

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE STATISTICIAN GENERAL OF THE
FEDERATION, DR. YEMI KALE DURING THE COMBINED SESSION OF THE
NATIONAL CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE ON STATISTICS (NCCS) AND THE
VALIDATION WORKSHOP ON THE REVISED NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT OF STATISTICS (NSDS) IN NIGERIA HELD AT SAMINAKA
HOLIDAY RESORT, KADUNA STATE
ON 2nd – 4th DECEMBER, 2015**

**Your Excellency, The Executive Governor of Kaduna State,
Secretary to the State Government,
The Honorable Commissioner, Budget and Planning,
Members of the State Executive Council here present,
Members of the National Consultative Committee on Statistics,
Representatives of Development Partners here present,
Workshop Participants,
Gentlemen of the Press,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am most delighted to be here with you today in Saminaka, for this very important meeting of the National Consultative Committee on Statistics (NCCS). But before I go into the objectives of the sessions we will be having over the next few days, permit me to explore very briefly its significance in the context of our national aspirations as a country and as a National Statistical System.

As the world celebrates the end of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and introduces a more ambitious Sustainable Development Framework, the importance of timely and reliable official statistics cannot be over emphasized. One does not need to look too far to grasp the importance of ensuring that reliable and dependable data is made available across the country in addressing national issues. Statistics are a vital source of evidence as they provide us with clear,

objective, numerical data on all aspects of our lives and the state of our country, including the growth and characteristics of our population, economic performance, levels of health and wellbeing and the condition of our surrounding environment. Without these, we cannot make well-informed decisions that will catalyse our social and economic development and transform the future. Accordingly, the significance of statistical information for making evidenced-based decisions that guide the implementation of new policy, monitoring of existing policy and evaluation of the effectiveness of policy decisions cannot be overemphasised. This point is especially relevant to Nigeria today as we are in an era of change. It is however, when we are able to collate, understand and interpret data correctly, as well as develop our ability to identify key areas in our society or our economy that require change, that our policy prescriptions and direction are more likely to respond to the real needs of the community and the real changes our country needs.

The timing of this meeting is also auspicious as it coincides with a period of increasing focus on and demand for data and statistical information. There is undeniably an increasing recognition of the importance of statistics leading to an emerging resurgence in the demand for data and statistical information in Nigeria. A cursory look at some key data request indicators at the Nigerian NBS can attest to this: in 2005, just under 50,000 reports were downloaded from the NBS website, compared to over 3 million in 2014, and this does not include requests for data by walk-in users, which was 23 in 2005, compared to 1817 in 2014. Last year NBS had the highest freedom of information requests and submissions of all government agencies in the country. Furthermore, in 2005, visits to our website was recorded at 36, 280 but at end of 2014, this was nearly 7.5million. And the number of times NBS was mentioned in the media in 2005 was about 73 times, whereas in 2015 we counted 6,365. The sheer numbers of invitations I have had to honor from international investors, from multilateral organizations and from the media is mind boggling and they are coming in from all over the world.

Given this obvious increased interest in Nigerian data, as a NCCS and members of the NSS, one might ask us the following questions: where are the numbers? Let me attempt to answer some of these questions by first explaining what's driving this enhanced focus and demand for data in Nigeria. I classify these factors driving the demand for data in Nigeria into two: exogenous factors and endogenous factors. The exogenous factors which are arguably more dominant typically involve "external demand" as dictated by conditions occurring outside the country. As a result of declining growth and business opportunities in most parts of the developed world, several international investors are seeking investment opportunities elsewhere and attention is turning to emerging markets including those in Africa. After the onset of the 2008 global financial crisis, growth slowed to an average of less than 2 percent in the developed world, while many African countries recorded over 5% growth rates. In fact the African rising story really started after this period. The result was a huge inflow of interest and capital inflow into the region. At the same time a huge number of international brands have come in and are now doing business in Nigeria as have international development agencies. Foreign investors and development agencies, however, require huge amount of data to make their decisions and with this increase in interest African and Nigerian statistical offices are being put under pressure to meet the demand and accordingly are being forced to raise the bar higher in the quality of data produced.

