

Namaste,

Hon'ble Governor of Edo State, H.E. Godwin Obaseki, representative of MOFA in Lagos, State Government officers, Colleagues of Diplomatic Corps, Business leaders and our dearest citizens,

2. Welcome to the Republic Day Reception of the Consulate General of India. I hope you are enjoying yourselves. I am now present with my speech and shall be grateful for your kind attention.

3. Today, we are celebrating Republic Day of India. We declared ourselves a Republic on 26 January 1950.

4. You may be aware that I presented my Commission of Appointment recently to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Federal Government of Nigeria has assured cooperation. This office has now been upgraded to the Consulate General of India.

5. India and Nigeria share the common ideals of coexistence and tolerance among all ethnic and religious communities. Unity and diversity is the Mantra for both countries. There have been commonalities of views on bilateral, regional and global levels. India believes in Nigeria and acknowledges its strength. Friend Nigeria has, therefore, been invited to the upcoming G-20 summit under the presidency of India.

6. India, the mother of democratic ideals and the largest democracy of the world, perceive democracy to be the most suited form of governance for a pluralistic societies. Successful elections are thus of utmost importance. An election is a collective call to wisdom and a collective call to action and decides fate of nations. Nigeria is in election mode for Federal and many state Governments. We wish them a peaceful and successful election and electioneering.

7. India Nigeria business relationship is strong. The cumulative investment of India is to the tune of 19 billion USD and the bilateral trade is around 15 billion USD per year. In my short stint, I have witnessed three major trade delegations to Lagos.

8. India is an attractive destination for studies and medical treatment for Nigerians. NIMASA is sending more than 150 students to study marine engineering in India. Around 5000 students from Nigeria has received 100% scholarship for attending distance learning degree courses from reputed institutions of India. Several hundred students receive Study in India scholarship.

9. The Government of India offers hundreds of slots for Nigeria under India Technical and Economic Cooperation programme. These are very sophisticated short term training programme imparted by premier institutions of India and fully funded by the Government of India.

India also offers world class treatment at very affordable cost.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

10. This is an exciting time in the history of India. The period from 2022 to 2047 has been termed as Amrit Kal, auspicious period, as India completes 100 years of independence in 2047. India wishes to take development to the next level from the basic needs of Roti, Kapra aur makan i.e. Food, cloth and shelter. We need to connect every village with roads, every family to have a bank account, every eligible person having health cards and every household to have cooking gas connection. Today, India is the fifth economy in the world and trying to increase our GDP to US Dollar 5 trillion economy.

11. How are we going to achieve this dream to make ourselves a self-sufficient country with ease of doing business and having a best quality of life in 2047?

12. It would require momentous efforts by us all. Every sector of the economy has to pitch in to increase productivity and generation of employment for all. As you know, India is the third largest ecosystem of startups with 65 unicorns. Number of startups in the country had increased from 452 in 2016 to 84,012 till November 2022. The country has seen exponential growth in startups. In last seven years, the

Venture capital funding to Indian startups has increased from \$5 Bn in to \$42 Bn.

13. The reform and incentive given to the mobile manufacturing has been very successful. India is now the world's second largest mobile phone manufacturer. The government estimates that mobile phone production is likely to grow from \$30 billion in FY21 to \$133 billion by FY26. I am very happy to inform you that Indian Institute of Technology, Madras has successfully launched made in India mobile operating system namely BharOS just two days ago.

14. The automobile and allied industry is another success story, and I expect the industry to reach \$300 bn by 2026. Export of automobiles registered a positive growth of 35.9%. Defence and space sectors also is on rapid growth path. The space industry of India may reach to the 10 % global share from the existing 3 % by 2030. Similarly, the need and aspiration of self sufficiency in Defence sector augurs well for the country.

The strength of our pharmaceutical sectors and vaccine manufacturing has stood the test of even Covid time. Nigeria is also a sizable importers of Indian medicines.

15. India is moving rapidly towards digital economy with introduction of the United Payment Interface, and the emergence of e-wallet players. In the financial year 2022, over 72 billion digital transactions were recorded across the country. Digitization is expected to bring in transparency and reduce the incidence of corruption to the bare minimum.

