KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF INNOVATION,

SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY, CHIEF UCHE NNAJI, AT THE GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY (GOUNI) ENUGU, AT THE INTERDISCIPLINARY CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE, HELD AT THE PETER MBAH AUDITORIUM, GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY ENUGU, ENUGU STATE 2ND APRIL, 2025.

Protocol: Good Morning: My esteemed Vice-Chancellor, respected faculty, visionary, innovative researchers, dynamic students, ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to be the keynote speaker at this unique occasion, which kicks off the GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY (GOUNI) Interdisciplinary Conference on Climate Change. Under the direction of the Directorate of Interdisciplinary Research. I wish to thank the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Christian Anieke, the Governing Council and Management of this great University for the invitation as the keynote speaker. I commend your foresight, which clearly demonstrates your commitment to getting our country to move with time and in the right direction by leveraging Science Technology and Innovation. Well done.

2. This gathering of great minds, experts, academia, and industry players with a shared commitment is crucial as we discuss a theme of utmost importance: "Harnessing Interdisciplinary Research to develop Innovative Solutions to Climate Change". It is an important gathering on our journey towards a more sustainable and responsible innovative solutions to climate change. As a keynote speaker, I believe I am expected to provoke thoughts, identify critical issues and possibly broaden the scope of the discourse. In today's world, Research and Innovation have become so disruptive that they no longer beg for accommodation in climate change milieu.

3. Today, we gather not just to discuss climate change but to explore how Nigeria can turn cutting-edge research into market-driven solutions— where science meets industry for real-world impact. Interdisciplinary research integrates knowledge from diverse fields—such as climate science, engineering, economics, policy, behavioral psychology, and artificial intelligence—to create innovative, adaptable solutions.

4. Climate change is no longer a distant threat; it is a present reality. Rising global temperatures, extreme weather events, biodiversity loss, and sealevel rise demand urgent action. Traditional siloed approaches—where scientists, engineers, economists, and social scientists work in isolation are no longer sufficient. The complexity of climate change requires us to break down disciplinary barriers and collaborate across fields to develop holistic, scalable solutions.

5. Nigeria faces a dual challenge: mitigating climate threats while unlocking economic growth. From desertification in the North to flooding in the South, the risks are real—but so are the opportunities. The global green economy is projected to be worth \$10 trillion by 2050. The question is: How can Nigeria position itself as a leader in climate innovation. The answer lies in partnerships—where academia's breakthroughs meet industry's scalability and entrepreneurship's agility. Nigerian universities and research institutes produce groundbreaking work—biofuels, solar tech, drought-resistant crops—but too many patents gather dust. Industry needs scalable solutions; researchers need commercialization pathways. Together, we can bridge this gap.

6. Presently, we have developed a Technology Action Plan for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation for Energy, Agriculture and Industry economic sectors in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Environment and National Council on Climate Change as a tool to address our climate actions and address our NDCs[Nationally Determined Contributions...climate action plans submittedby each countryunder the ParisAgreement of 2015 to reduce greenhousegas and adopt to climate impact], this document was approved by the Federal Government in 2023 and more economic sectors as identified by NDCs will be approved after several stakeholders' consultations and due diligence. In addition, the Ministry is championing the Global Clean-Tech (climate technologies) innovation Programme (GCIP) a programme that promotes innovation and entrepreneurship in emerging markets and developing economies to address climate and environmental challenges. Part of the activities of that Programme is the collaboration with University(ies) to unlock the kind of breakthroughs needed to accelerate industrialization, the outcome of the programme will serve as a new era of strategic foresight and research integration. Furthermore, in order to beneficiate the oil and gas industry and provide sustainable economic growth, the Ministry also produced the National Policy on Methanol fuel Production Technology and after the

approval, has been promoting the technology deployment in collaborations with different MDAs, Research Institutes, States etc

7. I am happy to inform you that His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR has approved the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Research and Innovation and my Ministry is serving as the Secretariat. My Ministry is assisting in integrating research and innovation efforts across Ministries Department and Agencies (MDAs) to breakdown Ministerial silos that have historically hindered national development. This latest move will accelerate on economic diversification agenda, enhance competitiveness, reduce import dependency, and position Nigeria as a knowledge-driven economy.