On the domestic front, data demand is being fueled by what I call "endogenous" factors. One can point to an increased demand for data due to the increased insistence for accountability and good governance by citizens, as well as the willingness by governments at all levels to demonstrate progress and democratic dividends in various sectors. Nigeria just completed successful elections recently and huge parts of the campaign were arguments about data. Endogenous demand for data is also being driven by a resurgence in strategic planning and renewed emphasis on key performance indicators for outputs and outcomes rather than solely on inputs. As

we are all aware, after many years of neglect, Nigeria, both at the Federal and across many States, has embarked on a process leading to a return towards strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation and accordingly, the use of evidenced-based policy as a means of transforming the social and economic well-being of our country. The underpinning of this entire system is timely and reliable statistics. As a nation we have becoming more aware that measuring progress is instrumental in ensuring the success of any development programme or process. Nigeria as a nation is faced with many developmental challenges in the areas of health, education, security, governance and so on and measuring the success or otherwise of these interventions and initiatives can only be substantiated by accurate and reliable data which is arguably as important if not more than the programmes or strategy itself. These realizations are driving what I called the endogenous demand for data in Nigeria. The combination of these exogenous and endogenous factors I mentioned earlier has thus created a scenario where there is immense attention and interest in Nigeria, as one of the major destination for growth and opportunities, and with it has come increased demand for information and consequently significant efforts over the last few years to improve the quality, timeliness and reliability of statistics.

Against the backdrop of the crucial role of statistics for development and the increasing demand for reliable and timely data and the need to meet that demand, we have, as you are aware, collectively developed, the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS). The guiding philosophy for the Nigerian Statistical System over the last few years is thus espoused in the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics (NSDS), an internationally-recognised framework for statistical development in several countries. At this juncture let me congratulate the NSS for being among the first country's to design and start implementing its NSDS in Africa. The NSDS was aimed at transforming the entire statistical system in Nigeria, bringing together all agencies involved in data production across the three tiers of government. In essence, it provides a

framework for development and ownership of statistics in the country by sufficiently equipping the system to produce and disseminate reliable and timely statistics that will assist in the formulation, implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of government policies and programmes. The ultimate goal of the NSDS was the evolution of an integrated, harmonised, coordinated and coherent National Statistical System (NSS) which will ensure unified data production processes, to effectively support the broader national development strategies. The NSDS was aimed at transforming the entire statistical system in Nigeria, bringing together all agencies involved in data production across the three tiers of government. In essence, it provides a framework for development and ownership of statistics in the country by sufficiently equipping the system to enable it produce and disseminate reliable and timely statistics that will assist in the formulation and implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of government policies and programmed to achieve our developmental goals as a country.

When the institutional framework for the NSDS was approved by the Federal Executive Council, it was described as an ambitious strategy. I agree. But I also think it is a strategy with seeds of immense opportunities, which is within our grasp. Ambition is a driving force that has made many countries in the world great nations today. We therefore embarked on an ambitious statistical program because we believe that Nigeria is a great country with boundless potential and our people should no longer be compelled to settle for second best especially with respect to statistical output. In our land of plenty, we should envision great things. The empires of the future are the empires of the mind.

We are gathered here at this NCCS meeting to take a good hard look at the progress on the implementation of the NSDS as well to discuss the status of statistical development at the national and sub-national level of government. In all aspects of our national life we must pause to reflect and examine where we are coming from, where we are now and most importantly of all, where we

are going. Indeed, as Socrates put it, “an unexamined life is not worth living”, and this truism applies equally to the lives of individuals as it does to the destiny of nations.

Indeed, this is why I consider this year’s session of the NCCS as a special one in the sense that, as it is primarily aimed at extensively validating the Draft Report of the revised NSDS as well as the revised Sector Statistics Strategy of selected MDAs. As you are all aware, the NCCS is a body made up of professional statisticians, as well as all major data producers in the country. Saddled with the responsibility of producing statistics for the management of the nation’s economy, it is a gathering of individuals and organizations with the best statistical capacity in the country, so for me personally, it is always a privilege to meet at this forum to deliberate on issues of statistics as we seek to proffer solutions and strategies that will bring about a more robust and better coordinated statistical system. This Committee is also burdened with the responsibility of ensuring that our nation operates on evidence-based policies, adopted through the use of accurate and relevant statistics. Accordingly, it is fitting that we come together periodically to discuss issues bordering on processes, methodology, operations and activities, as well as ways in which we can effectively coordinate and harmonize our efforts in fulfilling our mandate as the highest statistical body in Nigeria. Looking back on our performance as a statistical system over recent years, I acknowledge with great admiration, your commitment and dedication towards uplifting our noble profession in Nigeria. It is this dedication and commitment to statistics development that has today resulted in a great yearning for a new direction in our public service and governance processes. This new developing trend is one of results-oriented service and the application of informed policies in tackling our economic and social problems. This therefore, bestows on us greater responsibilities as producers of statistics, to ensure that we continuously produce this much desired statistical information for the use of both government and citizens alike. While acknowledging the tremendous progress we have made in recent past in spite of the numerous constraints, I still

believe that the challenges ahead of us are quite enormous and as a body, we must rise to the occasion.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, given this ever increasing interest in data, it has become necessary more than ever before, for the Nigerian Statistical System (NSS) to further improve on its data generation efforts. Gone are the days when government officials make wild promises or claims of their performance in office, now those claims have to be substantiated with verifiable and easily accessible data. Gone are the days when as a nation, we tolerated and came to accept a statistical system that was less than optimal, weak, uncoordinated and largely ineffectual in meeting the needs of policymakers, business investors and citizens who needed accurate, reliable and timely data on key socio-economic indicators to make informed decisions. Gone are the days when data users ignored official data and made up their own data irrespective of the fact that it was unscientific, uncoordinated and emotionally-driven. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, our government and country, our development partners and prospective investors are looking to us to give them information so that they can gain knowledge and through the correct application of knowledge gain the much needed wisdom required to change our country for the better.

In order to meet this ever growing demand and interest in Nigerian data, all State Government Statistical Agencies and Federal Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies are required to collaborate with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) as the coordinator of the National Statistical System, in this vigorous pursuit. The full implementation of the NSDS is the major way by which we can meet this objective. You will recall that the implementation of the first NSDS commenced effectively with a Pilot Phase of six (6) States and some selected MDAs at the Federal level in 2011. As a matter of fact, a lot of remarkable achievements were recorded during this Phase, in spite of the limited funding vis-a-vis the recommended financial requirement in the first NSDS, with some of the pilot states serving as models for statistical transformation at the state

level. In the same light, the second Phase of the NSDS is intended at deepening these reforms in the entire statistical system, by bringing together all agencies involved in data production across the three (3) tiers of Government. In effect, it will provide a frame-work for development and ownership of statistics in the country by sufficiently equipping the system in terms of Human Resources, Essential Tools and Infrastructure to produce and disseminate reliable and timely statistics that will assist in the formulation and implementation of Government policies to enable her achieve some developmental goals as entrenched in the current Government's policy thrust and the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular I would like to see a specific focus on the design and implementation of a sustainable financing mechanism for statistical activities in Nigeria, which if properly designed, could serve as a model for African Statistical Systems. This is very important at this time of our national development, particularly as we see statistical budgets decrease while demand for data is continuously rising.

Fellow participants, perhaps it is appropriate to inform you that during the first year of the implementation of the NSDS, focus was more on statistical advocacy with a view to creating awareness about the project and its relevance to the overall development of the Nigerian economy as well as instilling a sense of ownership of the project in the minds of relevant stakeholders. To drive the process at the State level, however, each State is expected to have in place the State Statistical Master Plan (SSMP). Thus, to effectively kick start the NSDS/SSMP implementation, a User Satisfaction Baseline Survey Workshop was organized for the six pilot states including (Anambra, Bauchi, Edo, Kaduna, Niger, Ondo) and at the national Level. The objective of the workshop was to interact with users of statistics with a view to getting their views as to how they assess the overall quality of the statistics made available to them at their respective domains. The findings emanating from these workshops were used to establish some benchmarks which served as basis of comparison with the findings from the End-Line workshops. The essence of this was to

ascertain the impact the project would have made on the level of statistical development in the affected states and at the national level. You will be given a comprehensive Report on the evaluation of the implementation of the NSDS in the course of this meeting and the current status of the Nigerian Statistical System.

