

**OPENNING REMARKS BY DR TOLA WINJOBI NATIONAL COORDINATOR CIVIL SOCIETY COALITION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CSCSD) AT THE 4<sup>TH</sup> AFRICA CONFERENCE ON BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS 2018 ORGANIZED BY INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (INCSR) WITH THE THEME: ADVANCING SUSTAINABILITY PRINCIPLES FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, 28TH -29TH NOVEMBER 2018 AT LAGOS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY CONFERENCE CENTRE, IKEJA, LAGOS**

In the decades that preceded the turn of the new millennium, there were hopes and expectation that year 2000 would provide a magic wand that would provide solutions to many if not all of the intractable challenges facing humanity. It was a period where commonplace were slogans such as “health for all by the year 2000”, “education for all by the year 2000”, “food sufficiency for all by the year 2000”, “shelter for all by the year 2000”, “prosperity for all by the year 2000” and several other slogans. Poverty, hunger, starvation and diseases seemed to be the major challenges facing the developing nations while the developed economies seemed to be enjoying the benefits of development including human rights, democracy, and good governance.

The United Nations indeed felt concerned about the plight of common people especially in the global south. In order to address the problem of poverty and promote sustainable developments, the eight millennium goals were adopted in September 2000 at the largest gathering of 189 Heads of States committing both rich and poor countries to do all they could to eradicate poverty, promote human dignity and equality, and achieve peace, democracy and environmental stability. By this commitment the world had an unprecedented opportunity to improve the lives of billions of people by adopting practical approaches to meeting the Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

For fifteen years, MDGs were faced with some challenges which could be categorized into two:

- the challenges inherent in the Millennium Declaration leading to setting up of the eight goals of
- the MDGs and; the challenges facing the implementation of MDGs in various countries.

By the end of 2015, many African countries missed the MDG targets while some completely derailed. This led to another strategy to bring about a turn around in the lives of people across the globe. There were series of meetings and conferences which produced outcome documents. The final refined outcome document containing the 17 goals to shape the world for the next 15 years beginning from 2016 is titled “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, and it was launched and adopted by heads of states and government at the Global Summit held between 25 and 27 September 2015 in New York, United States of America. The summary of the Global Goals is presented viz:

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. End hunger, achieve food security and adequate nutrition for all, and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Attain healthy life for all at all ages
4. Provide equitable and inclusive quality education and life-long learning opportunities for all
5. Attain gender equality, empower women and girls everywhere
6. Secure water and sanitation for all for a sustainable world
7. Ensure access to affordable, sustainable, and reliable modern energy services for all
8. Promote strong, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all
9. Promote sustainable industrialization
- 10.Reduce inequality within and among countries
- 11.Build inclusive, safe and sustainable cities and human settlements
- 12.Promote sustainable consumption and production patterns
- 13.Promote actions at all levels to address climate change
- 14.Attain conservation and sustainable use of marine resources, oceans and seas
- 15.Protect and restore terrestrial ecosystems and halt all biodiversity loss
- 16.Achieve peaceful and inclusive societies, rule of law, effective and capable institutions
- 17.Strengthen and enhance the means of implementation and global partnership for sustainable development

One needs to underscore the fact that apart from the 17 SDGs which revolve round the agenda, the 2030 Agenda is a plan of action focusing on five Ps: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. Realising 2030 Agenda and achieving the SDGs would be a mirage if governments neglect these five Ps which are the bases of development. In similar vein, the implementation of all the 17 goals is dependent on factoring in the three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic and environmental elements. SDGs would not be realized by

2030 if these three dimensions are relegated in our plans, policies, and programmes.

I believe Nigeria can achieve SDGs by 2030 provided our governments summon the political will by blocking leakages, seriously fighting corruption without fear or favour rather than only recovering looted funds and obeying the rule of law, upholding justice, ensuing peace and respecting human rights of Nigerian people.

Very topical and germane is this 4th Africa Conference 2018 with the theme: Advancing Sustainability Principles for National Development. Casting a cursory look at the four sub- themes, it can be concluded that they are relevant to SDGs as they are directly addressing some of the SDGs. The first sub-theme addressing the Imperatives of Sustainable Stock Exchange for Economic Growth in Africa is linked to Goal 8 dealing with Decent Work and Economic Growth. Without decent job there cannot be economic growth and without economic growth there can't be national development. According to National Bureau of Statistics, 22.64 million youths aged 15 and 35 bracket are unemployed while yearly the number is increasing considering the number of youth passing out from higher institutions without a ready made job.

Youth unemployment rose from 49.7 percent in the last quarter of 2017 to 52.65 percent in the 4 th quarter of 2018. Unfortunately government is weak in providing employment while they sometimes refuse to fill up the vacant positions left by the retirees. They bemoan lack of financial resource base. It is sad to note that some state governments are not paying the minimum wage of N18,000 let alone paying the current N30,000 as being demanded by the trade union. This is nothing beside the N29 million take home pay of an average senator. Let the government cut down the humongous remunerations of our house of assembly members as well as those of the executive including the political office holders. In January 2017 alone, 7.9 million jobs were lost (NBS 2018). Thus, this becomes a challenge to the private sector that can absorb better than government our array of unemployed youth into the work force. Since governments seem to have failed, let the private sector consider the plight of our youth and provide succor to them by providing them decent job commensurate with their qualifications and productivity while governments should also provide an enabling business environment that wears human face.

The second sub-theme deals with Sustainable Banking – Assessing Social and Environmental Risks. “Sustainable Banking is using money with conscious thought about its environmental, cultural and social impacts, and with the support of savers and investors who want to make difference, by meeting present day needs

without compromising those of future generations”. To be taken seriously by banks and other financial institutions is the issue of corporate social responsibilities. Sustainable development cannot find its place in the greed of financial institutions making profit for the sake of it but in the provision of win-win services to customers that can lift them above poverty. Corporate Social Responsibility is not about money all of the time but about providing genuine advice that would lead to informed decisions by the customers.

For example, rather than luring customers into deceptive portfolios, it is expected that banks

should be able to provide financial advice on the suitable portfolios that civil society organizations, for example, could invest their funds in so as to plough such accrued profits back into development projects for the benefit of the people.

The third sub-theme focuses on SDG 7: Affordable and clean energy where governments are expected to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all. I no less agree with IN-CSR that affordable renewable energy is a solution to Climate Change and catalyst for national development. Over time, our various energy policies in Nigeria have not made any difference or impacted positively on the socio-economic condition of Nigerians; it is like we are moving from bad to worse. Electricity generation was even better in the 50s and 60s when we used to have Electric Corporation of Nigeria (ECN). There has been gradual retrogression in our energy system especially power generation when we changed from ECN to National Electric Power Authority (NEPA) and from that to Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN).

Now we have GENCOS, DISCOS and IBEDC, IKEDC, BEDC etc. Despite an increase to 7000 Kw, Nigeria is still groping in the dark as many companies, communities and individuals still depend greatly on generating plant for their subsistent power supply. Many artisans and technicians are still being thrown into further poverty due to epileptic power supply. The summersault power supply affects business; it even kills it. It is laughable but no longer strange to see many offices

of distribution companies like GENCO and DISCOS (including IBEDC, IKEDC, BEDC) that are supposed to be supplying electricity using generators in their offices to power their gadgets and equipment. I think the solution to all these erratic power supplies in the country is affordable and clean energy as it is being done in South Africa and Germany. The discussants should come up with recommendations, workable advice and solution to this perennial power supply in Nigeria.

The intersection between CSR, SDGs and sustainability strategies which is the fourth sub-theme is as important as SDG 17. The goal is to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development. It needs be said that government alone cannot achieve SDGs without the cooperation of all critical stakeholders such as the civil society, development partners, academia, donors, private sector etc. Among all these, private sector stands out because of the leverage they are surely going to bring to bear. Which is why this 4th African Conference is not only relevant but also timely at this stage. IN-CSR's partnering with the Institute of Management Consultants (IMC) and the Civil Society Coalition for Sustainable

Development (CSCSD) is not only appropriate but also in line with Goal 17 of the SDGs so as to ruminates and strategise on how civil society and private sector can work together by supporting government in order to bring about development in the interest of the critical masses of over 87million Nigerians suffering from poverty .

Ladies and gentlemen, I don't want to undertake the exercise of paper presentation. We have qualified resource persons to do justice to all of these issues. I want to congratulate the International Network for Corporate Social Responsibility (INCSR), Civil Society Coalition on Sustainable Development (CSCSD) and the Institute of Management Consultants (IMC) for putting this together.

I encourage you to sit back, relax and enjoy various presentations and ceremonies as they unfold in the next couple of days.

Thank you for your time.

**Tola Winjobi (PhD)**

National Coordinator, CSCSD

[tola.winjobi@cscsdev.org](mailto:tola.winjobi@cscsdev.org)

08030618326