**REMARKS BY H.E. AMBASSADOR OPUNIMI AKINKUGBE, NIGERIAN AMBASSADOR TO GREECE AT THE VIRTUAL CONFERENCE ORGANISED BY THE HELLENIC-AFRICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND DEVELOPMENT ON 23RD MARCH 2022**

Your Excellencies, Members of the Board of the Hellenic African Chamber of Commerce and Development, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my pleasure, on behalf of the Government and people of Nigeria, to welcome you all and thank you for making the time to participate in this important conference.

I wish to commend our hosts, The Hellenic African Chamber of Commerce and Development for convening this event. We appreciate your energy and interest in building bridges that connect Nigerian and Greek business to our mutual benefit.

The topic of this evening’s conference: *“Prospects and Opportunities for Greek Entrepreneurs for Trade and Investment in Nigeria,”* captures succinctly the mood of the moment and is in line with the desire of the Nigerian Government to attract foreign direct investment. We need you as much as you need us and that is why we are excited to be part of a platform that brings together relevant stakeholders for important conversations such as this.

We are not here to pretend that our nation does not face enormous challenges, however, the popular narrative, a narrow perspective of doom and gloom is a very myopic view of our great country and can lead one to miss out on the incredible opportunities that abound. I am convinced that the opportunities that remain largely untapped, and the extraordinary possibilities that they present, far outweigh the many challenges.

We appreciate the companies founded by Greek and Cypriot visioners over 60 – 70 years ago, such as AG Leventis, Mandilas, and George Coumantaros of Flour Mills. Their continued presence through the good and bad times attests to the benefits that the Nigerian market has to offer. They have become household names that continue to invest, thrive and create thousands of jobs in Nigeria. I am pleased that Mr Sadiq Usman of Flour Mills of Nigeria is here to share some of their experience as well as Mr Vangelis Kamaris of METKA.

The Nigerian Government through The Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission (NIPC) has come up with innovative ways to facilitate the ease of doing business in the country, and I am pleased that the Executive Secretary Mr Emeka Offor is here to address us today.

I hope you are as excited as I am about the line-up of brilliant speakers who play critical roles in our economy.

The world today is dealing with a catastrophic war in Ukraine. Its attendant effects on precious human lives and livelihoods as well as global supply chains and markets, all happening against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, proves that no country can afford to be totally dependent on another for vital resources and markets.

The need for greater collaboration cannot be overemphasised, as all nations must look to broaden their relationships. We view with much interest, the Greek National Extroversion Plan which gives significant focus to the African continent. The very successful visit this January to Nigeria by the Greek Foreign Minister H.E. Nikos Dendias was very well received and underscores the importance with which our two governments view our bi-lateral relationship.

On our part, at the Nigerian Embassy in Athens, we invite you to view us as your partner. Our Chancery remains a place for you to seek and obtain relevant information and connections. Our immigration team is one that we are very proud of, and you can expect a seamless visa experience as you to travel to Nigeria. Do pay us a visit; we would love to receive you.

Your excellencies, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, Nigeria is open for business. It is a market that you cannot afford to ignore. I invite you to take advantage of the wide range of opportunities that will be presented today. It is for us all to be proactive about turning these conversations and opportunities into concrete action and success stories to the benefit of both Nigeria and Greece. Let us move from talk to action.

I wish you all a very successful evening and thank you for listening to me.

Ambassador Opunimi Akinkugbe

Athens, Greece

23rd March 2022