



WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL/CEO OF THE
INFRASTRUCTURE CONCESSION REGULATORY COMMISSION ICRC),
ENGR. CHIDI K.C. IZUWAH, SNR, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE
CONFERENCE ON INTEGRATION OF GENDER AND SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPEMENT GOALS (SDGS) PERSPECTIVES IN NIGERIA'S PUBLIC
PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS (PPPs), HOLDING ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER
2, 2019 AT THE TRANSCORP HILTON, ABUJA

PROTOCOLS

It is my singular honour and privilege to welcome you all to this august gathering organised by the Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission (ICRC) in collaboration with the Australian government. Permit me to commend the Australian government and all our sponsors and supporters for making this event a reality, as we look forward to a sustained collaboration between our organisations. We thank the Global Infrastructure Hub, the World Bank & Shelter Afrique for their technical partnership and our inimitable sponsors Income Electrix Ltd & Mainstream Energy Solutions for their generosity.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is gratifying that we are all gathered here to witness a historical event that promises to change the way and manner we develop, design, procure, operate and monitor our Public Private Partnerships (PPP) Infrastructure projects in Nigeria. This initiative was conceptualised and designed to achieve the integration of gender considerations at all levels of the PPP delivery lifecycle in Nigeria.

In this regard, high-profile speakers, key dignitaries and other notable stakeholders in the PPP ecosystem have been invited to participate in this first-

of-its-kind event, designed to deliver gender responsive PPPs and to integrate the SDGs in the core delivery mechanisms of PPPs. This means that as we plan, design, procure and manage our PPP infrastructure, we will incorporate key considerations in the lifecycle that will eliminate the present gender disparities in our PPP processes, procedures and execution for positive impact on women.

It is important to remind us all that many infrastructure projects and programmes are gender blind. It is assumed that women and men will automatically benefit from new infrastructure, without due acknowledgement to the full range of social and economic impacts, both beneficial and negative. Too often, the positive outcomes experienced by women through infrastructural projects have been unintended and unplanned. When we prepared our poster for this conference, my colleague from Yobe State Adamu Umar put this up on our staff whatsApp group “The conference banner is a true reflection of the Nigerian rural woman. The banner remains me of my sisters in rural Yobe and how they dwell for the greater part of day in the search for water at an aquifer of up to a quarter of a kilometer or 250 meters depth”.

As you all know, the ICRC (Establishment, Etc.) Act, 2005, is the principal legislation for the regulation of PPPs over Federal Government Infrastructure, and the Commission was established as a result of efforts by the government at harnessing private sector resources for the provision of public infrastructure in Nigeria. Since it went into operations, the Commission has been providing Ministries, Departments and Agencies of the Federal Government with the necessary guidance and technical support to successfully executive infrastructure projects through the PPP arrangement. We are pleased that the ICRC has over the years made steady progress with some significant contributions to the delivery of PPPs in Nigeria. *Nigeria's* Political support and commitment to PPPs was fully stressed by Mr, President during his

independence day broadcast as follows *“To maximise impact, we shall continue to increasingly welcome and encourage private capital for infrastructural development through Public Private Partnerships”*

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, we all have a collective responsibility of placing Nigeria, and indeed the continent of Africa on the path towards attaining the UN Sustainable Development Goals – especially Goal 5 on Gender Equality and Goal 9 on Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure.

One of the critical steps towards achieving that is why we are here – to begin the integrative process of incorporating gender perspectives in Nigeria’s PPPs. No doubt, this process will significantly change the way our PPPs are planned, designed, procured and managed. I would also like to inform you that this initiative is extensive and would involve carrying out disaggregated community stakeholder consultations, incorporating gender perspectives into the PPP procurement, operations and management lifecycle. All these components including the SDG goals would involve gender mainstreaming which would be integrated into PPP activities for positive impact on the well-being of women and the rest of Nigerians.

In this regard, we must apply gender sensitivity into our infrastructure policy design and delivery. Indeed, we cannot agree less with the *School of Thought* that says infrastructure is not gender neutral, and gaps in access to good infrastructure affect’s women in our society disproportionately. Women need to have a voice in setting priorities in the design and the operation of our infrastructure if it is to have the desired development impact.

Undoubtedly, our women are daily confronted with challenges that are no fault of theirs, and efforts must be made to address them from all fronts. Therefore, one

of the key goals of this initiative is to ensure that PPP infrastructure is designed to support women's economic and domestic activities. Lack of access to electricity results in household drudgery for women, due to lack of lighting, electric water pumps and refrigeration. Lack of proper and safe sanitation facilities in public spaces—especially in the context of refugee or internally displaced people's camps—increases the stigmatization of menstruation, urinary tract infections and the risk of gender-based violence. Men don't suffer such impacts from a lack of sanitation facilities.

It is our contention in the ICRC, that improving the lives and opportunities of women and girls should be an explicit objective of infrastructure and PPP projects. Well-designed, appropriately located and affordably priced infrastructure can be a powerful tool in the pursuit of gender equality. Gender should not be regarded as something requiring attention in infrastructure projects. Rather, women and girls must be considered primary clients whose satisfaction is a critical factor in ensuring infrastructure project's success and sustainability. When gender equality issues are not taken into account, women can become worse off – both absolutely and in relation to men.

Infrastructure and PPP projects should be designed to:

- Increase women's economic opportunities.
- Provide appropriate services to women.
- Actively involve and empower women.
- Encourage women to take up decision making and leadership roles.
- Improve girls and women's access to education and health care.
- Eliminate discrimination against girls and women.

At this juncture, it is my honour and privilege to welcome, Her Excellency, the First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and all our distinguished guests present here today to witness this history making event, as we enjoin you to participate actively in the activities lined up for the three-day programme.

I would like to end by quoting my sister Mrs Amina Oyagbola “Women are the largest untapped reservoir of talent in the world. By working together side by side we can build the future we deserve”. Join me sing for the Nigerian Woman and Girl Child.....Ain’t no stopping us now....we are on the move.

Thank you very much for listening. God bless you and God bless our country.