

ADDRESS BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, ARC. SONNY S. T. ECHONO AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EQUIPPING OF THE TETFUND MULTIPURPOSE LABORATORIES HELD ON 17th FEBRUARY, 2026 AT THE TETFUND BOARDROOM, ABUJA

Protocol

I am pleased to warmly welcome you to the inauguration of the Advisory Committee on the Equipping of the TETFund Multipurpose Laboratories. The formation of this Committee, as well as the calibre of its membership, reflects the importance attached to this project. Your selection to serve on this Committee was carefully considered, based on your individual expertise and your collective capacity to work collaboratively to successfully accomplish this assignment.

2. I thank each of you specifically, for graciously accepting the responsibility to serve on this Committee. Your willingness to lend your time, expertise, and experience to this important assignment is appreciated. I also wish to commend you for honouring our invitation and making out time from your undoubtedly demanding and busy schedules to be physically present with us today for this inauguration ceremony.

3. It is widely acknowledged that innovative research and its effective commercialization are key drivers of economic growth and prosperity in today's global landscape. In the modern era, sustainable economic development is largely propelled by increased productivity, which stems from purposeful, solution-oriented research that addresses real societal and industrial challenges. However, such outcomes cannot be achieved in the absence of adequate research facilities and enabling infrastructure. For research to thrive and deliver meaningful impact, it must be supported by the prerequisite infrastructure like well-equipped laboratories, modern tools, and a conducive environment for innovation.

4. It will be recalled that TETFund previously commissioned a National Survey on Research Infrastructure in Nigerian Public Tertiary Institutions to evaluate the availability, functionality, and relevance of existing facilities in line with current standards and global best practices. The survey report revealed significant gaps, including

duplication of equipment within the same institutions, limited inter-faculty collaboration for optimal utilization, the presence of outdated facilities, and instances of underutilized equipment.

5. Furthermore, feedback from TETFund Research Interventions including the National Research Fund, Institution-Based Research, and Mega Research Grants indicates that a significant proportion of research grant allocations are consistently devoted to the procurement of laboratory equipment and consumables. While the acquisition of such equipment is often necessary to support proposed research activities, this trend underscores systemic gaps in the availability of shared, functional, and adequately maintained research facilities within Beneficiary Institutions. Consequently, individual projects frequently bear the burden of purchasing equipment that could otherwise be centrally provided and collectively utilized.

6. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, all these clearly indicate the absence of World Class requisite R&D infrastructure to conduct top-level research. The inability of our researchers to compete favourably with their counterparts' world over is largely attributed to inadequate research infrastructure facilities in our institutions.

7. In view of the above, and in response to this prevailing situation, the Fund made provision in its 2023, 2024, and 2025 Intervention Budgets for the establishment of a total of Six (6) Central Multipurpose Laboratories in selected Beneficiary Institutions, aimed at providing quality laboratory infrastructure and other necessary facilities/equipment to strengthen research capacity and enhance research training. The benefiting institutions which include:

- a) University of Lagos, Lagos State
- b) University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State
- c) University of Abuja, FCT
- d) Bayero University Kano, Kano State
- e) University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State
- f) University of Maiduguri

8. I want to note that this was based on the recommendations of the 2023 Nine-Member Committee on the Establishment of the

Central Multipurpose Laboratories, which was chaired by Emeritus Professor Olufemi Bamiro, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan and former Chairman of the TETFund National Research Fund (NRF).

9. The construction of the Laboratories physical infrastructure is at various stages of completion in line with approved project specifications and implementation timelines. In view of the progress made in the construction of the laboratories, it has become expedient to constitute an Advisory Committee to guide the Fund to efficiently equip the Multipurpose Laboratories in line with international best practices.

10. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the Terms of Reference for the Committee are to:

- a) Review the equipment list provided by the Committee on the Establishment of the Central Multipurpose Laboratories to ensure that it aligns with the purpose;
- b) Identify and advise on the selection of high-quality, cost-effective, and durable equipment for the initial operationalisation of the laboratories;
- c) Recommend equipment to be procured in phases if/where necessary;
- d) Review the management framework as suggested in the Report and advice accordingly; and
- e) Make any other recommendations that will ensure effective operationalization and sustainability of the Multipurpose Laboratories.

11. The Committee has One (1) month from today to submit its Report. I am very confident that you will bring your wealth of experience to bear in the discharge of this vital assignment.

12. On this note, Mr Chairman and Members of the Committee, I have the singular honour and privilege to inaugurate this Advisory Committee on the Equipping of the TETFund Multipurpose Laboratories, on this day, Tuesday, 17th February, 2026.

13. I thank you all for your kind attention.