**AN ADDRESS TITLED “PROMOTING A SUSTAINABLE ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT” DELIVERED BY OTUNBA KAYODE FASAE, DIRECTOR GENERAL, MICROFINANCE & ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (MEDA) AT THE ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION / CORONATION CEREMONY.**

­­­**PROTOCOL**

 It is my pleasure to be here on this occasion of the roundtable discussion and coronation ceremony of the new Oluloro of Iloro-Ekiti, HRM Oba Oluwafemi James Olugbesoye, Arojojoye II.

2. From the academic and professional viewpoints, it is incumbent on us to first and foremost take a look at what amounts to “sustainable enterprise development” before we can adequately deal with the required efforts to promote this essential economic development factor. I guess we all know that there is a sustained broad and wide-ranging international debate on the promotion of enterprise development as a result of the increasing role of the private sector, in all its forms, which has been universally recognized as the key to development changes including employment creation and poverty reduction.

Enterprise has been described as a unit of economic organisation or business activity either as a sole proprietorship, partnership, company, or corporation as well as any other legal forms which is built on economic opportunities for the purpose of making profit. As a result of the importance of enterprise in the society such as its potentials to generate income, revenue, and employment, it has become the responsibility of every government to work with the private sector to promote the development of business activities.

3. For the purpose of this paper, sustainable enterprise development can be described as the conscious and deliberate policies and programmes of government in partnership with the private sector, designed to ignite, nurture and sustain business activities in a particular geographical area. It includes the various activities of the government to improve the ease of doing business in such a way as to create a favourable business climate such that prospective entrepreneurs are encouraged to generate business ideas, start new business ventures and nurture such organisation to grow and survive. It is important to note that the promotional efforts of the government cannot be limited to creating physical enabling environment alone but rather it should include improving the skill sets and providing various incentives that will encourage the citizens to think of a business idea and develop such into a particular entrepreneurial venture.

4. While many scholars have argued against the direct involvement of governments in owning or managing businesses, it is almost universally agreed that the core responsibility of a government is to provide the enabling environment for sustainable enterprise development. This has been largely recognized as the summation of government policies and programmes to provide security, power, good roads and transportation, telecommunication, as well as other catalysts that support favourable investment climate. In recent times, this has been expanded to include promotion of entrepreneurial skills among the citizens of a country. It is not enough to provide the enabling physical environment; promotion of sustainable enterprise development includes addressing the mindsets of the people to identify business opportunities and learning how to translate same into viable business ventures. Promoting sustainable enterprises is about strengthening the institutions and governance systems which incubate and nurture enterprises and ensuring that human, financial, natural and technological resources are combined equitably and efficiently in order to bring about innovation, creativity and enhanced productivity within the business space of a country. This responsibility calls for new forms of cooperation between the government, business communities and the larger society in a bid to ensure that the entire space of the economy is structured to encourage and optimize economic and business activities whilst safeguarding, securing and ensuring the continuity of the business.

These entrepreneurs are not just going to work on great business ideas as they are not just solving problems, or creating employment opportunities rather they are building up our economy. Their entrepreneurial ideas are creating jobs, enhancing prosperity and inspiring a generation of youth who see how their minds can be the greatest resource for personal development as well as economic development of the society.

5. The next issue for discussion here is therefore on how to promote sustainable enterprise development in our society. Without doubt this should be the core responsibility of the governments at all tiers – regional, national, state and sub-national levels. Sustainable development is more than just environmental issues; it requires the integration of all the three pillars of development – economic, social and environmental. In implementing policies and programmes in these three cardinal pillars, the government is expected to take the lead and galvanize the private sector to support and partake in the development.

Central to sustainable enterprise development is the provision of security of life and property without which conducive investment climate cannot be guaranteed. The federal and state governments are required to formulate and deploy appropriate macroeconomic policies for stability and sound management of the economy. These are set of policies which directly define the competitive and enabling environment that determine the sustainability and growth potential of enterprises. These macroeconomic policies are fiscal, monetary and exchange rate, particularly those affecting demand conditions; as well as specific policies at the sectoral level in agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, banking and other services.

Governance also impacts greatly on physical infrastructural development which includes energy, housing, transportation, telecommunication, education, health, etc. The state of infrastructures has strong impact on the rate of enterprise development in a country. The structure of civil and political life is undoubtedly an important determinant of competitiveness, economic growth and sustainable enterprise. Good governance which encompasses respect for human rights, functioning democratic institutions, freedom of expression, equal rights for women and men, effective mechanisms for social dialogue, and so forth is a necessary condition for sustainable enterprise development.

Another crucial requirement for the promotion of sustainable enterprise development is the regulatory and legal environment which is the sole responsibility of the government. It is generally accepted, for example, that peace, a trusted and respected legal system, appropriate levels of social development and relatively predictable and stable political institutions, all have a major bearing on the sustainable enterprise development. The structure of civil and political life is undoubtedly an important determinant of business competitiveness, economic growth and sustainable enterprise development.

Ekiti State has been commonly described as agrarian on one hand and a civil service state on the other hand. By implication, the State is ranked low in the number of enterprises and as a result, is in dire need of sustainable enterprise development. I guess that informed the choice of this topic by the organizers.

But how friendly is our investment climate? Has it been so attractive to enterprise development? I hope you still remember that we recently witnessed a situation where banks and other businesses were leaving our State in droves without attracting any serious concern from the then State government. We have also recently experienced a reversal of the trend whereby businesses that had earlier left our shore returned and with additional business enterprises coming up in new investment areas. I leave you to make a conclusion on which of these two scenarios is more committed to the promotion of sustainable enterprise. I believe you are aware of the new Ekiti State Development and Investment Promotion Agency Law 2019 which was recently signed by His Excellency, the Governor of Ekiti State, Dr John Kayode Fayuemi. This Law encapsulates the necessary provisions to promote improved ease of doing business and by extension deliver economic and fiscal diversification of the State economy. In just fourteen (14) months, the efforts of the our hard-working and well-focused Governor has brought back GTBank Plc, Gossy Water, Coca Cola depot among many businesses that previous left the shore of Ekiti. In addition, various investment promotion efforts which include the World Bank Ero Dam water reticulation project will not only boost the provision of potable water across the State but will complement the operations of business organisations such as Promasidor Nigeria Plc at the Ikun Dairy Farm and many more that are likely to follow.

6. In conclusion, let me remind and reassure you that this administration is fully committed to the economic development in the form of promoting sustainable economic development. The recently concluded Ekiti Entrepreneurship Week which was quickly followed by the training of 2,500 Ekiti indigenes under the CBN/EDI/AGSMEIS is designed to equip the trainees with basic business skills that will enable the trainees to access various CBN intervention funding schemes as well as other State Government programmes to start their business enterprises. This tempo will not only be sustained but in the years ahead much more strategic enterprise development programmes and activities will be rolled out on capacity-building, enterprise development and facilitation. I therefore call on the people of Ekiti State to continue to rally round our able and amiable Governor, Dr. John Kayode Fayemi in his efforts to transform Ekiti State.

7. Thank you and God bless.

Otunba Kayode Fasae