

FCDO supported National Research, Development and Innovation Coordination Summit good will message (Delivered by Susan Mshana, Deputy Development Director at the British High Commission, Nigeria)

Distinguished panel members, guests, ladies and gentlemen. Good afternoon to you all. It is my pleasure to be here with you. Thank you for inviting me to speak with you.

On behalf of the British High Commission in Nigeria, I would like to share with you today some thoughts on the UK's vision on the broad spectrum of Science, Technology, Research and Innovation, focusing on Research, Development and Innovation, which is the theme of today's summit. I will touch on our offer to our Nigerian friends and allies; and how we see this summit fits with our ambition.



International scientific cooperation and openness is at risk. Emerging technologies exacerbate existing inequalities between and within countries and rising geostrategic competition (and associated protectionism) are introducing new barriers to collaboration. This trajectory undermines global appetite for scientific collaboration between and even within countries, particularly with LMICs, for development. Yet rapid, equitable progress against global challenges cannot be achieved without not only maintained, but increased collaboration on science and technology.

Amid escalating, interlinked crises, the world needs to accelerate the revolution in science, technology, research, and innovation to build global resilience to shared challenges. Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals is faltering in the face of shared challenges, including food and energy insecurity, climate change and health threats. Many of the major steps forward in international development – including to tackle poverty and increase life expectancy – have been driven by advances in science and technology and the use of rigorous research-based evidence on what does and does not work. Yet these advances would not have been possible

without open, equitable and secure international collaboration., complemented by strong local research governance.

Narrowing down to Nigeria and the topic of discussion at this summit, it is unimaginable the quantum of research across different disciplines being conducted across research institutions, private firms, management consultants, government agencies and civil societies. However, the emerging challenge being observed is the lack of coordination of all parties involved in research development and innovation (RDI) at the central or federal level in Nigeria. This comes with the attendant need for standardisation, policies, and regulations to ensure best practice in research, irrespective of the field of study, while ensuring government visibility and support in data management across all geographic resolutions.

The Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024, by the African Union Commission, encourages each member State to allocate 1% of GDP for research and development. This is based on the premise that robust research and development will help chart the path for local economic development. Hence the need for a central level coordinating government institution in Nigeria to ensure no sector of the economy or relevant stakeholder is left behind in research funding. Such an institution will also ensure high research quality, and provide oversight for research production and dissemination at the national level. Above all, a central level research coordinating body would give the Federal Government a big picture view within one organisation of all the different research and development activities going on in-country across geographic scale, economic sector, and discipline as well as those involved. This would further strengthen the RDI sector in the country while improving government's capacity to plan better and make evidence-informed decisions and policies.

We are committed to championing progress towards a more open, equitable and secure research ecosystem that is more inclusive of developing countries, to support greater multilateral and bilateral collaborations on science and technology.

The UK's FCDO can provide a counter-narrative, leveraging a wide range of cross-government international funds, an experienced network delivering science diplomacy, and its leading role in multilateral fora. The British High

Commission in Nigeria can demonstrate the importance of R&D programming and wider collaboration, to fuel the necessary advances in science and technology in Nigeria. This can be done in a way that builds on trusted relationships and protects research security.

The collaborative effort of the UK with strategic partners currently supports 16 African countries through the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) to set up or where already existing strengthen their national research and innovation coordinating institutions. Today's event is a testament to this support in Nigeria by creating this safe space to discuss and problem solve on the best approach to set up and operationalise a national research and innovation coordinating institution in Nigeria with all strategic stakeholders in attendance.

Our world-leading science and research sector will work in open and secure partnerships with researchers and innovators to drive our scientific response to some of the biggest global challenges and deliver science for development. UK's FCDO and UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) are two strong UK public institutions with expertise, and globally renowned in this domain and have been driving this agenda for stronger national level research coordination in African countries.

The British High Commission in Nigeria is well placed to enhance Nigeria's empowerment by developing research capability, removing barriers to increasing quality scientific output and facilitating tech transfer. With the capacity of research institutions in Nigeria growing, and the number and quality of research outputs increasing – there is a critical opportunity to develop a more global open, and inclusive research ecosystem, which works for the UK and our Nigerian partners. We also have a strong story to tell on technology and knowledge transfer that is embedded in broader capability-centred partnerships – these are issues that really matter to Nigeria and often feature in broader bilateral discussions on Science and Technology, meaning there is a strong case for visible UK leadership in this space.

We are committed to using our global voice for public good, creating modern partnerships that give precedence to local ownership and needs, and offering unmatched breadth and quality of support to our partners. In the pursuit of our vision, we will be patient because we know that it takes time to achieve sustainable and transformative impacts.

Thank you for your attention.