



## **INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND WOMEN BUSINESS SUMMIT**

**Theme:**

**“Women as Catalysts of Innovation and Creativity in Nigeria:  
Opportunities and Challenges”**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

**BY**

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## **(Protocol)**

Mr Mattias Schmale, UN Nigeria Resident and Humanitarian  
Coordinator

HM, Women's Affairs and her team

Dr John Asein, DG Nigeria Copyright Commission; and the  
Registrar, Trade Marks Registry, who is ably represented here  
today.

Other speakers, my old many friends and colleagues here present

Mr Oluwatobiloba Moody, Director WIPO Office Nigeria

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. I am truly delighted to join you all here today to celebrate the  
2023 World Intellectual Property Day.

2. I would especially like to thank and commend Mr Oluwatobiloba Moody and his team for convening this event and inviting me to give the keynote address at this event, aptly themed “Women as Catalysts of Innovation and Creativity in Nigeria: Opportunities and Challenges”.
  
3. The global theme ‘Women and IP: Accelerating Innovation and Creativity’ acknowledges women in a profound way, a reminder that creativity is unbiased – blind to racial, tribal, religious or gender stereotypes that the world often projects on us.
  
4. Creativity, Innovation “a new idea, method, device: NOVELTY; the introduction of something new....”
  
5. In theory, we ALL agree that innovation and creativity are instrumental to social and economic progress in any region, and

provide new opportunities for women to engage with work and create efficiencies that drive growth.

6. Currently, the global female population of about 3.9 billion represents about 49.5% of the world's population of over 8 billion. Interestingly, this is replicated in Nigeria with her female population of about 107.5 million, representing about 50% of over 200 million. This demonstrates empirically, that women account for a large chunk of the global talent pool.

### **Leading Women – Innovation & Creativity**

7. Across the world, women have been at the forefront of and contributed immensely to the knowledge landscape in scientific, technological, health, education, arts and entertainment sectors - with inventions as varied as the first home security system; the dishwasher; the Global Positioning System (GPS); the development of the Laser-pha-co probe and technique for cataract surgery; the development of stem cell isolation

technique that has spurred advances in oncology; and many, many more. Nigeria is no exception and I am sure we can each reel out several examples, I will mention just two women who I know personally, and there are many, many more....

8. Mrs Funke Opeke, founder of the Main Street Technologies and Chief Executive Officer of MainOne Cable Company, a communications services and network solutions provider company, returned from the US after 20 years of working abroad to deploy a system that revolutionised the communications sector by correcting Nigeria's internet connectivity problem.
  
9. In 2008 she raised \$240million in funding and laid West Africa's first privately owned, open access 7,000km undersea high capacity cable submarine from Nigeria to Portugal. This opened up an entire market in the country for online banking, booking services and retail websites, e-commerce, digital economy....

10. Mrs Tara Fela-Durotoye of House of Tara International who evolved from starting her beauty enterprise as a young undergraduate law student, and has now built one of Africa's leading brands in the beauty and make up industry. She established the House of Tara way back in 1998, launched the first ever bridal directory in Nigeria in 1999, and set up the country's foremost beauty academy in 2004. I see you will be hearing from Tara later this morning.

11. I will stop with these two visionary pioneers to avoid getting into trouble but there are literally thousands of others I am aware of.

12. Clearly, the country is ripe with opportunities for innovative ideas to address gaps in our development, and it is inspiring to witness our ability to rise to the challenge amidst the rapid pace of disruptions. With the emergence of technology and innovation, the economy is presented with exciting new prospects, and Nigerian entrepreneurs are determined not to be left behind.

## **Opportunities and Challenges**

### **Economic empowerment challenges**

13. More than 18% of households in Nigeria are headed by women. But they often lack access to, and control over, productive resources, and are not recognised as fully participating economic actors. With limited income, it's difficult to provide for their households.

14. The labor force participation rate is the proportion of the population ages 15 and older that is economically active. In Nigeria, the labor force participation rate among females is 52.1% and among males is 65.5% for 2022. Since 1990, female labor force participation has decreased, compared with labor force participation in the lower-middle income group, the gap between men and women is lower in Nigeria.

15. From the most recent data available to us, more men than women owned a business in 2018. The share of female business owners for Nigeria falls in the highest quintile of all countries for which there are data. Share of business is calculated as the proportion of female or male newly registered limited liability company owners out of the total number of newly registered limited liability company owners in the economy in the calendar year.

16. Coming down to the bottom line, the importance of gender parity in economic terms has been proven empirically in the well-cited McKinsey Global Institute Report of 2020, which stated then that Nigeria's GDP could grow by 23% or \$229bn in five years (by 2025) if women participated in our economy to the same extent as men do.



## **Opportunities**

17. In order to embrace the new, we must first be willing to open our hearts, our minds and our hands. Therefore, today, it is imperative for us to discuss the future We want, and How we can achieve it – individually and collectively – by leveraging creativity and innovation.
  
