KEYNOTE ADDRESSS DELIVERED BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF STATE, FCT, DR. RAMATU TIJJANI ALIYU, AT THE 2022 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION ORGANIZED BY THE ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN TOWN PLANNERS, FCT CHAPTER, HELD AT THE BAWA BWARI HOUSE, WUSE ZONE 5, ABUJA.

TUESDAY 8TH MARCH, 2021

PROTOCOL

I am highly delighted to discharge this great task of delivering a keynote address at this event marking the 2022 International Women's Day (IWD) organised by the Association of Women Town Planners, FCT Chapter.

2. As we are aware, the International Women's Day (March 8), is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality. It provides a useful opportunity to reinforce the fact that everyone has a role to play in forging a more gender-balanced world, and that everyone has a role to play in ensuring that women’s unquantifiable work in the household, women's work in community and nation building, do not go unnoticed and unacknowledged.

3. Ladies and gentlemen, the 2022 theme: "Gender Equality Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow" is not only well thought out, but offers an opportunity to reflect on progress made, and a call to celebrate the tremendous efforts by women around the world in shaping a more balanced future.

4. I have no doubt in my mind that this year's theme is aimed at advancing gender equality in the context of the climate change crisis and disaster risk reduction which is one of the greatest global challenges of the 21st century. This is also in light of the fact that women are increasingly being recognized as more vulnerable to climate change impact than men, as they constitute the majority of the world's poor and are more dependent on the natural resources which climate change threatens the most.

5. For so long, women have determined career success by their ability to adjust to male-dominated cultures and business processes in their fields. Women try to play by the existing rules in the workplace and have the additional hurdle of society's perceptions of how women should act and be seen. While education and practice are reducing some of the invisible struggles of being a woman in a leadership role, there are still challenges to face and overcome. It therefore rests on current women leaders to embrace their role-model status and address those challenges head-on, with action and execution.

6. Therefore, I call on women in leadership positions to push the boundaries of gender equality by utilising their strengths and leadership qualities – in skill, knowledge, experience and emotion. They must pursue the things they want from their job and their career, not waiting for them to come to them. Frankly speaking, the most alluring thing a woman can have is confidence.

7. On this note, let me commend the leadership of the Association of Women Town Planners, FCT Chapter, for their consistency in organising this event aimed at reinforcing the fact that everyone has a role to play in forging a more sustainable gender-balanced built environment. This goes to show that the female town planners are prepared to take the lead in tackling the challenges of building our cities sustainably.

8. As a professional town planners, let me reiterate that the onus is on us to continue to find solutions to the attendant multi-dimensional consequences of rapid urbanisation, as we strive to provide liveable spaces both within and outside urban centres. To the female town planners in particular, this challenge is even more significant because I am now a key player in the administration of Nigeria’s Capital Territory.

9. As planners, we are, undoubtedly, witnessing the evolution of the territory at a breath-taking pace. We must therefore be ready with solutions to the problems of the past while addressing current ones and anticipating future challenges. I posit that as women, we are imbued with the natural qualities of tender care and are in a position to direct the development of human spaces in a manner that suits the living of today without comprising the comfort of those to inherit the earth from us. This is the charge before our distinguished female town planners.

10. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, as a female minister and professional town planner, the FCT Administration shall continue to do everything possible to find innovative solutions that guarantee the right development balance between today and tomorrow, as well as between the city centre and the satellite towns and hinterlands. This we shall do together, taking full advantage of the territory’s diverse aggregation of skilled men and women planners.

11. On this note, and in conclusion, let me align my thoughts with the (paraphrased) words of Susan B. Anthony: "The day will come when men will recognise women as their peers, not only at the fireside, but in councils of the nation. Then, and not until then, will there be the perfect comradeship, the ideal union between the sexes that shall result in the highest development of the race.”

12. Thank you for your kind attention.

RTA