

**NIGERIA SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SOLUTIONS NETWORK (NSDSN)**  
**C/o Centre for Sustainable Development, University of Ibadan,**  
**20 Awolowo Avenue, Bodija, Ibadan.**

**An account of the Launch of the Nigerian Sustainable Development Solutions Network in**  
**Trasncorp Hilton, Abuja.**

**1. Introduction**

The formal launch of the NSDSN took place on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2013 at the Transcorp Hilton Hotel, Abuja. The event was declared open at 10:15am by the Chairman Professor A.B.O.O. Oyediran, MD (Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Ibadan).

The Nigeria Sustainable Development Solutions Network is an initiative of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network. It brings together all Federal Universities in Nigeria under one umbrella committed to working with all relevant stakeholders to pursue the sustainable development of Nigeria. The United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UNSDSN) through its leadership Council is supporting the functioning of the NSDSN.

The NSDSN, being a University driven intervention is a non-partisan organization made up of a critical mass of knowledgeable and innovative minds needed to drive the post 2015 MDGs' agenda. Nigerian Universities through their cross-disciplinary expertise, no doubt, have the needed capacity and resources for impactful engagement on these myriads of challenges which the post 2015 MDGs era is likely to manifest.

One hundred and eight (108) persons from the Universities, National Assembly, International Organisations, the Media and Research Institutes attended the launch. The President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr Goodluck Jonathan, GCFR was represented by Chief Barrister Nyesom Wike, the Hon. Minister of State for Education

In his opening remarks, the Chairman of the occasion, Professor A.B.O.O. Oyediran called on Nigerian Universities to focus their research activities on the challenges that face Nigeria and the African continent in the area of sustainable development. He also urged Nigerian Universities to make their researches robust and ensure that all stakeholders particularly, other organizations outside the University system participate and contribute actively to research and development efforts.

In his preliminary remarks on behalf of the Directors of NSDSN, Professor Labode Popoola emphasised the need for the launch, and why Nigerian Universities should collaborate. He said gone were the days when researchers stayed in their cocoons. He admonished researchers to think out of the box by working across disciplinary boundaries. Professor Ikenna Onyido, Director, NSDSN provided a background to the NSDSN and outlined its objectives. He also proposed a paradigm shift and a new focus which calls for the involvement of staff and students in solving real life problems and the incorporation of local experiences into Universities curriculum development. The new focus also would ensure that Universities remain relevant by partnering with government at all levels and with businesses and civil society organizations to ensure that solutions are provided to today's problems, in order to secure the future and opportunities of generations of Nigerians.

## **2. Goodwill Messages**

- 1) Honorable Alhassan Ado Doguwa, Chairman, House of Representatives committee on MDGs, promised the support of the National Assembly for NSDSN through its legislative and over-sight functions. He assured NSDSN of active collaboration between the National Assembly and the Network in the attainment of its laudable objectives.
- 2) The UNDP Resident Representative, Mr. Daouda Toure represented by Ade Jekoetje, lauded the launch of the NSDSN as timely as it represents a pro-active and pre-emptive action on post-MDGs challenges as they affect Nigeria. She also lauded the NSDSN for providing the best practical solutions that Nigeria needs to tackle sustainable development challenges after the MDGs era. She called on all stakeholders and government at all levels to support the NSDSN initiative.
- 3) Senator Sola Steven Akinyede , emphasized on the inclusion of issues of sustainable development in the curriculum of Nigerian Universities. He expressed his gratitude to the NSDSN and called on it to involve the youth in the drive towards sustainable development.
- 4) Senator Bob Effiong Dickson, Pro-Chancellor, University of Benin, expressed his appreciation at the objectives and functions of the NSDSN and extended his goodwill to the Network.
- 5) Professor Joseph Atubokiki Ajienka, Vice-Chancellor, University of Port Harcourt on behalf of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, extolled the evolution of NSDSN and commended the effort of the consortium.

## **3. Keynote Address**

The highlight of the occasion was the keynote address by Professor Jeffrey D. Sachs, Director of the SDSN and special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Sustainable Development. He provided a pictorial illustration of sustainable development challenges in Nigeria and all over the world to demonstrate the magnitude and complexity of the sustainable development challenges. The illustrations ranged from flooding, erosion to desertification among several others. He outlined the main features of sustainable development to include: economic development, social inclusiveness, environmental sustainability and good governance. He explained the reason behind the choice of universities to drive the Sustainable Development Solutions Network and to train the next generation of sustainable development leaders.

## **4. Supporting Remarks and Formal Launching**

- (a) An address was delivered by the Senior Special Assistant to the President on MDGs, Dr. Precious Kalamba Gbeneol. She gave a brief account of government's effort at achieving the MDGs in Nigeria.
- (b) The Minister for State of Education, Mr. Nyesom Wike who represented President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, also delivered the President's address, reporting on the extent to which government had gone in achieving the MDGs. He pointed out that Nigeria was leading other African nations in the attainment of the MDGs. He also touched on government's transformation agenda particularly, in the power sector. He thereafter, formally launched the NSDSN.

## **5. Closing Remarks**

The closing remarks were made by the Chairman, Professor A. B.O.O. Oyediran, while the vote of thanks was moved by the Deputy Secretary General, Committee of Vice-Chancellors, Mr. A.O. Adigun.

## 6. Conclusion

At the post-launch meeting between NSDSN members and Professor Jeffery D. Sachs at the same venue, the following decisions were taken:

- i. A date should be set for a conference in 2014
- ii. Each University should provide a sustainable development account of the State where it is domiciled at the 2014 conference in order to build a data bank on sustainable development for Nigeria.
- iii. Universities should get students to work on sustainable development issues.
- iv. NSDSN should be represented at global sustainable development processes.
- v. Universities should be part of Federal Government initiatives from concept to implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- vi. An immediate task of the network should be the actualization of a proposed comprehensive study on the Niger Delta and its clean up.

## 7. Appreciation

The NSDSN is grateful to the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr Goodluck Jonathan, GCFR, Hon. Minister of State for Education, Members of National Assembly, International Development Agencies, Vice Chancellors, and all who participated to make the formal launch of the network a huge success.

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