

ADDRESS BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, TETFUND, ARC. SONNY S. T. ECHONO AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE TETFUND ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON OPERATIONALIZATION OF EQUIPMENT UPGRADE IN WORKSHOPS AND LABORATORIES FOR UNIVERSITIES, POLYTECHNICS AND COLLEGES OF EDUCATION (TECHNICAL), AD HOC COMMITTEE ON ASSESSMENT / REVIEW OF THE TETFUND CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON OPERATIONALIZATION OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT SPECIAL INTERVENTION, HELD ON 11TH MARCH, 2024 AT THE TETFUND BOARDROOM, ABUJA

Protocol

I am pleased to warmly welcome you to the inauguration of three Special Ad Hoc Committees, the Advisory Committee on Operationalization of Equipment Upgrade in Workshops and Laboratories for Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education (Technical); the Ad Hoc Committee on Assessment / Review of the TETFund Centres of Excellence; and the Advisory Committee on Operationalization of Skills Development Special Intervention.

2. The constitution of these Committees underscores the importance the Fund attaches to strengthening its intervention activities towards the delivery of its mandate. Bearing in mind the importance of the tasks ahead, the Members of these Committees were carefully selected based on your individual capacities and the belief that you will collectively work as a team to deliver on these vital assignments.

3. Thus, I thank you immensely for taking the time out of your busy schedules to accept to serve on the respective committees and to be here today for this inauguration, despite the short notice. I am aware that most of you travelled far to answer this call to service. I therefore thank you for your patriotism and appreciate your commitment to the service of our country.

4. In line with the Fund's commitment to deepen its content-based interventions and facilitate the institutionalization of Research and Development, concerted efforts are being made to identify more innovative ways to enhance research capacities of our Beneficiary Institutions and promote skills development for our teeming youths.

5. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, modern economic development process continues to depend on increased

productivity arising from purposeful and problem-solving research. It has been acknowledged that no society can succeed without adequate research infrastructure facilities to support innovative research for solving societal problems.

6. The National Survey funded by the Fund in 2022 to assess the availability, functionality and compatibility of all existing research facilities across the Beneficiary Institutions, in relation to contemporary requirements and global best practices, reveals that most of the equipment in the Laboratories and Workshops of our Beneficiary Institutions are obsolete, inadequate or underutilized.

7. Notably, improving and expanding Nigeria's R&D Infrastructure and facilities are essential if we are to raise the level of productivity and move the country to a knowledge-based economy. Consequently, the Fund made provision under the 2024 intervention for the upgrade of the equipment in Workshops and Laboratories for Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education (Technical).

8. To ensure effective implementation of the intervention, the Fund constituted an Advisory Committee chaired by Prof. Hayward Mafuyai Babale to advise on the operationalization of the upgrade of equipment in Workshops and Laboratories of the Institutions. The Committee has the following Terms of Reference (ToR):

- a) Assess the state of workshops and Laboratories in target Institutions (Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education), this includes equipment and other facilities in use.
- b) Determine requirements/criteria for upgrade of equipment in the workshops and Laboratories.
- c) Make recommendations regarding type/category of upgrade, whether equipment repair or replacement of obsolete equipment, physical infrastructure improvement (renovation/reconstruction/rehabilitation) of existing workshops/Laboratories, sustainable power supply or any other necessary facility needed.
- d) Any other recommendations that will ensure effective and efficient use of the Workshops and Laboratories in the Institutions for maximum impact including any additional support needed.

9. Distinguished Personalities, part of our strategies to achieve the objectives of deepening the institutionalization of R&D was the establishment of Twenty-Seven (27) Centres of Excellence spread across the six (6) geographical zones of the country, specializing in various areas of national priorities. The overarching goal of the Centres of Excellence is to bridge the gap between researchers and users by supporting strategic and applications-oriented research that have potential for industrial applications, through the gathering of complementary resources, expertise needed for technical development and industrial growth. This effort is intended to stimulate and strengthen the triple helix concept, with a view to enhance Nigeria's research and innovation ecosystem.

