

## **TWELCOME NOTE BY THE CONVENER OF THE INNOVENTION SERIES AND EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIRMAN OF VERDANT ZEAL, DR TUNJI OLUGBODI**

Protocols & recognitions.

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

Thank you for taking time to be part of the Innovention experience. This is the 8<sup>th</sup> in the series which started in 2012 when Verdant Zeal turned 5.

We decided to pursue legacy by instituting the Innovention Series, which would discuss Africa's developmental issues bordering technology, harnessing our youthful population, entrepreneurship, leadership and, of course, the role of branding and positioning.

In these past 8 years we have hosted diverse people from different backgrounds in our quest to define and fine meaning for our emancipation from the shackles of stagnation and underdevelopment. These included political leaders, intellectuals, professionals, students and activists and a host of others.

Our problems and challenges as a nation and continent and many of these fully qualify to keep one awake at night. The most worrying for me, however, is the dismal state of education (note the irrelevance of our current curriculum to take on the future that is driven by science, technology and everything in between).

The second is the unemployment rate and the absence of jobs. Juxtapose this with the population explosion, and the prospects of being the world's 3<sup>rd</sup> largest population by 2050, we are clearly heading for major disaster, unless we can flip the coin and change the narrative.

We have long decided that the government has virtually no role in the liberty that we desire. That should be clear to us all from the self-help interventions we daily make on our own behalf in virtually all areas of life and living.

Going forward it is our desire to make even stronger impact with the Innovention initiative. This will be through a combination of strategies which will include:

1. Strategic partnerships and collaborations
2. An independent structure to support a self sustaining phase.
3. Provision of better platforms and connections for stakeholders.

4. Develop initiatives that Transform connects the dots for the youth.

The Series will therefore be defined by the following 5 pillars:

- Entrepreneurship
- Youth Empowerment
- Technology for Growth
- Leadership
- Development Accelerators

As part of the progressive changes we are featuring other sessions apart from the traditional key note address. We have also featured exhibitions, albeit on a limited scale. Just yesterday we had a remarkable Masterclass at a session with our guest from South Africa, Roger Boniface. It is the first time we are having a masterclass. We intend to continue our engagement with forward looking institutions through the Innovention Roundtable which we started two years ago in Kaduna.

For seven years Verdant Zeal has virtually funded and carried the burden of the Innovention initiative.

We will therefore like to thank all our friends and partners who have pitched in help formally, for the first time, in one way or the other to make today a reality.

This year we also have a stellar cast of distinguished speakers who are giving of their time and resources to share thoughts with us.

I am happy that today you are all part of our journey and part of history in taking the vital remedial steps that will save our continent. Africa's population is the fastest growing and youngest in the world, and is concentrated in urban areas. This new class of consumer has a smaller family, is better educated and higher earning, and is digitally savvy. Africans are exceptionally optimistic about their economic future. That's the spirit of optimism that makes this continent unstoppable.

Innovention is about keeping this optimism alive.

I look forward to a stimulating and rewarding time today and I hope we will all be better off for it.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Innovention 8.0.

Thank you.