****

**OPENING ADDRESS BY BOSS MUSTAPHA, SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERATION, AT THE AFRICA PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP (PPP) SUMMIT, HELD AT THE TRANSCORP HILTON HOTEL, ABUJA ON 4TH – 5TH JULY, 2022**

**PROTOCOLS:**

I wish to express my profound gratitude for the invitation to deliver the opening address at the Africa Public-Private Partnership Network (APPPN) Summit, a network of PPP units and practitioners across the continent established out of a greater realisation and consensus of the need for collaboration between Africa PPP units for the achievement of Africa’s infrastructure development.

2. Permit me to use this medium to formally commend the organizers, the Infrastructure Concession Regulatory Commission (ICRC), and other sponsors for sustaining the PPP dialogue process over the years in the interest of Nigeria and other African countries.

3. The theme of the Summit – “*Financing Africa’s Infrastructure through PPP”,* is apt and well thought out, especially at this critical period when efforts are being intensified to sustain and deepen the process of infrastructure growth and development of the African continent through PPPs, and take it to the next level.

4. This forum has for the past few years provided unique investment opportunities in infrastructure, as well as for sharing knowledge and experiences with key policymakers, leaders in the private sector, and other strategic partners within the continent and across the globe. The APPP Network since its establishment has remained a critical platform for African public sector institutions and agencies to assess their policies and programmes for bridging the huge infrastructure gaps that exist in African economies.

5. Distinguished guest, Ladies and Gentlemen, over the years, the private sector has remained the engine for sustainable economic growth and development of economies across the globe. Today, the role of the private sector in infrastructure development and structural transformation in Africa and the rest of the world cannot be overemphasized. Many African countries have made significant moves to promote this, through restructuring of financial sectors and adoption of policies to create the enabling environment for the private sector to grow and thrive. Countries like Nigeria and South Africa have started to reap the fruits of the various policy changes that were, and are still being, initiated. Indeed, Africa’s private sector currently accounted for more than 80 percent of total production, and two-thirds of total investment. It is also responsible for over 90 percent of formal and informal employment.

6. As we all know that, Africa faces huge infrastructure gaps, but this also presents huge opportunities for private investment through public-private partnerships, especially in energy, housing, transportation, agriculture, technology, waste management, and social services and amenities. The continent requires energy, transportation, and new satellite cities to accommodate millions of people moving from rural to urban areas. Indeed, all sectors of the African economy are yearning for massive investment to fast-track infrastructure development and structural transformation that will impact the citizenry.

7. The current economic growth pattern on the continent stresses the importance of private sector investment through PPP in promoting Africa’s growth and structural transformation. Hence, identifying the private sector development as an engine of sustainable structural transformation through PPPs is of critical importance to the continent. Indeed, to release the potential of Africa, there is the need to develop and imbibe a resilient and vibrant PPP framework as a means of facilitating rapid infrastructure transformation of the continent.

8. To be able to stimulate and create a vibrant private sector on the continent and accelerate infrastructure development, a number of issues must be addressed. There is definitely the need to create a welcoming investment climate. This can be achieved by reducing risks and costs of doing business and by securing private property rights, improving governance, fighting corruption, simplifying regulations, and promoting competition. African governments must also resist pressure to erect trade barriers for intra-African trade to flourish. Currently, intra-African trade amongst African states is about 10% of total exports. This is the lowest amongst other regions in the world. But we strongly believe that with the initiative of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement the situation will drastically improve.

9. There is also the need for financial sector development by strengthening regulatory and institutional frameworks to improve governance and increase competition, improving access to finance and financial literacy, developing payment systems, and enhancing creditor rights. Similarly, access to finance by the private sector is equally very key.

10. Distinguished Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen, the public-private partnerships (PPP) have become a very viable procurement option as well as a reliable and dependable vehicle for accelerating infrastructure development and structural transformation in many economies across the globe. The advantages of PPPs over traditional procurement methods are quite profound and well documented. Suffice to say, however, that PPPs are well known for mobilizing additional sources of funding and financing for infrastructure. PPPs also help to improve project selection, subjecting assumptions to the market test of attracting private finance. Indeed, countries with relatively long PPP histories have found PPPs very useful for managing construction, with adequate maintenance of assets, better than traditional procurement, with projects coming in on time and on a budget more often. The roles of government and the private sector in economic activity and management have become clearer and more inevitable.

11. There is no doubt, given the constraints on the public budget for financing the ever-growing infrastructure needs and in keeping with the practice in other nations with similar situations, the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) has encouraged and supported the strengthening of the framework for Public-Private Partnership (PPP) policy. Furthermore, the current financial situation of Nigeria occasioned by the global COVID-19 pandemic and dwindling revenue have made this shift to PPPs more compelling than ever before. However, the government will continue to maintain that integrity and transparency must form the basis of all decisions on PPPs to ensure the right framework for effective partnership and value for money.

12. Finally, I note with interest the rich programme of activities designed for this strategic Summit. The issues lined up for discussion are critical for Africa’s infrastructure growth and development through PPPs. We, therefore, expect that the outcome of this Summit will greatly enrich the policies and programmes of Nigeria and other African economies, and place the continent in a solid position to attain the much-needed infrastructure growth and structural transformation at a much faster pace.

13. On this note, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, permit me to formally declare open the Africa PPP Network Summit. I wish you very fruitful deliberations.

Thank you for listening.