8. In another development, Nigeria through my ministry has signed a 2,600megawatt (MW) solar module supply agreement with LONGi Solar France SARL. The solar modules will power Nigeria's Green Hydrogen Hub Project, located in the Liberty Oil & Gas Free Trade Zone in Akwa Ibom State. This project is expected to transform Nigeria into a regional hub for clean energy production, leveraging its abundant solar resources to drive industrial growth, hydrogen exports, and clean mobility solutions. This is one of the largest solar procurement deals in sub-Saharan Africa.

9. The fight against climate change is not a solo mission—it is a symphony of expertise. Whether you are a scientist, entrepreneur, artist, or policymaker, your perspective matters. Let us commit to breaking down silos, embracing diverse knowledge, and co-creating solutions that are as interconnected as the ecosystems we strive to protect. Together, through interdisciplinary collaboration, we can turn the tide on climate change and build a resilient, equitable, and sustainable future.

10. I crave your indulgence to put out some case Studies into proper perspectives we can build on:

Solar Energy: Ahmadu Bello University's solar innovations + private sector partnerships is producing decentralized clean energy for rural communities. Waste-to-Wealth: UNILAG's plastic recycling tech adopted by startups like Wecyclers is creating create jobs and reducing pollution. AgTech: IITA's climate-smart seeds scaled by agribusinesses to boost food security.

11. On Industry-Driven Research: Let companies articulate real-world problems (e.g., "How can we decarbonize cement production?") and co-fund university research. Example: Dangote Group partnering with FUTO on

low-carbon cement alternatives. Captain of industries, I enjoin you to invest in R&D like your future depends on it—because it does. Partner with universities, not just for CSR but for competitive advantage.

12. Government will create policies that reward collaboration—link research grants to commercialization milestones. To the Students: You are the bridge. Whether you study physics, economics, or law, your skills can accelerate climate action. Your research must solve industry's pain points. Engage early with businesses—don't wait for 'perfect' solutions. Encourage MBA students to partner with engineers on commercializing climate tech. To our Professors, teach entrepreneurial science—how researchers can pitch to investors, protect IP, and navigate markets. I enjoin you also to cultivate a thriving ecosystem that fuels interdisciplinary innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship

13. Ladies and gentlemen, I want to assert that organizing Conferences like this where critical stakeholders can come together to discuss burning issues, come up with the way forward and fashion out an appropriate agenda is a step in the right direction. More initiatives along this line are needed from the Universities to fashion out the best way forward.

14. Interdisciplinary work is not without hurdles—differing terminologies, funding constraints, and institutional barriers can slow progress. To overcome these, we must: Foster Collaborative Platforms: Universities, governments, and industries should create hubs for cross-disciplinary dialogue. Reward Interdisciplinary Work: Funding agencies and academic institutions must prioritize and incentivize collaborative research. Engage Stakeholders Early: Policymakers, businesses, and communities should be involved from the outset to ensure solutions are practical and scalable.

15. I commend the Vice Chancellor Prof. Christian Anieke and Dr. Christy Onyia Director, Inter. Disciplinary Research Directorate and other management Team for their vision and leadership to engage meaningfully with stakeholders and academia to lay a foundation for a stronger, more innovative solutions for climate change in Nigeria.

16. In closing, the next industrial revolution will be green. Nigeria can either import climate solutions or create and export them. Let's choose the latter. Let's turn our labs into factories, our ideas into industries, and our challenges into prosperity. Together, we can build a Nigeria where sustainability is not just a goal—but a thriving business. This is just the catalyst required to strengthen Research commercialization from the University perspective.

17. Ladies and gentlemen, I sincerely appreciate your time and partnership culminating in the success of today's conference. It is a signal to our collective aspiration to rebuild Nigeria leveraging Research and innovation for innovative solutions to climate change. I welcome you to the Conference.

18. On this note, it is my pleasure to formally declare this Conference open.I look forward to a very fruitful sessions and stimulating exchange of views.I would like to receive the outcome of this auspicious conference.

19. Thank you. God bless Enugu State, Godfrey Okoye University and the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Chief Uche Geoffrey Nnaji Honourable Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology