

**AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP  
NIGERIA COUNTRY OFFICE**



**SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR, AFRICAN  
DEVELOPMENT BANK, ABUJA NIGERIA AT THE ENABLE YOUTH  
WORKSHOP HELD AT THE TRANSCORP HILTON HOTEL, ABUJA  
DATED 21<sup>ST</sup>-22<sup>ND</sup> APRIL, 2016**

Your Excellency the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Rural development  
of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Audu Ogbeh,

Honourable Solomon DALONG, Minister of Youths and Sports of the Federal  
Republic of Nigeria,

Hon. Dr. Moses ZINNAH, Minister of Agriculture of Liberia,

H.E. SAAH N'TOW, Minister of Youth of Liberia,

H.E. Monsieur Sidi Tiémoko TOURE, Ministre de la Promotion de la Jeunesse,  
de l'Emploi des Jeunes et du Service Civique de la Cote d'Ivoire,

Honorable Alieu Jammeh, Minister of Youths of the Gambia,

H.E. Mr. Toure Nee Kone Maman, Ambassador of Cote d'Ivoire to Nigeria,

H.E. Mr. Lovemore Mazemo, Ambassador of Zimbabwe to Nigeria,

Mrs. Zouera Youssoufou, CEO Dangote Foundation,

Mme. Madam Abimbola Adebakin, COO Tony Elumelu Foundation,

Representatives of Development Partners,

Colleagues from African development Bank

Distinguished invitees,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the African Development Bank and the Nigeria Country Office in particular, I am glad to welcome you all to this very important history making-event, i.e. the ENABLE Youth Design Workshop for Africa. Let me thank you for making out time to be physically present at this gathering in spite of other equally demanding and important assignments.

The ENABLE Youth Program is a fall-out of the Dakar High Level Conference organised by the Bank, which was held from 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> October, 2015. One of the key high points of the conference was the Bank's decision to set up a Youth Employment Financing Facility. In this connection, the ENABLE Youth Program is one of the instruments promoted by the AfDB in collaboration with IITA and other partners, to support youth entrepreneurship and employment opportunities in agriculture.

In the few months, post-Dakar, several countries have expressed keen interest in participating in the ENABLE Youth Program. These countries have submitted requests to work with the Bank in collaboration with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), and other partners to design and roll out country-specific ENABLE youth programs.

The broad objective of this workshop is to design the ENABLE Youth Program for Africa. The program is aimed at addressing Graduate Youth unemployment on a sustainable basis.

Africa has the world's youngest population, but has at the same time an ageing population of farmers, which is not good for a continent striving to be food self-sufficient, and aiming to eradicate malnutrition by 2025. Statistics show that there are more 360 million young Africans between the ages of 15 – 35 years and that

number is expected to double by 2045. The struggle to feed these growing young population and to meet their aspirations for decent jobs is a challenge. Other challenges confronting African youth are large urban populations, high urbanization rates, high youth unemployment, crime and the tendency to restiveness.

It is also true that currently, about 60 percent of Africa's unemployed are young adults. Agriculture, which employs over 70% of the people of Africa offers a great potential for youth employment and eliminating hunger and malnutrition if well harnessed. Also, with the current drive by most Governments to reduce overdependence on the oil sector, diversification of the economy through Agriculture will create more jobs for our youths in Africa.

In the agricultural sector, lack of access to land, finance, markets, technologies and practical skills are barriers to youth participation. So, too, is the perception of farming and agribusiness as an unattractive career path, which is characterised by hard labour, long hours and poor returns on investment, and limited social recognition.

The Bank has noticed that every year, thousands of youths graduate from the University, but only a small fraction get to be employed by Government and the private sector, the rest engaged themselves in informal sector, while some get exposed to social vices that have created untold hardship to parents, the country and the society at large.

Let me use this opportunity to inform you that in Nigeria, the AfDB in partnership with IITA, is working with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development to explore opportunities for youth in agribusiness development. One key outcome is the proposed USD 300 million ENABLE Youth program

which is under preparation. This program will be a powerful mechanism for empowering graduate youth and directing them to careers in agribusiness based upon "Agripreneurs" (Agricultural Entrepreneurs) concept, where youths will be placed and supported within agribusiness incubation centres. Following their graduation from the incubation centres, youth will be supported with financing, in soft loans, to start their own businesses.

By the end of this ENABLE Youth Program Design Workshop, participants will be able to (i) build an evidence-based understanding of the ENABLE Youth Program Concept among key stakeholders including governments across the continent, development partners, private sector and finance institutions; (ii) through a tailored approach, develop a common strategic framework for the promotion of youth in agriculture; (iii) elaborate innovative financing mechanisms to fund youth in agri-business; and (iv) establish an ENABLE YOUTH in Africa network to facilitate the exchange and sharing of best practices and experiences.

Therefore at the end of the workshop, we should amongst others have a better understanding and buy-in of stakeholders into the ENABLE Youth program. In that note, I wish you very fruitful deliberations, and a successful stay in Abuja.

Thank you for listening.