

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY ENGR. SULEIMAN H. ADAMU, FNSE, HONOURABLE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES ON THE OCCASION OF OBANLIKU LGA-WIDE OPEN DEFECATION FREE CELEBRATION HOLDING AT SANKWALA, OBANLIKU LGA, CROSS RIVER STATE ON 7<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2017.**

**PROTOCOL**

I am delighted to address this gathering on the occasion of the Open Defecation Free (ODF) celebration of Obanliku Local Government Area (LGA) of Cross River State. Late last year, my Ministry declared Obanliku as the first ODF LGA in Nigeria. Today is the climax of the journey that we started since the inception of the programme in 2012. I wish to congratulate the entire people of Obanliku LGA, and by extension Cross River State for this landmark achievement. And hearty congratulations to all of us present here for being part of this historic event.

2. I also extend my congratulations to the Federal Government, because the Rural Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion in Nigeria (RUSHPIN) project, under which this achievement is recorded, was conceived by the National Task Group on Sanitation (NTGS), a coalition body of relevant Government Agencies, Development Partners and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) working in the sanitation sub-sector at the national level, which is domiciled in the Federal Ministry of Water Resources. The project is funded with a grant of \$5million from the Global Sanitation Fund (GSF) of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC).

3. While the country has made significant progress in the provision of safe water supply in the past decade, which has contributed to socio-economic development and poverty reduction in the nation, the same cannot be said of sanitation and hygiene. In 2015, Nigeria was reported to be the country with the highest number of people practicing open defecation in Africa, estimated at over 46 million people, and more than two-thirds of the population are without access to basic sanitation facilities. The efforts in time past to address this situation have yielded minimal results and the advent of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 has raised the bar, which we must aspire to achieve. A critical look at the situation shows that it cannot be business as usual and that all hands must be on the deck in tackling this challenge.

4. The Federal Ministry of Water Resources acknowledges this challenge and it is committed to pursuing the collaborative efforts required in addressing the issue. To this end, the Ministry developed the strategy document 'Making Nigeria Open Defecation Free by 2025: A National Roadmap', also known as ODF Roadmap, which has been adopted by the National Council on Water Resources as a veritable tool for eliminating open defecation in the country by 2025, and it has been incorporated into annual plans and budgeting processes for phased implementation at the national level while States are expected to do the same.

5. Also developed and launched last year was the Partnership for Expanded Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (PEWASH) programme, designed as a national collaborative instrument for the improvement of access to water supply and sanitation in Nigeria. PEWASH is aimed at building on previous efforts and complementing existing water supply and sanitation strategies by instituting a coordination and prioritization framework for project delivery. The programme is also expected to provide opportunity for the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector to leverage the available expertise, technology and financial resources from Governments (Federal, State and Local), Development Partners, Civil Society, Private Sector and Communities.

6. Nigeria through the PEWASH strategy, aims at eliminating open defecation by 2025 in line with the ODF Roadmap and achieving 100% access to rural water supply and basic sanitation by 2030 as indicated in the SDG 6.1 and 6.2 targets. PEWASH's 15 year timeline has been structured into three phases: Phase I (2016-2018) being the preparatory phase, Phase II (2019-2025) being the expansion phase and Phase III (2026-2030) being the acceleration phase. I therefore wish to enjoin all States, to buy into the process as we journey towards 2030, while making sure that we leave no one behind.

7. The PEWASH and the ODF Roadmap adopted the Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach, which promotes behavioural change by facilitating communities to assess their sanitation practices and proffer solutions towards addressing them, especially with regards open defecation, through the construction and usage of toilets using their own resources without subsidy on the hardware component. The same approach was used in achieving this feat of Obanliku LGA entirely becoming free of open defecation under the RUSHPIN project. I am aware

that many other donor funded sanitation projects have also adopted this approach.

8. The RUSHPIN project covers 6 LGAs namely, Agatu, Gwer East and Logo LGAs in Benue State and Abi, Bekwara and Obanliku LGAs in Cross River State using the GSF grant and 6 other scale up LGAs were to be covered using the respective States' counterpart funds. However, implementation in the scale up LGAs has been impeded due to non-release of counterpart funding by both States.

9. I undertook a visit last month to Gwer East, one of the implementing LGAs in Benue State and had a firsthand experience and interaction with people living in non-ODF and ODF communities. I was impressed to see different innovations that went into the construction of toilet facilities by different households in the ODF community. The commitment and zeal of the community members were also evident. During the visit, the Benue State Government expressed its commitment to release its counterpart fund and I also want to enjoin Cross River State to prioritize this, so as not to deny your people the benefits of this project.

10. Undeniably, the benefits of access to WASH facilities, especially of living in an open defecation free environment, impacts on the education, health, security and socioeconomic wellbeing of the people. In this regard, I wish to commend the people of Obanliku LGA for their commitment towards behavioural change and to encourage you to be steadfast in it, as a relapse will deny you of these inherent benefits.

11. At this juncture, I wish to appreciate the efforts of all the institutional structures put in place to ensure ownership and integration of the process. These include the Natural Leaders/WASH Committees (WASHCOMs), the WASH Department, the Local Task Group on Sanitation (LTGS), the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (RUWATSSA), the State Task Group on Sanitation (STGS) and the Executing Agency, United Purpose. I also recognise our traditional institutions made up of our Chiefs and Elders, who have contributed immensely to this achievement by providing the needed leadership. In addition, I wish to extend my appreciation to the members of the Programme Coordinating Mechanism (PCM), a sub-committee of the NTGS, which oversees and provides technical guidance to the RUSHPIN project.

12. I enjoin you all to keep up the good work, as I look forward to all the other implementing LGAs becoming ODF by the end of this year. WSSCC is a key partner in Nigeria's WASH sector and I wish to express government's appreciation to the Council, here represented by its Executive Director, Dr Christopher Williams, for the Global Sanitation Fund grant. I believe that with this laudable result, Nigeria should expect more grants to take this noble cause to the next level.

13. On this note, I wish to assure all stakeholders of my Ministry's commitment towards improved co-ordination, partnership and implementation of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programmes which is expected to address the water, sanitation and hygiene inadequacies in our cities and communities, and add to the scale-up processes in our joint effort to tackle the situation, through a more robust implementation and coordination framework designed under the PEWASH Programme

14. Thank you for your attention and God bless us all.