

## **Pranam! Namaste,**

Respected High Commissioner Sir, Hon'ble Jermaine Sanwo Olu, Executive Assistant to the Governor of Lagos State and Head of the office of diaspora affairs. He is representing the Governor of Lagos State, H.E. Babajide Sanwo Olu. I also recognize the presence of other dignitaries includingg Amb. Oludare E. Glowosele, Director of Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Lagos Office, State Government officers, Colleagues of Diplomatic Corps, Business leaders, friends of India and our dearest citizens,

Welcome to the Republic Day Reception of the Consulate General of India. Our Constitution, adopted on 26 January 1950, is a testament to our commitment to creating a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic republic.

Last week, Minister of External Affairs of India, Dr. S. Jaishankar was in Nigeria and his visit has further strengthened our bilateral relationship. In a visit of less than 24 hours to Lagos, the Foreign Minister had a West African Ambassadors conference, a lecture in NIIA on the subject of resetting the Global Agenda: The role of India and the Global South. He interacted with Indian and Nigerian business leaders and also spoke to the Indian diaspora urging them to be a living bridge that connects India to the world.

The Minister reiterated that India is ready and confident to take additional global responsibilities. India has come out as a clear and strong voice of the global south. In the recently concluded G-20 Presidency, India amplified the voice of the global south.

The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, HE Bola Ahmed Tinubu had a very successful visit to New Delhi participating in the G-20 summit and investment meeting with Indian businessmen. A total of USD 14 Billion worth of investment was pledged. The India way prevailed in the successful negotiation of the G-20 and the outcome was a strong leader's declaration document. All present here would acknowledge that India showed professionalism and finest ideals of diplomacy to secure this outcome document unanimously. Some of the important outcomes are:-

The peaceful resolution of conflicts, and efforts to address crises by diplomacy and dialogue. Today's era is not of war.

Better management of global financial institutions

Improved access to the digital medium and development of public digital infrastructure

Increased integration of issues and views of developing countries

Inclusion of African Union in the G-20

Bridging the gender gap and effective participation of women in economic decision making.

Recognizing this, the Government of India has passed the legislation for reserving one third of seats in the national Parliament and State assemblies for women. This is an epochal legislation for women empowerment.

India and Nigeria have a very vibrant business relationship. The cumulative investment of Indian business in this country is more than 27 billion Dollars and the bilateral trade is around 13 billion Dollars per year. There are more than 150 Indian companies operating in Nigeria. India is ready for cooperation with cutting edge technology like Universal Payment Interface, indigenous 5G system etc. Nigerian companies are up and coming in the Fintech field and they can harness the innovative fintech ecosystem of our country.

India has been assisting the global south in capacity building. The Government of India offers hundreds of slots for Nigeria under India Technical and Economic Cooperation programme. These are very sophisticated short term training programmes imparted by premier institutions of India and fully funded by the Government of India.

India wants economic dividends and also wishes to protect the environment. India supports sustainable development and has taken a lead role in the International Solar Alliance. Ninety-seven 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. Nigeria is a part of this collaborative

initiative. India has an ambitious target of 500 GW of renewable energy by 2030.

Big canvas of development is being set up by giving utmost importance to nation building. The number of medical colleges have increased from 387 to 706 in the last five years. Number of operational airports has increased from 74 to 137 and the Metro rail network has also increased exponentially catering to the need of stress free urban transport.

At the conclusion of Amrit Kaal in 2047 when India completes 100 years of independence, we wish to get to the level of development where basic needs of citizens are fully met and they have a good quality of life. We have been successful in connecting every village with roads and electricity, now every family has a bank account, health card has been issued to eligible persons and every household has cooking gas connection. Today, India is the fifth economy in the world and trying to increase our GDP to US Dollar 5 trillion. India's market cap is now at 4.1 trillion US Dollars and is ranked fourth in the world.

India is looking at futuristic technologies and is a hub of innovation. Artificial intelligence, robotics, chip manufacturing and chip designing are gaining strong foothold. The need and aspiration of self sufficiency in the Defence sector augurs well for the country. Recently, there have been approval and commissioning of indigenous designs of rifles and even drones. Digital payments and e-commerce have also taken strong roots in India. Last year over 114 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. Digital infrastructure is also supporting tax compliance and showing high buoyancy. The biggest hallmark of Indian digital infrastructure is the low cost which is acting as a catalyst and guiding many innovations.

India offers world class treatment at a very affordable cost. I have witnessed the belief of Nigerians in Indian doctors and Indian Hospitals. Additionally, India is also supplying quality medicines

including several life saving drugs to Nigeria. It is commendable to note that many Indian companies are manufacturing drugs in Nigeria and this field is expanding. India is termed as the pharmacy of the world and we are proud of it. However, the Government of India is prescribing policies to make India self-sufficient in Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs). Furthermore, India's health care system has seen progress, with initiatives like the Ayushman Bharat program striving to provide affordable healthcare to millions.

India has made incredible achievements in the past year in the realm of space exploration last year. The first, the successful Chandrayaan-2 mission marked a significant milestone for the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). India could land, maneuver and send data by using the moon rover. The Second is the first mission to explore the Sun. The primary objective of the Aditya-L1 mission is to study the outermost layer of the Sun, known as the corona, and understand the various phenomena occurring in the Sun's atmosphere. It has reached Lagrange point and the spacecraft is healthy and working.

I welcome the representative of the Lagos State once again. They are working great for continuous development. Lagos State has constructed over 160 roads, built new fire stations, and health facilities. The inauguration of the Lagos Film city will help show Nigeria's creativity. Lagos State has also completed the Lekki Deep Sea Port which is the largest sea port in Nigeria and one of the largest in Africa. This will be a game changer in the upcoming years. The commendable reforms initiated by New Nigeria are poised to stabilize the Nigerian economy, fostering a robust business environment. All of these achievements are notable, and will help enrich the relationship between India and Nigeria.

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 a 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 employers of Nigerians. I am confident that with continued support of the Federal and state Governments, friendship between the people of Nigeria and India will continue to flourish and achieve new heights.

I thank H E Jermain Sanwo Olu, the representative of the Governor of Lagos State to grace today's celebration. I would also like to thank the High Commissioner who decided to celebrate this year with the dignitaries falling under the Consular jurisdiction of the Consulate General of India, Lagos.

**Dhanyavad/ Thank you**

**Jai Hind**