

Promoting Quality Civic Education in the Country Programme

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Distinguished guests,

I am honoured to have the opportunity to speak before you today on the important issue of education.

Education is at the heart of sustainable long term growth and development. It is the foundation upon which we build the future of our nation and prepare our children to face the challenges of a constantly evolving world. As the world becomes more globalized, Nigerian society has become more stratified. Political, ethnic, tribal, and religious divides have become more pronounced. From Boko Haram, to the Joint Niger Delta Liberation Front, an insular sense of identity is at the heart of conflict in our Nation.

Failings in our education system have played a significant role in hardening divisions. While the world becomes more interconnected, Nigerian education has become smaller, not bigger. Whereas in my day students were exposed to different religions in school; today religious studies classes are segregated – Muslim students learn Islam, while Christian students focus on Christianity. The National Curriculum in Nigeria is broad and robust on paper, however, it is clear that it is not being implemented effectively.

Current interventions in the education sector often focus on infrastructure. As necessary as these efforts are, there needs to be a greater focus on the content and quality of the education

provided. To effect significant and sustainable change, infrastructure development must be coupled with enhancements to teaching methodology and lesson content. Building the capacity of teachers is essential to improving the quality of education and the academic experiences of students. The key is to provide children with the tools to think for themselves. To do so, we must instil a sense of commitment in teachers and ensure that they have the skills to bring the best out of children.

Education plays a crucial role in national development, giving children the knowledge and skills required to build a more open, tolerant and resilient society. However, providing quality education alone is not enough. Civic education should be incorporated across teaching, building understanding amongst students on their rights and responsibilities, the duties and powers of the state, and political and civic decision making. Quality civic education is vital, and can help to define and strengthen national identity, as well as foster citizenship that prepares young Nigerians to take up the mantle of visionary leadership.

In the words of Martin Luther King Jr.: “The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education.” Let us work together to build a robust education system, which emphasizes critical thinking, shared identity, civic duty and our core national values. I am encouraged by the calibre of people and organizations in this room. And I believe that together, we can help to find the solutions for the Nigerian education system.

Thank you very much.