

**ADDRESS BY PROF. RUQUAYYATU AHMED RUFA'I (OON), HONOURABLE
MINISTER OF EDUCATION, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA AT THE 1ST
ROUNDTABLE OF TEACHING REGULATORY AUTHORITIES IN AFRICA HELD
IN ABUJA, OCTOBER 11 – 14, 2010**

PROTOCOL

I am glad to be at this historic event where our brothers and sisters in Africa have gathered to brainstorm on how to move the teaching profession in Africa forward. As a teacher and now Minister of Education, I appreciate the importance of the teacher in any education system. The teacher is indeed the pivot of the education system, and that is why our National Policy on Education recognizes that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. In other words, any nation that toys with the teaching profession can never attain its educational or national goals. This is why I consider this Roundtable crucial in our quest in Nigeria and the whole of Africa for qualitative education system that can make its products globally competitive.

In my one year Development Strategy for Education in Nigeria, Teacher Education and Development is among the major objectives that must be accomplished in order to raise and sustain the quality of education in Nigeria. My administration is, therefore, sensitive to issues centred on teachers and the teaching profession. This is why I consider the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (**TRCN**) as a very important ally in the development of the education sector in this country.

In the past few months **TRCN** has contributed much to the achievement of my One Year Strategy Development Goals for Education in Nigeria. **TRCN** has registered over 800,000 teachers drawn from the primary to the university level. It has through the activities of the Teachers Investigating Panel (**TIP**) and Teachers Tribunal (**TT**) enhanced ethical awareness and professional conduct of teachers. It has produced a National Post Graduate Diploma in Education (**PGDE**) Benchmark, which means that there is only one **PGDE** curriculum in all Nigerian universities, unlike the former practice where each university had its own curriculum. The previous practice made uniformity, quality assurance and comparison with global

standards very difficult. **TRCN** has also produced an excellent comprehensive Professional Standards for Nigerian Teachers. With the professional standards in place, the competence of teachers in terms of professional attitudes, values, conduct, knowledge, skills and membership obligations of the teaching profession can now be easily determined and subjected to international analysis. **TRCN** recently honoured Nigerian's first Executive President, **Alhaji Shehu Shagari (GCFR)** and others with Fellowship Award, an event that has attracted so much honour and promotion to the teaching profession in Nigeria.

The organization of this Roundtable is yet another milestone in **TRCN's** drive to assist in the actualization of my Strategic Goals for the Education sector in Nigeria. I understand that currently only Nigeria and South Africa have Teaching Councils which is why Nigeria and South Africa are currently the only African countries that are members of the International Forum of Teaching Regulatory Authorities. Nigeria and South Africa deserve praise for standing tall in this respect in the world comity of Teaching Councils. However, it is my expectation and prayer that this Roundtable will spur more African countries to join the ranks of Nigeria and South Africa in the international body by establishing their Teaching Councils, and empowering them to play their role at the global level.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to assure our distinguished delegates that my administration will continue to accord very high priority to Education, particularly matters concerning teachers, teacher professionalism and motivation. Just last week, **His Excellency, Dr. GoodLuck Ebele Jonathan (GCFR)** personally chaired a Summit on Education in Nigeria. The Summit which was a gathering of education stakeholders from all parts of the country, was an ample demonstration of the President's commitment to raising the standard of education in Nigeria. The outcome of the Summit is incisive and has obviously enriched my One Year Strategy Development Plan for Education in Nigeria. In the plan the following issues are receiving my personal attention and the attention of His Excellency, the President of Nigeria:

- (i) Strengthening the Institutional Management of Education;
- (ii) Standards and Quality Assurance;
- (iii) Teacher Education and Development;
- (iv) Access and Equity;
- (v) Technical and Vocational Education and Training; and
- (vi) Funding Partnership and Resource Mobilization.

I have set up a Ministerial Task Team to drive each of these six strategic plans and another Central Coordinating Committee to work directly with me, as I am determined to make my humble marks in these areas during my tenure.

I wish to register my appreciation for the Representative of the International Forum of Teaching Regulatory Authorities and Chair of the General Teaching Council for Wales, Mrs. Angela Tardine, who has come all the way from the United Kingdom to grace this occasion, which shows how important this Roundtable is to the world body.

Similarly, I commend the South African Council for Educators for the very close working relationship it has with **TRCN** which has now given birth to a sort of African Renaissance and greater cooperation among African countries through the impact of this Roundtable. I thank all other distinguished guests for honouring our invitation; I hope you will enjoy Nigeria's unique hospitality, its sights and sounds.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and God's journey mercies back to your destinations at the end of the Roundtable.

Thank you for your attention and patience.