10. The first set of Twelve (12) Centres were established in 2019 in Universities across the country, while another set of Twelve (12) comprising Six (6) in Polytechnics and Six (6) in Colleges of Education were established in 2021. The Fund conducted several capacity building programmes for the Directors of the Centres, and provided the Establishment Guidelines and Strategic Framework to facilitate seamless take-off and operationalization of Centres in line with global standards, to ensure effective and sustainable operation of the Centres.

11. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, to ensure the consolidation of the Centres of Excellence, the Fund made provision under the 2024 Intervention for the upgrade of the most performing Centres. Consequently, the Fund considered it expedient to constitute an Ad Hoc Committee chaired by Prof. Oyewale Tomori to assess and review the performance and progress of the Centres in the Universities in line with their specific mandate. The Terms of Reference for the Committee are:

- a) Assess performance of the existing TETFund Centres of Excellence hosted in universities based on their given mandates and areas of specialization.
- b) Identify Centres adjudged to be performing well and recommend same for additional funds for sustainability and upgrade.

- c) Make recommendations regarding type/category of upgrade whether physical infrastructure improvement, provision of required Laboratory equipment/equipment repair or any other necessary facility needed.
- d) Identify the equipment, facilities and infrastructure needed for each of the selected TCoE to be upgraded taking cognizance of geographic location, surrounding environment including presence of industries, needs of the surrounding Institutions and strategic areas of focus of the TCoE for maximum impact.
- e) Any other recommendations that will ensure effective and efficient achievement of strategic objectives for the upgrade and implementation of activities of the Centres including additional support needed.

12. The promotion of skills development is one of the priority areas of Government to address the prevailing challenges of youth unemployment and prevalence of poverty in our society. The National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) has been making deliberate efforts to improve skills development in Nigerian Polytechnics by formalizing the informal apprenticeship training through the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF).

13. Accordingly, and in consonance with the Fund's commitment to the promotion of skills development, provision was made for Skills Development Programme in Polytechnics under the Fund's Special Interventions. Consequently, the Fund constituted an Advisory Committee chaired by Prof. Idris M. Bugaje, the Executive Secretary of NBTE to advice on the modalities for the operationalization of the Skills Development Special Intervention. The Committee has the following Terms of Reference (ToR):

- a) Assess present state of Skills Development Programmes in Polytechnics based on the Entrepreneurship and Skills Development Policy of Government.
- b) Harvest and determine Skills Development priorities of each Polytechnic based on its areas of comparative advantage.
- c) Identify needs of the institutions for 2 above in terms of facilities, equipment and capacity building, taking into cognizance that training programmes should not utilize more than 10% of the

total amount allocated under the intervention for each Institution.

- d) For capacity building programmes, determine priority areas of focus, including target participants for maximum impact towards the achievement of Project objectives.
- e) Provide appropriate recommendations on strategies for partnerships and collaboration to further enhance achievement of project objectives (linkages with private sector, industry engagement, civil society groups and non-governmental organizations).
- f) Any other recommendations that will ensure achievement of the intervention objectives.

14. The three Committees have six (6) weeks from today to submit their Reports. We are confident that given your expertise and commitment to our nation, you will individually and collectively bring your wealth of experience to bear in the discharge of this vital national assignment.

15. Please permit me to express our deepest appreciation to Mr. President for graciously approving the 2024 Intervention Budget of the Fund in which these activities are encapsulated. Let me also specifically thanked the Honourable Minister of Education for his guidance and unflinching support to the Fund in delivering innovative interventions to meet the aspiration of stakeholders.

16. On this note, Distinguished Chairmen and Members of the Committees, I have the singular honour and privilege to inaugurate the three Ad Hoc Committees this day, **Monday, 11th March, 2024.**

17. Thank you for your kind attention.