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Special Remarks by Dr. O. J. Nnanna

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SPECIAL REMARKS**BY****DR. O.J. NNANNA,***

**Deputy Governor (DM & BP),
The Chairman of the Opening Ceremony,
Zonal and Branch Controllers,
Distinguished Resource Persons and participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

1. It is my pleasure and privilege to address you at this opening ceremony of the ninth edition of the annual in-house Executive Policy Seminar organized by the Research Department, in collaboration with the Personnel Department. The annual seminar provides a unique opportunity to improve the intellectual and professional standing of the executive staff of the Bank as well as update their knowledge on current and topical economic policy issues.
2. The theme of this year's seminar, "Poverty Alleviation: A More Pragmatic Approach" is instructive, given the current socio-economic status of the country and the need to address the problem of poverty in Nigeria in a more realistic manner. The issue of poverty alleviation has recently assumed national and international importance after decades of its relegation to the background. The focus of economic development, particularly in the less developed countries in the mid-1980s, was dominated by growth-oriented Structural Adjustment

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Programmes (SAPs). After the mid-1980s, the concern for Poverty and adoption of poverty alleviation strategies have become universal in scope. In Nigeria, as in Sub-Saharan Africa, poverty is deep-rooted and concern for the elimination of poverty in all its ramifications, which gathered momentum since the collapse of the international petroleum market and adoption of SAP in the 1980s, has been variously documented. The programmes put in place to cushion the adverse effects of SAP covered many sectors of the economy. However, the achievements in terms of poverty reduction is not quite discernible due probably to the fact that they were merely meant to cushion the adverse effects of SAP and not poverty alleviation in the true sense of the word. The concern has also been brought about apparently by the realization of the fact that a major ultimate objective of economic management is to improve the general standard of living of the citizenry.

3. Poverty is a global phenomenon which threatens the survival of mankind. This informed the United Nations' declaration of 1996 as the "International Year for the Eradication of Poverty" and October 17 of every year designated as the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty" worldwide. Similarly, the decade 1997-2006 has been declared United Nations "Decade of Eradication of Poverty". The United Nations has also set up various targets to be met internationally in the fight against poverty. In line with the spirit of these declarations and the global reawakening to the need to vigorously address the problem of poverty, major efforts have been made to reduce the level of poverty in Nigeria through the introduction of poverty-alleviation projects and programmes by the government and international agencies.

4. In this regard, a significant proportion of public investment had been channelled through the Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs), Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructure (DFRRI), River Basin Development Authority (RBDA) and the National Directorate of Employment (NDE). Government has also made efforts in this regard through public credit institutions like the Nigerian Agricultural and Cooperative Bank (NACB), Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme (ACGS), specialized financing agencies such as the Peoples' Bank of Nigeria, Community Banks and the Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP). Unfortunately, the problem has persisted as the rural sector, where the poor live, has remained largely backward and apparently unresponsive to all these efforts. Little wonder the present civilian government has made poverty alleviation the cornerstone of its socio-economic policy.

5. As the CBN is traditionally at the forefront of producing initiatives in economic policy in this country, the choice of this year's seminar theme should, therefore, be appreciated in its true perspective. For a thorough treatment of the theme, we have carefully selected facilitators who are experienced professionals in the relevant fields to lead the discussions. I hope that participants will articulate at this seminar their ideas as to how the seemingly intractable socio-economic problem of poverty facing the country today can be tackled in a more pragmatic manner as well as offer suggestions for evolving a general policy framework for alleviating poverty in Nigeria.

6. In conclusion, I wish to acknowledge the support of the Personnel Department in the execution of this seminar series since its inception in 1993.

I do hope the collaboration between the two Departments in the area of in-house capacity building will continue for the benefit of the Bank in general.

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish you all very rewarding deliberations at this seminar.

Thank you for your kind attention.

I. BACKGROUND

Thoughts on appropriate conceptualization, measurement and accurate characterization of determinants of poverty has a long history. From analytical perspective, thinking about poverty can be traced back at least to the codification of poor laws in medieval England, through to the pioneering empirical studies, at the turn of the century, by Booth in London and by Rowntree in York. Rowntree's study, published in 1901, was the first to develop a poverty standard for individual families, based on estimates of nutritional and other requirements. In the 1960s, the main focus of poverty debate was on the level of income, reflected in macro - economic indicators like Gross National Product per capita. This was associated with emphasis on growth, as exemplified in the work of the Pearson Commission, *Partners in Development* (1969). In the 1970s, poverty became prominent, notably as a result of Robert MacLennan's celebrated speech to the World Bank Board of Governors in Nairobi in 1973, and the subsequent publication of *Redistribution with Growth*. Debate on poverty conceptualization was further upgraded by two factors. First was emphasis on relative deprivation, inspired by work in the UK by Runciman and Townsend. Townsend in particular helped redefine poverty, not just as a failure to meet minimum nutrition or

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