

GLOBAL AFRICAN DIASPORA SYMPOSIUM (GADS) ABUJA 2023

ADDRESS

Director-General

Directorate of Technical Cooperation in Africa (DTCA)

Amb. Rabiu Dagari mni.

1. Your Excellencies,

- President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, President **Muhammadu Buhari** **GCFR**, here represented
- The Secretary-General of Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, **H.E. Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti**
- Chairman, Senate Committee on Diaspora and Non-Governmental Organizations, **Senator Micheal Ana-Nnachi**,
- Honourable Minister of State Foreign Affairs, **H. E. Amb. Zubairu Dada**,
- Honourable Minister of State for Budget and National Planning, **Prince Clement Agba**,
- Chairman/CEO, **NiDCOM**, **Hon. Dr. Abike Dabiri-Erewa**, distinguished guests, members of the Diplomatic Corp here present, ladies and gentlemen.

2. It is indeed my pleasure to deliver this Welcome Address on the occasion of the **Global African Diaspora Symposium (GADS) Abuja 2023** with the theme, *'Building Stronger Connection Between Africa and the Global Diaspora'*. The aim of the **Global African Diaspora Symposium (GADS) Abuja 2023** is to seek solutions to pressing issues that are posing diverse challenges to Africa's development and to form necessary partnerships to achieve successful results. The Symposium further seeks to create an interface between Africa and its Diaspora, maximizing partnership and collaboration.
3. I therefore commend the leadership and management of the **African Diaspora Alliance (AfDA)** and the **Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS)**, which in conjunction with the **Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NiDCOM)** and the **Directorate of Technical Cooperation in Africa (DTCA)** put together this very important event.
4. In keeping with theme of this symposium, it's appropriate to posit that Africa has indeed reached a critical juncture requiring a change of narrative about Africans and Africa. As the continent that records consistent net outflow of

financial resources, it's heartening to note that African economies have received steady financial inflows from Africans in diaspora far in excess of Official Development Aid and Foreign Direct Investments. The value of remittances from the African Diaspora doubled from \$37 billion in 2010 to \$87 billion in 2019, reaching \$95.6 billion by 2021. Egypt and Nigeria are among the top ten remittance recipients globally, with \$31.5 billion and \$19.2 billion respectively in 2021. Nigerian Diaspora home remittances in 2021 of \$19.2 billion was four times the country's Foreign Direct Investment and contributed about 6.1% of our annual GDP. We need to change the narratives, however, and redirect inflows of remittances to productive ventures away from consumption.

5. It is also time to change the narrative about Africa being a resource rich continent. Africa should not be about export of natural resources only. **Tom Burgis** in his book **The Looting Machine** says Africa accounts for 13% of the world's population and just 2% of its cumulative GDP, but it is the repository of 15% of the planet's crude oil reserves, 40% of its gold and 80% of its platinum. The richest diamond mines are in Africa, as are significant deposits of uranium, copper, iron ore, bauxite and by one estimate, Africa has a third of the world's hydrocarbon and mineral resources. **Burgis** further noted that *"the basic commodities that lie in abundance in Africa remain the primary ingredients of the global economy."* **Andrew Mackenzie**, the Chief Executive of the world's biggest mining company, BHP Billiton, says and I quote *"half of the world's GDP is underpinned by resources."* This means Africa has a disproportionate share in powering the global economy by supplying critical commodities and minerals that spur global economic growth and maintain the livelihood of millions. We have to change the narrative from Africa being an exporter of resources and commodities to an exporter of finished products taking advantage of value addition and creating value chain for our numerous products and produce. It is also a matter of lamentation that Africa with a population of about 1.4 billion controls only 3% of global trade. We certainly need to change the narrative. Its perhaps auspicious that this event is taking place when the African Continental Free Trade Area is taking off. The African Continental Free Trade Area provides huge opportunities for the continent towards the attainment of Africa Agenda 2063. In this venture, there are immense opportunities for our Africans in Diaspora.
6. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, it is indeed a sad commentary that Africa, with over 60% arable land, cannot feed itself and must rely on expensive and sometimes unreliable supply of food imports from other regions of the world. This is a challenge to our policy makers as it is to our experts in agriculture,

agronomy, soil science, etc. both on the continent and the Diaspora. I must add here that the depressing situation we found ourselves in during the Covid 19 pandemic, with Africa, as a continent of over 1.4 billion people, having to rely on the donation of vaccines from other regions of the world at the instance of the United Nations, is another challenge to our scientists and policy makers, which this Symposium should address.

7. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, while we in Africa pride ourselves in having the youngest population and robust population growth, it is unedifying and demeaning to see our youths engaged in perilous journeys across the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean Sea in order to reach Europe and other places. Hundreds die each year while attempting to cross over to Europe and thousands are brutalized and inhumanly treated in the hands of human traffickers and unscrupulous security agents. We have to change this narrative, surely.
8. Again, while Africa bears the full brunt of climate change, environmental degradation and massive deforestation, the continent is denied the funds necessary for mitigation and adaptation, even though Africa's contribution to the phenomena is inconsequential.
9. Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, since the objective of the Symposium is to seek solutions to pressing issues that are posing diverse challenges to Africa's development and to form necessary partnerships to achieve successful results, this forum provides an excellent opportunity to highlight the most pressing problems Africa face developmentally and then identify Africans and Africans in Diaspora with skills and knowledge to address them. To give just an example, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the DTCA, recognising the seriousness of global warming and the consequent rise in sea level, engaged the services of eminent professors of Africa and Africans in Diaspora to undertake a study of three important cities situated on the coast. They undertook a study on *"Minimising Vulnerabilities of Coastal Cities and Communities in Africa through Adaptation to Climate Change Impacts - in Lagos, Nigeria, Cape Town, South Africa and Port Said in Egypt."* We have shared widely their work to assist other African countries with similar problems.
- Furthermore, DTCA, working in conjunction with the European Union, International Organisation for Migration, International Centre for Migration Policy Development, the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and NiDCOM will be organising a conference in the 3rd quarter of this year to

assess *“Irregular Migration’s Impact on Socio-Economic Development of Africa”*.

- In September 2023, the DTCA, in collaboration with Centre for Dry Land Agriculture, Bayero University, and other partners are organising *“Food for West Africa Conference”* in Kano.
 - DTCA and Human Science Resource Council of South Africa is also organising a conference on *“Just Climate Finance”* and we shall be engaging Africans and Africans in Diaspora to attend virtually or physically.
10. I have highlighted some of what we do at the DTCA, as our programmes always strive to attract African experts in finding practical solutions to African problems and promoting the growth and development of African economies. Africa needs to sufficiently engage with our Diaspora in the Caribbean and Latin America who are enthusiastic about reconnecting with their brethren in Africa. We must recall here that 4 out of 5 persons that crossed the Atlantic were Africans and 80% of them were taken to Brazil and the Caribbean. We must, therefore, acknowledge here the achievements of Africans in Latin America and the Caribbeans. In Venezuela, where I served as the Ambassador of Nigeria, the name **Pedro Camejo**, a black African, had become legendary because of his valour and exceptional heroism at the **Battle of Carabobo of June 1821** that won Venezuela her independence.
 11. Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, let me say that it is at forum like this that we must start the work towards changing the narratives about Africa. Africa must not be seen as a ‘Lost Continent’ but a continent full of opportunities. We must also challenge the historical inaccuracies about Africa as a continent with no history before the arrival of Europeans. This Global African Diaspora Summit is apt, because over 100,000 years ago, bands of Africans left the shores of this great continent to populate other regions of the world. Only Africa could truly qualify to host such an event because it is the cradle of mankind.
 12. To end my remarks, I say welcome to Africa the home of Shaka Zulu and Menelik II of Ethiopia, the continent of the Egyptian pharaohs and the great Egyptian Civilisation. I welcome you to the home of Mansa Musa, Sultan Idris Aloma, Danfodio, Sundiata and the Oba of the Great Benin Empire and the Empire of Oyo. I welcome you to the home of the Great Zimbabwe relics, Timbuktu, Nok Culture and the relics of the Kingdom of Aksum. I welcome to the home of Cheikh Anta Diop, Nelson Mandela, Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiongo. I welcome you to Nigeria the heartbeat of Africa.

13. I thank you all for your kind attention and wish you us a very fruitful Symposium. God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria; God bless Africa.

Amb. Rabiú Dagari mni.

Director-General

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Abuja, FCT, Nigeria.

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