16. We do not want economic dividends by relegating the environment. India supports the sustainable development and has taken a lead role in International Solar Alliance. Ninety-two countries have signed and ratified. Headquartered in India, this is an alliance of 112 sunshine countries to provide a framework to harness solar energy for the Global good. India has an ambitious target of 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030. Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi announced Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for environment), to

bring individual behaviours at the forefront of the global climate action narrative. Mission LiFE envisions replacing the prevalent 'use-and-dispose' economy with a circular economy defined by mindful and deliberate utilization. The Mission plans to create and nurture a global network of individuals, namely 'Pro-Planet People' (P3), who will have a shared commitment to adopt and promote environmentally friendly lifestyles.

17. India is ready and confident to take additional global responsibilities. India has come out as a clear and strong voice of global south. In the recently concluded voice of Global summit 125 countries took part. HE President Buhari also spoke on this virtual summit and advocated the idea of better flow of FDI in developing countries.

18. More than 200 meetings are planned in India during G20 Presidency. It is estimated that the voice of global south would be duly amplified. The G20 theme of "One Earth, One Family, One Future" under India's presidency in 2023 adopts the core tenets of humanism. During its Presidency, India will aspire to deliver outcomes in areas of critical interest such as integrating the climate and development agenda, accelerating progress towards achieving the SDG 2030 mandate, furthering development cooperation, supporting small and marginal farmers, enhancing food security and nutrition, addressing global skill gaps, women empowerment, promotion of blue economy and coastal sustainability, digital health solutions, green hydrogen and tech-enabled learning. PM Modi gave a call for 4Rs - 'Respond, Recognize, Respect and Reform' in context of various priorities of the developing world.

19. India's global outreach during the CoVID times was exceptional. Once the turbulence of CoVID settled, India supplied pharmaceuticals items to several countries. India actively initiated efforts to vaccinate its 1.3 billion population and also did Vaccine Maitri or Vaccine Friendship. Under this humanitarian project, the government provided around 200 million vaccines to over 98 countries. They sent approximately 10 percent of these vaccines as gift. India gifted 200,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines to the UN peacekeepers for

distribution to all peacekeeping missions. Nigeria was also beneficiary of this vaccine friendship.

20. The unanimous adoption by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) of the resolution to declare 2023 as the International Year of Millets, a proposal sponsored by India and supported by over 70 nations, underlines the international community's support to recognise the importance and benefits of these grains for the global food system. India treat Millets as the panacea for global food shortage and food inflation. On 28 January 2023 our High Commission is organizing an event in collaboration with State Government of Nigeria.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

21. I am sure all of you have visited the stalls put up by our community members to showcase the diversity of India. Indian community of Nigeria in general and Lagos in particular is well organized and professional. The non-residents Indians and overseas citizens of India, we call them Pravasis, from Nigeria attended the just concluded Pravasi Bhartiya Conclave in India. Approximately 10 prominent citizens from Nigeria participated. The theme of the conclave was "**Diaspora: Reliable Partners for India's Progress in Amrit Kaal**". India sees Non-resident Indians and Overseas citizens as partners of development.

22. Indians working here are considered as the "most preferred community" due to their expertise, hard work, sense of discipline, law abiding and peace loving nature. There are few thousand Indians estimated to be living in Nigeria, some of whom are with us today. I thank them for their contribution to the development of their chosen country. I am honored to note that Indian owned or controlled companies are among the biggest employer of Nigerians. I am confident that with continued support of the the Federal and state Governments, friendship between the people of the Nigeria and India will continue to flourish and achieve new heights.

23. I would also like to take this opportunity to especially thank the Governor of Edo State, HE Godwin Obaseki for the excellent

hospitality extended to us during our visit to the Benin City. Benin City is the cradle of civilization of this region. I was extremely impressed with the futuristic ideas executed by the Edo State under the leadership of the Governor. I would especially like to mention their two initiatives. The First is Decagon where resident students are trained in industry specific skills like coding and information technology. Students are awarded Diploma after successful completion of the short term course. They are paid stipends to meet their daily needs. The unique feature of the project is that you are required to reimburse the training cost once you get employment. This is a great programme as it helps when you need it and you should give back once you are earning. The Second initiative was the visit to innovation lab. Here also students are learning the skills in media like acting, directing, photography, dance, drama, music and other fields of film making. Facilities are excellent and they can earn their livelihood from this acquired skills. The river port project just concluded between the Edo State and the Belgian Government is also very commendable. Kudos to the Governor for the excellent work being done in the Edo state.

24. I assure the Governor that the Consulate has made inquiries about sister city/ sister state arrangement with India and will pursue further.

I thank HE the Governor of Edo State for taking time off from his busy schedule to grace today's celebration.

Dhanyavad/ Thank you