Let me mention here that I have no doubt that the present State Governments will leave no stone unturned in putting in place the necessary statistical infrastructure that would support the implementation of their respective State Statistical Master Plan (SSMP). This is critical in order to provide robust and reliable statistical information that would support State Government's decision-making processes as well as proper planning of socio-economic programs in the states. My confidence is based on the enthusiasm developed in statistics by the various State Governments. In particular, the acceptance by His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Kaduna State, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai to personally declare open this combined session of the NCCS and NSDS Validation Workshop is a clear testimony of his readiness not only to promote statistical production, but also to enshrine a culture of the use of statistics for government's decision making processes. At this juncture, I must also acknowledge and commend the support the Kaduna State Government has given towards the development of statistics in the State, especially in the area of the provision of a stand-alone Office Accommodation for the State Bureau of Statistics and appropriate staffing of the office. In the same vein, I want to also encourage those States that are yet commence the process of establishing their State Bureaus of Statistics (SBS) to, as a matter of priority, put in place the necessary machinery for repositioning their respective State Statistical Agencies (SSAs). The current reform in the Nigerian Statistical System entails that, for NBS to effectively and efficiently coordinate the system, each State of the Federation and the Federal Capital Territory must have functional State Bureau of Statistics. This is a challenge that we must collectively resolve to address. From next year in our attempt to coordinate the statistical system better, NBS will commence a

quarterly forum of heads of State Statistical offices. The object is to keep ourselves updated on our respective statistical projects and their challenges as well as to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure consistent methodology. Once again, it is important that I re-emphasize the need for all stakeholders to support the implementation of the next Phase of the NSDS in order to provide the nation with comprehensive, timely and reliable statistics.

So why are we here today? What is our simple objective in Saminaka for the next 2 to 3 days therefore? It is to harness the great talents, energies and enthusiasms and ideas in this room and within the next few days bring forth, say a dozen new ideas about how we can improve the statistical system. Some of these ideas, we will be able to embrace as a committee. Others, we will not. And some we will take in part and change. There are however no right or wrong answers.

In closing let me assure you that this activity is not just another futile program of government but very serious business indeed. Accurate, timely and reliable data for evidenced based policies and planning is serious business. As we deliberate today and over the next few days, I want to enjoin you to always envision a glorious and prosperous Nigeria Statistical System that is among the top in the world and has taken her rightful place in the comity of nations and to fully appreciate how critical our role to that development must be for it to succeed.

My address will not be complete without commending the financial and more importantly, technical support provided by our Development Partners towards the development of statistics in Nigeria. The support provided by partners such as the Europe Union (EU), World Bank, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Department for International Development (DfID) has been extremely pivotal in the successes recorded in recent times and we must acknowledge and commend them. I wish to also recognize the support and cooperation of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) over the years. As a matter of fact, this type of support and

collaboration is highly desirable if we must build a sustainable and vibrant statistical system, upon which our developmental aspirations can be realized. .

I would like to conclude with a mission statement: Nigeria can become a developed nation only if everyone contributes to the best of his or her ability and capacity. The job of Government is to set a strategic vision for the nation and to design policies, plans and programmes to drive that vision. Government at all levels must then invite the nation to respond to that vision and to give that vision flesh and bones and to advance ideas to translate the vision into reality. To do this however, we have a great responsibility in providing the reliable data in a timely fashion, required to make this a reality. This as a NCCS is our role in this process of national development.

As a nation, I think we face two overall choices. We can either drift into the future like we have been doing for many years or we can plan for our future by providing the statistics that enables us to design policies plans and programmes for development. I believe it is time to seize the future with both hands, to build an improved statistical system that is needed for a better and more developed Nigeria to the benefit of our fellow citizens.

Accordingly, I wish everyone a fruitful and successful meeting. While I thank you for being part of this important event, I must reiterate my challenge to all participants to come up with feasible ways and means of improving the delivery of good statistics in Nigeria. I believe the recommendations to emerge from this Workshop will be useful in repositioning and refocusing the statistical system to enable it meet its core mandate, which is the production of timely and reliable statistics. While the task ahead is daunting, I believe that we can achieve what we have set out to do, if we do the right things at the right time and for the right reasons. The task ahead of us does not diminish, and the demand for data will continue to soar. While the work environment and conditions remain harsh, and funding, though improving on many fronts, is hardly ever enough, we

must nevertheless deliver on our mandate, as a National Statistical System and in particular, as a NCCS with responsibilities towards developing the National Statistical System (NSS).

In so doing, Nigeria will not only be great, but will serve as a model for other African countries and indeed the developing world.

Once - again, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you immensely for your kind attention and wish you fruitful deliberations.

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