

Opening Remarks Presented at the Occasion of the Official Launch of Grand Challenges Nigeria

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Protocols.

In our world today, nations are grappling with one challenge or the other. In the United States, it's mass shootings and gun violence; in China, it's the slow post-pandemic recovery with declining exports; in Ukraine, the ongoing war continues to have profound economic and political consequences. This goes to show that every nation, without exception, faces its unique set of challenges—some embedded in history, others shaped by evolving realities. Nigeria is no exception. But what sets a nation apart is not the magnitude of its challenges, but the audacity with which it confronts them. Today, we gather to embody that audacity.

In our rich culture and the resilience of our people lies a truth: the solutions to Nigeria's challenges cannot be copy-pasted from foreign templates. They must be homegrown, rooted in our values, and powered by our understanding of local realities. What makes us unique as a nation is not just our diversity or our resilience—it is the very structure of our strength. We are strongest at the family level, we are stronger at the community level than at the local government level, stronger at the local government level than at the state level, and stronger at the state level than we are at the federal level. This is who we are! This is why the grand challenges Nigeria project is critical—it dares us to confront our problems by drawing strength from our unique context, our grassroots voices, and our collective will.

Endorsed by His Excellency, Vice President Senator Kashim Shettima, this initiative aligns seamlessly with the *Renewed Hope Agenda under the visionary leadership of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu*. It reflects our shared commitment to reforming the economy, achieving food security, and prioritizing education, health, and social investment as the pillars of national development. Drawing inspiration from the *N-774 Initiative a flagship program of the National Council on Nutrition anchored by his Excellency the Vice President*. Similarly *Grand Challenges Nigeria* embraces the principle of localized, community-driven strategies designed to meet the unique needs of Nigerians, wherever they reside.

At the heart of this initiative lies the understanding that life is built on three critical assets: **time, knowledge, and financing**. These three must work together, and where one is lacking, the other two must compensate. Time demands urgency, financing requires commitment, but it is *knowledge*—the fuel of research and innovation—that propels us forward. *Grand Challenges Nigeria* solves for this by fostering a platform where our best minds can connect research to practical, impactful solutions. Through this, we are not just solving today's problems; we are shaping tomorrow's possibilities.

This initiative brings together the Government of Nigeria, the Nutrition Society of Nigeria, and a consortium of national and global partners. It is a multi-sectoral coalition that commits funding, expertise, and leadership to seed impactful innovations, scale them up, and amplify their reach. It is a movement that reflects the hopes of our people, the dedication of our leaders, and the potential of collective action.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen. The journey ahead will test us, but history has shown that when Nigerians unite in purpose, we overcome the impossible. We will harness the power of our grassroots, leverage the brilliance of our researchers, and commit to a legacy of progress, care, and health for generations to come.

Thank you and may God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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