



ADDRESS BY MR. BISI ONASANYA, GMD/CEO, FIRST BANK OF NIGERIA PLC, AT THE 3RD AES ANNUAL CONFERENCE, NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (NIIA), VICTORIA ISLAND, LAGOS, JUNE 28, 2011

PROTOCOL:

I am pleased to join you at this third edition of the AES Annual Conference organized by the Academy of Entrepreneurial Studies Nigeria, an institution committed to engendering growth in the Nigerian economy. It certainly takes a lot of effort to gather a pool of outstanding experts and an equally distinguished audience representing a wide array of stakeholders in the Nigerian economy, to discuss and proffer solutions to vital issues bordering on our nation's development. The high quality of this august gathering is indicative of our collective desire to foster the desired economic landscape. This Conference is, therefore, laudable and deserving of every support.

FirstBank's participation as lead sponsor of the AES National Conference under the FirstBank Impact Series initiative is in sync with our tradition of fostering thought leadership, engendering developmental policy shift and facilitating financial inclusion. The theme for this edition of the Conference which is, "Entrepreneurship, Infrastructure and Health – Panacea for Nigeria's Economic Renaissance," is in consonance with our Bank's support for capacity building, entrepreneurship and leadership for national development. This discourse is particularly opportune as it is taking place at a time when the Federal Government and various State Governments are crafting the agenda for their new tenures of office. I trust that our leaders are open to new and refreshing ideas on nation building. We urge the various governments to give the recommendations from this Conference the deserved attention.

FirstBank is committed to promoting economic growth and development, especially through the provision of infrastructure for rapid industrialization. Our Bank has championed project syndications in the country and continues to fund projects that contribute significantly to national development, which cut across the manufacturing, construction, telecommunications, aviation, marine, oil and gas as well as education sectors.

As a foremost promoter of social responsibility, FirstBank has been at the vanguard of providing invaluable support for diverse sectors of the economy. In capacity building, for example, FirstBank has fostered education through the provision of structured interventions like the

FirstBank Professorial Endowment in Nigerian Universities, established to complement the efforts of the government in education and the development of infrastructure in Nigerian universities. In promoting the enterprise culture, we are collaborating with the Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE), Nigeria and the Nigeria Leadership Initiative (NLI) on entrepreneurial development. Also, we are partnering with FATE Foundation on a business leadership radio programme aimed at building entrepreneurial capacity for aspiring and budding entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

These interventions, among several others, represent FirstBank's commitment to engaging in Public Private Partnerships to develop the Nigerian economy. Hence, our sponsorship of this important conference. We are equally poised to persistently provide dependably dynamic financial services to our teeming customers.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, I salute the leadership of Academy for Entrepreneurial Studies, Nigeria led by the President, Dr. Ausbeth Ajagu, MFR, and the AES Conference Organising Committee led by Engineer Godwin Omene, for organizing a far-reaching Conference series like this to seek avenues for galvanising ideas to impact national transformation. I also appreciate the patriotism of the erudite speakers who have committed to sharing their invaluable experience and thoughts with us today.

Indeed, the large turnout of participants from across the public and private sectors is indicative of the high esteem in which you hold this important forum to discuss issues germane to national development. I wish you fruitful deliberations even as I reaffirm FirstBank's commitment to continuously contribute to national development in all ramifications.

May God bless you and may God bless Nigeria.

Bisi Onasanya

GMD/CEO, First Bank of Nigeria Plc

June 28, 2011