

WELCOME ADDRESS BY Arc. SONNY S.T. ECHONO, THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE TERTIARY EDUCATION TRUST FUND, AT THE STRATEGIC WORKSHOP WITH HEADS OF INSTITUTIONS ON THE 2025 DISBURSEMENT GUIDELINES, HELD AT THE TETFUND AUDITORIUM ON THURSDAY, 13TH MARCH, 2025.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to this Yearly Strategic Meeting with Heads of Beneficiary Institutions. The primary focus of this engagement is the 2025 Disbursement Guidelines. Additionally, this session provides an opportunity for meaningful discussions, collaboration, and feedback on the 2024 disbursement cycle. As an intervention agency, our goal remains to enhance the impact of these interventions by focusing on performance evaluation and strengthening partnerships between the Fund and the institutions we support.

Looking back at year 2024, it was marked by significant achievements. The Fund successfully implemented its programmes and projects as approved by the Board of Trustees. The Institution-Based Skills Development program for Polytechnics was initiated and the Career Service Centres Intervention across all Beneficiary Institutions was also introduced. The first phase of upgrade of workshops and laboratories, support for the national skills qualification framework in polytechnics and the improvements of our centres of excellence, all commenced satisfactorily. Additionally, the Fund organised its first National Tertiary Education Research fair from 17th to 21st November 2024

The Funds engagements with stakeholders were robust. Key highlights include a One-Day Strategic Meeting with heads of institutions to review the 2023 Intervention Cycle; a Two-Day Sensitization Workshop for Directors of Entrepreneurship, Career Centres, and Librarians in Abuja and Lagos; and a Two-Day Interactive Session with the leadership of ASUU, SSANU, ASUP, and COEASU to discuss emerging issues and the way forward for TETFund interventions. Furthermore, another meeting held with Heads of Beneficiary Institutions on November 11, 2024, allowed us to receive feedback on project implementation and inputs into the proposed 2025 intervention guidelines.

Throughout the year, we addressed key challenges, including the issues of distressed projects, suspension of the foreign component of the Academic staff training programme, the sustenance of the ICT roadmap especially the need for beneficiary institution to fully embrace and utilise the BIMS and TERAS platform. We have remained committed to our Research and Innovation programs which remain a pivotal fulcrum on which we hope to achieve our institutional and national development goals of becoming globally competitive in our ever-changing world. The year 2024 was indeed productive, and we remain committed to sustaining this momentum.

Our intervention activities have increased significantly, aligning with national priorities outlined in the Education Sector Road Map under President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's administration and championed by the Honourable Minister of Education, Dr. Tunji Alausa.

I extend our sincere appreciation to the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), under the leadership of Mr. Zaccheus Adelabu Adedeji, for the sustained improvement in revenue collection. We are indeed grateful to Mr. President for his painstaking efforts in sustaining allocative efficiency as well as prudent deployment of the funds resources to achieve desired impact.

In line with Federal Government's directives, all Physical Infrastructure Development allocations for 2025 shall be directed toward the upgrading, rehabilitation and renovation of dilapidated infrastructure in our beneficiary institutions. This was communicated to you earlier to enable you consult widely and prepare your projects ahead of time. You were also advised to employ the services of your consultancy units and or physical planning units in the preparation and --- --- project under the current disbursement cycle, the Fund has significantly increased the allocation for Research and Innovation, Academic Staff Training and Development, as well as Manuscript and Book Development. It has also increased significantly the numbers of beneficiary institutions for its special and designated projects.

The 2025 Disbursement allocation is structured as follows: the total Direct Disbursement of **(91.08%)**, is made up of **(48.90%)** as Annual Direct Disbursement and **(42.18%)** as Special Direct Disbursement. Designated Projects account for **(8.72%)**, while Stabilization funds are **(0.20%)**. In this regards each category of beneficiary institution has been allocated the Annual Direct Disbursement as follows.

	Normal	Zonal	Total
University	2, 560,562,352.66	300,000,000.00	<u>2,860,562,362.66</u>
Polytechnic	1,794,335,731.71	200,000,000.00	<u>1,994,335,731.71</u>
Col.of Education	1,978,428,260.79	200,000,000.00	<u>2,178,428,260.79</u>

Under the Special Direct Disbursement category, key initiatives include increased funding and expanded participation in the Special High Impact Programme (SHIP), completion of the National Library building in Abuja, establishment of mechanized farms in some universities, and accelerated provision of student hostels through Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and direct construction in fulfilment of Mr. president promise to Nigerian student and in furtherance of ----- plans of our institution.

Other key focus areas in the 2025 Disbursement Guidelines include expanding Infrastructure to enhance student's intake for Doctors, Nurses, pharmacist and Dentist in our universities and colleges of medicine, adopted of medical simulation and technology to improve curriculum delivery and patient care, provision of alternative power to selected beneficiary institutions to obscure current difficulties in coping with energy costs. other priority include addressing campus security, enabling disaster recovery and completing previously distressed projects. Research and innovation support will continue with provision for the National Research Fund, institutionalization of R&D, existing an expanding partnerships, Research meets Industry (Triple Helix initiative), and commercialization of research outcomes.

We are also making significant investments in laboratory and agricultural development. Additional funding has been allocated for the recently approved central multipurpose research laboratories in Lagos, Abuja, Kano and Port Harcourt, along with the establishment of two new ones. Three new Agricultural Laboratories/Demonstration Farms will be set up, with additional support for the existing ones. Under designated projects, we will produce funding for upgrading of engineering workshops and Laboratories in universities, polytechnics, and college of education. There will also be increased funding for the National Skills Development/TVET program in our Polytechnics, some of the new intervention lines introduced this include:- Diaspora Outreach/Exchange Program, Staff Support Fund for universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education, provision of electric tricycles for campus transportation, and Student Startup/Innovation Grants.

In line with our ICT Development and Innovation roadmap, we will and promote adoption and utilization of our converged services, build ICT Experience Centers and, Innovation Hubs across our beneficiary institution, enforce Government directive on the full utilization of digital resources including the blackboard learning management system, thesis digitalization and the TERAS platform.

We are also establishing 12 new Entrepreneurship for Innovation Hubs in Polytechnics and Colleges of Education.

Our TERAS platform aims to digitize and modernize learning institutions, aligning with global standards. We have consistently encouraged beneficiaries to make the best use of the platform as we sustain our collaborations and subscriptions to these learning management systems,

As part of our commitment to reducing reliance on government funding, institutions are requested to foster partnerships with the private sector for infrastructure development and facility management, starting with student hostels.

I would like to seize this opportunity to acknowledge the invaluable support of the media, the National Assembly, Governing council of Institutions, and the various Unions in the discharge of our mandate. Our collective efforts aims to revitalize the

tertiary education sector by minimizing distractions and fostering a collaborative approach.

As we prepare for the commencement of the 2025 intervention cycle, I urge all Heads of Beneficiary Institutions to ensure the full utilization of their 2024 and previous allocations, while fast tracking the procurement process to access their 2025 allocations. I look forward to an engaging and fruitful discussion that will further shape our interventions.

Thank you and may our sacrifices in this holy season be blessed.