18. Increasingly, there is a shift in the acceptance of the need for more representation for women in positions of influence, that matter. Governments and organisations are prioritising female representation and this creates the space for women to influence innovations in various spaces in which we play.
  
19. Today, I will speak a bit about the space I currently operate in, which is traditionally not too popular a choice for innovators and creatives, but with surprisingly increasing opportunities that may surprise you.

20. With numerous innovations to the governance space, and the use of creativity, design thinking, and the deployment of GovTech, the Nigerian government through the PEBC's systemic intervention has, since 2016, delivered over 180 verifiable reforms targeted at enabling the business environment for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), many of which are female-owned businesses.

21. The deployment of automation and digitization to audited and reformed processes has, thus, proven to be an effective catalyst towards achieving gender parity in the economy.

22. The PEBC Secretariat supported the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) on the deployment of the Companies Registration Portal (CRP). Following the reforms to the business registration processes, incorporation could be completed within 48 hours from an average timeline of 21 days previously. In addition, the intervention made it possible for business owners to

start and complete business incorporation without employing the services of lawyers or chartered secretaries.

23. The Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) introduced e-filing and e-payment of taxes, allowing companies to file their federal taxes conveniently from anywhere in the world.

24. The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) introduced a 90-day timeline for the registration of food products as part of efforts to streamline the product registration process. As a result of these reforms, we were able to provide some succour to MSMEs as they moved their goods across Nigeria, however, implementation has remained a challenge over the years.

25. Additionally, in line with its holistic reform agenda reflected in the composition of the PEDEC, the FGN has collaborated with all arms and levels of government since its inception.
26. With State Governments, through a collaboration with the National Economic Forum, also Chaired by HEVP, we have worked hand in hand to cascade business climate reforms to all Nigerians since 2017.
27. With the Judiciary – electronic accessibility to judgements of the Court of Appeal, and with 9 State Judiciaries so far on the establishment of Small Claims Courts in order to improve access to justice for Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The Lagos State Small Claims Court has introduced e-filings, e-payments for processes in court.
28. With the Legislature – Secured Transactions in Movable Assets Act 2017, Credit Reporting Act 2017; CAMA 2020, Business Facilitation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2022; a first of its kind legislation in Nigeria. And the most recent addition to our stables,

the Copyright Act 2022 which was signed into law by Mr President on March 17, 2023 – coming into force in 2024.

29. We are pleased that the creativity and innovation in delivering reforms has earned us the attention of, and formal collaboration with, the likes of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Gov/Tech Lab, which identified us as a champion in innovation in governance.

30. Therefore, as we draw to the end of the current Administration, today's theme could not have come at a more opportune point in time to look to sustainability in business climate reforms in the quest to fuse a discussion on three critical areas in the world – women, innovation and creativity.

WHAT MORE TO DO TO attain and remain at the cutting edge?

**For us individually? How?**

31. Skills Training – work/life tech enablers – how is your workspace changing?

Skills sets to plug into Innovation and Creativity?

Break boundaries for strategic partnerships

Engage women in design and diffusion

Cultivate champions

Capitalize on opportune timing and context

32. Being future ready – embrace new tech, make it part of your arsenal; develop skills that are beyond the level playing field - Knowledge and value proposition.

33. Do it afraid –Leveraging Tech in business

Non-tech founders – it is about having an idea that you are passionate about and the ability to partner to execute a tech-enabled business.

34. Tech-founders – the tech ecosystem in Nigeria is thriving. Infact, in October 2022, Nigeria's Start-up Bill was enacted. The Act provides a legal and institutional framework for the growth of startups in Nigeria and creates a conducive environment for the sector's development in the country.
35. We are delighted that, Nigeria's technology ecosystem maintained its position as the best-funded for two years consecutively, with a minimum of 180 startups, representing approximately 30% of the funded ventures in Africa, and raising about \$1 billion. This influx of private capital has enabled startups expand their operations, generate employment opportunities, and contribute significantly to our GDP growth.
- Conclusion**
36. For all its challenges, whether real or perceived, there is perhaps no better time to be alive, and a woman, than today with the vanguards that creativity and innovation place before us.

37. Human beings have historically solved their most intricate problems and remained competitive through innovative disruptions. These ideas are typically brought forth by pioneers who discover safer, more efficient, and cost-effective ways of living, doing business, and governing. They can range from minor adjustments that enhance our overall experience to extensive transformations that take us on entirely new paths.

38. Innovative disruptions thrive on natural and human-made gaps within the system, and there are plenty of these in Africa. It is no wonder that our continent is considered the next, and perhaps the final frontier – and Nigeria continues to play a leading role in how this story unfolds.

39. I wish you all a fruitful deliberation session and urge you to listen attentively to this amazing lineup of panellists in the upcoming sessions. Good Morning!