Opening Remarks Presented by the Executive Secretary, Tertiary Education Trust Fund, Arc. Sonny S.T. Echono at the Public Unveiling and Launching of Tertiary Education, Research, Applications and Services (TERAS) Platform on Tuesday, 17th October 2023

PROTOCOL

The Hon. Minister of Education, Prof. Tahir Mamman, SAN, OON

Hon. Minister of State for Education, Rt. Hon, Dr. Yusuf Tanko Sununu

Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Education,

Regulators from NUC, NBTE, NCCE,

Pro-Chancellors, Vice Chancellors, Rectors and Provosts,

Special Guests from NITDA, National Library, CVCNU

Staff and Students of our Tertiary Education Community,

Gentlemen of the Press,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

PREAMBLE

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, the Management and Staff of TETFund, and the over 2 million students and staff of our beneficiary institutions currently captured on our Beneficiary Identity Management System (BIMS), I warmly welcome you to today's unveiling of the TERAS platform. Our target is to grow

that number well beyond 3m before the end of the year. I also wish to thank the Hon. Minister, Prof. Tahir Mamman and the Minister of State for their visionary leadership which has berthed today's event.

Today marks a significant moment in the history of Nigerian tertiary education. We gather here to present to Nigerians and the entire education sector an extraordinary initiative – TERAS, the Tertiary Education, Research, Applications and Services Platform. Our mission is simple yet transformative: to revitalize and fortify the Nigerian tertiary education landscape as promised by Mr. President, by providing an all-encompassing platform that consolidates essential services under one roof. We envision TERAS as the centralized hub for tertiary education services, fostering quality assurance, collaboration, efficiency, and innovation. Before we delve deeper into the details of TERAS, allow me to take a moment to reflect on the journey that brought us here, how the deliberate policy measures we've undertaken found favour and support from our Honourable Minister and is in sync with the vision of Mr. President to rekindle hope in our educational system.

TERAS has its origins in the challenging days of the COVID-19 pandemic, a period when our nation and our education system ground to a halt. The impact was profound, but it also served as a catalyst for action. Government, recognizing the need to mitigate disruptions in education, swiftly set in motion a series of policies and directives through the Federal Ministry of Education. These initial steps have

now culminated in the creation of TERAS, the groundbreaking platform we present today.

Our journey towards TERAS has also been influenced by the ever-increasing importance of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), across various innovations spanning data and analytics, internet of things, convergence, blockchain, artificial intelligence, nano technology and others. Policies have been carefully crafted and implemented to harness the power of technology, unleashing its immense potential to uplift our educators, empower our students, and produce a workforce that is globally competitive and able to address national challenges as well as exploit opportunities for sustainable economic growth and development.

TETFUND INTERVENTIONS IN ICT

From 2016 to 2018, the Fund focused its ICT Support Intervention on digital literacy and capacity development for staff at our beneficiary institutions, which by 2020, achieved the training and certification of over 20,000 persons in various digital skills relevant to today's ICT world. In continuation, the 2019/2020, ICT Support provided funding for eLearning implementation. The objective is to achieve hybrid /blended learning and to expand access beyond the confines of physical classrooms. The initiative had the added benefit of reducing the burden on students in accessing learning materials. As of today, over 215 institutions are at various stages of completion in implementing this intervention.

Furthermore, in 2021, the Fund commenced the Thesis Digitization project to ensure scholarly works produced in Nigerian Public Tertiary Institutions are

properly dematerialized, put online, and used to strengthen the integrity of our academic institutions with plagiarism checking, open access, public repositories, and other scholarly resources. In furtherance of our digitization efforts, a Digitization Project Steering and Coordinating Committee was established to develop a framework for federating research outputs and theses from our Beneficiary Institutions towards a sustainable National Knowledge Bank, coordinate the successful implementation of the dematerialization of the physical theses, identify intellectual property issues, develop and adopt a model digitization policy and collaborate with similar knowledge repositories across the globe.

Having recognized the pressing ICT needs of our beneficiaries, we dedicated our Zonal intervention for 2022 towards improving our beneficiary Institutions' ICT infrastructure and other needs. An ICT Infrastructure Committee, drawn mainly from our universities and regulatory authorities was set up to supervise the success of the projects. This intervention provides mobile internet access to the staff and students on and off campus, provide access to research e-Journals online all year round, and at a minimum provide renewable power solutions for our beneficiary institutions' Libraries.

For 2023, we released guidelines and commenced efforts to enhance online learning with the Blackboard system and increase capacity in communication skills for 2,000,000 staff and students of our beneficiary institutions.

It was based on these interventions that TERAS came to life. We recognized the necessity to deliver digital based resources to our beneficiary institutions, and the

need to identify staff and students in our tertiary education ecosystem to whom these resources are to be delivered.

TERAS – UNIFIED SERVICES PLATFORM

TERAS adopts a strategic approach by aggregating these services, ensuring that the value for money is maximized while making a wide array of services available to the entire education ecosystem.

From a technical perspective, TERAS has been meticulously designed to seamlessly integrate various essential components. First is identity management through BIMS (Beneficiary Identity Management System), followed by a federated academic repository to, address critical challenges faced by students, researchers, and institutions in accessing educational resources and research materials. Other services such as, sponsored Mobile Internet Access, EagleScan for plagiarism checking, Aggregated Journal & Research Subscription inclusive of EBSCO, Blackboard Learning Management System, Digital Literacy (ICDL and Communication Skills), and Intervention Funding are available to our institutions, staff, and students.

CONCLUSION

My Honorable Minister, Distinguished guests, colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen, with joy in my heart, I present TERAS. Thank you**.**