



REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY,
AMBASADOR ALEX ENAN KEFAS ON THE
OCCASSION OF 63RD INDEPENDENCE
ANNIVERSARY OF NIGERIA,
28TH SEPTEMBER, 2023
LISBON, PORTUGAL

Excellencies', Ambassador Jorge Silva Lopes, Director, State Protocol, other Government officials, friends, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen— good evening and thank you all for joining us.

This year's National Day is unique in many fronts. It is not just a celebration of attainment of independence, but a watershed in our national history. As a people, we are reflecting on our journey of 63 years of nation building. It is also a moment of looking forward to a more blissful future in our national endeavour to construct a politically stable, economically inclusive and prosperous country.

2. The new Government that has just come on board on May 29 this year, is working hard to settle down to implementing its programme of action. Let me quickly insert that the election of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR did not only open a new chapter in our political and democratic history, but has set a pace for other countries in Africa and perhaps, beyond.

3. As you all may be aware, since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, elections have held and we have witnessed peaceful transitions from one regime to another. Globally, this landmark has been described as a good omen and indeed, a new dawn in the African political democratization process, an obvious ingredient for national stability and inclusive development. In other words, it is an affirmative response to the persuasive calls from all and sundry that Nigeria should lead by example.

4. Nigeria and Portugal commenced formal diplomatic relations in 1975 (48years) with Nigeria opening its Embassy in Lisbon, Portugal. The two countries have sustained growing co-operation partnership with high-level exchanges on both sides. Also in June 2022, as part of efforts

in deepening relations between the two countries, former President, Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR paid a three-day State Visit to Portugal. Economic cooperation between the two countries remains cordial with exchange of goods and services mainly in the oil and gas sector. Nigeria is an important economic partner to Portugal.

5. On the economic front, we have made some significant progress. With more than USD477.39 billion and USD2,184.4 trillion in terms of nominal GDP and Purchasing Power Parity respectively (World Bank Data 2022), Nigeria is the largest economy in Africa. Apart from being considered by the World Bank as one of the emerging markets and a regional influence, the country's GDP is currently growing at an average of 2.51% and it is expected to increase to 3.51% in the last quarter. This, analyst said marks the 11th consecutive quarter of economic expansion, resulting from by the boom in non-oil and service sectors particularly, information and communication, playing a significant role.

6. I should state that Nigeria's potentials as an economic powerhouse are not in doubt in spite of the fluctuating global oil price. The positive

trajectory has placed it at a vantage position as the most favoured investment destination in the continent. To foster economic growth and investor confidence in Nigeria, major steps had been taken by the new government to reform both the investment environment and the act of doing business in the economy and other growth and job-oriented reforms are in the wings.

7. As the current Chairman of ECOWAS, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR promised to seek to help re-establish democratic governance in a manner that addresses the political and economic challenges confronting the nation, including the violent extremists who seek to foment instability in our region. He extends a hand of friendship to all who genuinely support this mission.

8. Our foreign policy at the moment is largely hinged on “four Ds” policy initiative - “Development, Democracy, Demography, and Diaspora. It is aimed at bringing modern solutions towards addressing some complex challenges and to effectively play its roles at the forefront of

promoting Nigeria's interests and protecting citizens abroad. Also, Nigeria's foreign policy is investment driven and Government is committed to providing an enabling environment. Prospective investors are urged to take full advantage of this impressive government initiative and opportunities that abound in the country. Thus, with political stability in view, the country will further attract the much-needed capital flow, through appreciable Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) and core Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) to lead the region and continent.

9. Like every nation, we are not ignorant of our challenges, especially those common challenges characterized with nation building. I should make known to this gathering, that through the Joint Cooperation of our valuable neighbours, we are making unprecedented gains against the extremist, Boko Haram, in the Northeastern part of Nigeria. Through the Multinational Joint Security Taskforce restructured by the five neighbouring countries, and from our previous experiences on similar unconventional security challenges, we want to

reassure our friends that Nigeria will surely win the war.

10. Taking cognisance of our national, regional and global responsibility, especially as a regional big brother in Africa, a middle Power in International Affairs and an emerging Global Power, President Tinubu's administration is already working tirelessly on a comprehensive roadmap that will enable Nigeria fulfil its natural mandates, both at the continental and global stage.

11. It is in this regard that we honestly crave the support of our friends more than ever before. We will like to seize this auspicious opportunity to express our profound gratitude to our regional and global partners and in particular, the European Union. With our collective efforts, we will not only advance to consolidate on our gains but can be rest assured that, like the harmattan smoke, global conflict and related challenges will soon disappear into oblivion.

12. Nigeria - Portugal bilateral relations is no doubt on the threshold of history. Everything, administratively and politically is being done to

upscale the engagement to a more practically and mutually beneficial engagement. This is crucial to both sides as it is necessary to translate the over 48 years of cordial relations into economic benefits as evident in the signing of seven (7) Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries in 2022. I would like to use this opportunity to express my appreciation to Portugal for accepting over 2,000 Nigerians refugees who fled from the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

13. While we do not intend to delay you with a long speech, I should reassure you again that the huge investment opportunities embedded in our economy's rejuvenation agenda, greatly outweigh the security threats posed by insurgency predominantly in the North-eastern part of Nigeria.

14. Let me also use this opportunity to thank everyone of you here present especially our sponsors, **Mota-Engil, Galp, Bacalhoa, Brilhanta Divinha Comercio de Vinhos, Timwe Tech** and the entire staff of the Embassy for their support in making today's event a huge success.

Thank you all for coming, and please let's toast to the good health, peace and prosperity of Nigeria, Portugal and the entire world.