

**REMARKS OF EMERITUS PROFESSOR N. M. GADZAMA, CHAIRMAN  
OF THE COMMITTEE, TO THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE  
TETFUND STANDING COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH AND  
DEVELOPMENT (R & D) ON 24<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2020.**

**1. PROTOCOL**

**2. INTRODUCTION**

It is with great appreciation and thanks that we welcome the respected Honourable Minister of Education, Malam Adamu Adamu for inaugurating this important Committee this morning. It is our hope that this action of the Honourable Minister will reverberate in the history of Nigeria and in the annals of future development of the country. It is also our belief that countries will enhance advancement of their country's quality economy and good standard of living of their people if they invest heavily in human resources especially in knowledge, innovation and imaginative thinking of their people. Nigeria can do the same.

We must offer recommendations for fast tracking development in all aspects of human endeavour and knowledge in Nigeria. As a result of the establishment of Research and Development Foundation in this country gives us renewed hope for fast tracking development. That is why the high calibre membership of the Committee gives us hope for a new beginning with confidence, especially as notable Professors, and other experts from Federal Ministries and their Agencies, including the Labour Unions are involved. Indeed the preliminary work by TETFund under the able leadership of Executive Secretary- Professor S. E. Bogoro has been thorough and most adequate for the immediate take off of the Committee. A lot of thought had also gone into constituting the Committee to include great Nigerians in the local environment and in the Diaspora to add value

to our work. Given the expertise assembled here, I have the honour to accept the responsibilities bestowed upon us in this historic assignment

**3. AGENDA FOR THE COMMITTEE IN 2020**

**In the field of manufacturing and agriculture, the United States of America did not link science and industry by accident. In the 1800s the US legislature passed farm bills and provided funding to ensure that Universities researched into technologies that would push industrial and agricultural enterprises to improve ways of production, leading to phenomenal growth in their economy especially as they developed new methods of profitable farming and manufacturing; making the country fast track its journey to prosperity. Nigeria MUST do the same. Exploiting the link between research and commercial success will galvanize the now dormant giant led by the academia to embrace the responsibility of diversification and transformation of the economy of the country. The ability of our academics to patent and get copyrights on inventions will also protect them from exploitation by unauthorized individuals (both foreign and domestic) and put our best and brightest minds to creating out-of-the-box local solutions when they now know their research will be funded and that they will reap the royalty benefits on their inventions.**

**As we come to the end of the fossil fuel era, several countries have already given us the timetable for when they will stop using combustion engines and switch over to electric engines. Ranging from 5 to 15 years from now, they have indicated to us when our oil economy will crash. We as researchers must take up the challenge to strategically position Nigeria to diversify ahead of this looming crisis. We have many of the minerals to produce batteries and other sources of renewable energy like solar cells,**

wind, biogas for our use and others for export. We must become the leader through strategic plans on this problem. I challenge the ITC, Solid Minerals/Mining, Manufacturing/Business Committees and the able Nigerian Engineers to urgently create the roadmap.

In the area of public health, in the light of our present coronavirus pandemic, there has never been a time in our history when our medical and biological researchers are more seriously challenged. We need innovative solutions to this global problem for our local context. We need not to think in silos with regard to human health, animal health and environmental health but as the “ONE HEALTH” as is being pushed by WHO. Indeed because over 75% of our emerging and re-emerging human diseases like COVID-19, Lassa fever, monkey pox, etc are of animal origin, therefore we need to use this ONE HEALTH approach to push our research agenda forward and avoid territorialism. As we see increasing outbreaks of diseases due to factors like climate change, growing population, globalization and increasing human-animal contact, we must act fast to anticipate outbreaks like COVID-19 that is postulated to have started in a seafood market in Wuhan China. We are all working for one goal; the progress of Nigeria, Africa and humanity in sustainable good health!

We will need scientifically rigorous and reproducible research into one of the most untapped God-given gifts we have in the country; our herbs and traditional formulations. When countries like China gave a marching order to find a new remedy for Malaria due to parasite resistance to Chloroquine, where did they go? They went to their indigenous herbs survey. Quickly 5000 of these remedies were subjected to orthodox scientific analysis that finally gave the world Artemesin based medications, arising from one of the traditional remedies! This has saved

millions of lives of children and adults globally. I believe our Nigerian scientists are capable and can do the same for many of the illnesses that the global research world neglects because they do not affect the Northern hemisphere people. COVID-19 is killing our people with no known global medication or vaccine against the coronavirus- the disease agent. This is a huge challenge for all biological scientists, particularly the Medical and Pharmaceuticals Committee; needless to say that the pandemic disease has negatively affected all aspects of human endeavour, suggesting that all Committees may consider aspects of the impact of the disease appropriately in Nigeria. We commend the PTF for good work on COVID-19 management in Nigeria and also the positive contributions of TETFund and other members of the private sector who have mobilized billions of Naira in this effort.

Indeed in the wake of Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions like lockdowns, social distancing, virtual-working and tele-schooling, our academics and researchers will need to rethink the entire vista of the way we live, work, study and socialise. I challenge especially our educators to rethink the entire learning/education system to safely produce the same or even better results in education from our schooling population; one of the largest in the continent! We can ill afford to let the next generation fall through the cracks due to the losses caused by this pandemic. It is therefore important we explore the useful contributions of e-learning in sustainable education, especially in crisis situation of disease pandemic.

For the political scientists in this era of revising our collective legal DNA as a nation through constitutional review, it is time to take the lead in advising the legislators through sound socio-scientific evidence based research. The social scientists and researchers of the country should guide the politicians in this matter, and not the other way round!

**We need to harness our global advantage of young men and women that are leaders in the world of ICT- information technology. We need to ensure their fledgling start-ups, with research findings to guide the transformation of our economy and new ways of doing things from analogue to digital. India invested heavily in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education in the 1960s to 1970s and are now reaping the rewards by being a global leader in this Information Technology era. Indeed you find Indian programmers leading the operations of several multinational giant IT companies all over the world! The base quality education spurred by healthy competition makes the whole difference .**

**Finally as we push this research agenda forward we need to constantly ensure proper reward for hard work. I propose a fixed proportion/segment of the annual national honours be firmly dedicated to Nigeria's researchers and inventors. We need to create an environment where young people are inspired to pursue academic excellence as a path to recognition, not reality TV shows and social media escapeds. We can, I believe, have awards for young researchers showing promise to return the glory of quality classroom learning and laboratory inventions, not just the TV based studio showmanship.**

**We close by special thanks and appreciation to our amenable Honourable Minister of Education, a man of great foresight, for inaugurating this important Standing Committee on R & D, as Nigeria's progress comes first and foremost! May the visionary and innovative thinking of the management, Trustees and Board of TETFund and the superior technical input of this worthy and distinguished Committee, make this a reality soonest. As we accept the serious challenge of our appointments with assurance of dedication and tangible recommendations, giving ourselves**

**credible timetable for credible progress for our dear nation, we promise to put in our very best.**

**That is, we shall work together diligently, despite some overlapping in the mandate of the 13 areas of the groups of the Standing Committee with suggested Terms of References in line with the Second Level UN Classifications. It must be that our Final Report will be so poignantly and powerfully persuasive for Nigeria to establish independent RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION for future development of this great country as has been done by China, Singapore and others. Therefore comparison between what obtains now and with the future, promises a quantum leap on the impact of R & D to the future of our nation.**

**The diligent TETFUND Team is always at hand to support our work. The friendly Leadership of RDSC will always offer guidance through all the Technical Sessions**

**Thank you and God Bless.**