

**Welcome Address by the Executive Secretary of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund Arc. Sonny S.T. Echono at the Annual Strategic Planning Workshop Organized for TETFund Beneficiary Institutions at the TETFund Auditorium on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to this annual interaction, as heads of beneficiary institutions of the Fund. I am truly delighted and do sincerely appreciate your prompt response to our invitation despite the rather short notice. This clearly confirms your commitment and resolve, which is the same as mine and my staff at the Fund, to do what is needful to improve our tertiary education subsector for national development.

This important meeting is an avenue to receive feedback and evaluate the performance of our intervention lines. Experience has shown that such interaction between the Fund and our beneficiary institutions affords the opportunity to share thoughts and ideas and has indeed helped stimulate debates on how best we can improve the Fund's intervention lines in various institutions across the country. It also helps us to deliver on our mandate in a more effective and efficient manner.

I am pleased to inform you that Mr. President has approved the 2023 disbursement guidelines in the total sum of **N320,345,040, 835**. (Three hundred and twenty billion, three hundred & forty-five million, Forty thousand, eight hundred & thirty five Naira only) On the basis of this, each university shall get, for the Year 2023 intervention cycle, the total sum of **N1,154,732,133.00**. This comprises **N954,732,123.00** as annual direct disbursement and **N200million** as zonal intervention. Similarly, each Polytechnic shall get **N699,344,867.00** comprising of **N569,344,807.00** as annual direct disbursement and **N130million** as zonal intervention, while each College of education shall get **N800,862,602** comprising of **N670,862,602.00** as annual direct disbursement and **N130million** as zonal intervention. It is pertinent to note that this represents the highest disbursement to each beneficiary institution, since inception of the Fund.

I should also place on record that the fortunes of the Nigerian tertiary education sector improved significantly under the Buhari administration. Between 2015 to date (8 years), the total sum of **N1,702trillion** has been disbursed as EDT collection to public universities, polytechnics and colleges of education compared to a total sum of **N1,249trillion** disbursed from the inception of the Fund in 1993 up to 2014 (21 years). This remarkable success is due to sustained efforts at expanding and increasing efficiency of collection of the Education Tax and added impetus is the gracious approval of Mr. President for an increase in education tax from 2.0% to 2.5% in the year 2021. We are grateful to all the key actors, notably Malam Adamu Adamu, Minister of Education, Mrs. Zainab Ahmed Shamsuna, Minister of Finance, the Chairmen and members of the Senate and House Committees on Finance and my brother Mohammed Nami, Chairman. Federal Inland Revenue Services (FIRS).

May I also seize this opportunity to appeal to Mr. President, as a parting gift to the education sector and a fitting finale to his manifest desire to improve education funding in the country, for his ascent to the Finance Act 2023, which provides for a further increase in education tax from 2.5% to 3%.

You will recall that at the Year 2022 workshop, several crucial issues were discussed. It provided me with the opportunity to listen to several complaints and problems facing several beneficiary institutions and we were able to respond appropriately to many of the issues raised and committed to looking into those that required our careful examination and review. Among some of the problems discussed were the issues of abandoned or non-completion of projects in institutions which constituted a serious challenge to the Board of Trustees in ensuring allocative efficiency and value for disbursed funds.

We have since reviewed our disbursement process on the internal audit clearance requirement and also engaged on a one- on- one meeting with affected institutions with the aim of resolving this persistent problem. Furthermore, we organized a workshop

anchored by the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) to assist beneficiary institutions. Speedily access, procure and complete their projects. I want to believe that these measures have improved the situation, as I reiterate our agreement with the Bureau of Public Procurement (BPP) that all our intervention projects should be procured through open competitive bidding to expand opportunities for participation and enhance efficient, timely and cost-effective project delivery. Beneficiary institutions are therefore advised to advertise their procurements early and avoid dilatory tactics in their procurement process.

During the Year 2022 workshop, I also took time to discuss my deep interest in the promotion of research and innovation in our tertiary institutions, and to develop the information and communication technology (ICT) capacities of our Institutions. The payment delays associated with academic staff training and development, were also discussed and some suggestions and feedback were taken as a result of which we now make payments on tuitions fees for scholars directly to the training institutions. We also engaged you on matters related to manuscript and book development and are glad to say that this intervention line has improved appreciably. We shall in the coming months propose a more robust and detailed interactive workshop with you to discuss further on these and other important issues relating to the intervention lines and projects with the aim of a better sensitization and nimbleness in implementation.

Distinguished heads of institutions, the Year 2023, just like the previous year [2022] remains a promising year that has seen tremendous improvement in the collection of education taxes. As we distribute the year 2023 allocation letters today, I am pleased to inform you that we have kept our promise to constantly improve our operations and reduce processing. As I have stated in several fora, my commitment to and prioritization of the knowledge component of our interventions has not waned. This you will see in our deliberate provisions for entrepreneurship and innovation hubs, research laboratories and modern demonstration farms, capacity building

on research, ICT and other related fields in our special and designated intervention lines. We are reviewing and evaluating all TETFund Centers of Excellence with a view to repositioning them to function effectively as envisioned at their establishment. My staff shall be visiting all institutions with TETFund centers of Excellence to assess their needs and requirements for optimal performance.

Special provisions have also been made for disaster recovery and the provision of security infrastructure in our schools.

I want to remind you of the significance of this workshop once again and urge you to utilize this opportunity to discuss some of the issues affecting your institutions and our interventions or operations. I will welcome and cherish all contributions from participants and heads of institutions present at this workshop including constructive criticism where necessary. I urge you to make the workshop as interactive as possible.

As I conclude I want to sincerely appreciate, the efforts of the Federal Inland Revenue Service, who have been valuable partners stakeholder in the delivery of our mandate and particularly for the increase in collection which surpassed the target for the Year 2022. I believe that they would do even more for the Year 2023 collection as we look forward to our desired goal of achieving the **N500 billion** Education tax collection in the nearest future. I call on all heads of institutions here present to ensure the smooth, timely, judicious, and effective implementation and utilization of the year 2023 intervention allocation, to make the much needed impact in our respective tertiary institutions.

I also seize the opportunity to register our debt of gratitude to Malam Adamu Adamu for his leadership, trust and prompt consideration of our requests. The Sector shall remain eternally grateful for his eager, dedicated and selfless service as Minister of Education.

I would also like to express our appreciation to the Heads of our regulatory agencies, National Universities Commission (NUC),

National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), for their sustained support and indeed to all the staff of the Fund for keeping faith with our reform measures.

It is our fervent hope that sustained improvements in performance across all sectors and by all actors in the education family will deliver a robust and functioning system which shall be an enduring legacy of the present Administration.

**Thank you for your kind attention and God Bless.**