**Welcome Remarks of the Provost, Anti-Corruption Academy of Nigeria, Professor Sola Akinrinade, FNAL, at the Opening Ceremony of the National Workshop on Academic Integrity for Nigerian Universities, at the ICPC Auditorium, on 6 July 2015.**

The Hon. Chairman, ICPC, Barrister Ekpo Nta

Hon. Members of the Board

The Executive Secretary of the NUC, Professor Julius A. Okojie, OON

The Executive Secretary of TETFUND, Professor Suleiman Elias Bogoro

The Registrar of JAMB, Professor Dibu Ojerinde

The Secretary-General of the Association of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities/Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Immediate Past Vice-Chancellor of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Professor Michael Oladimeji Faborode

Distinguished Resource Persons

Distinguished Participants from our Universities – Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Registrars, Chairmen of Committees of Deans, Directors of Academic Affairs;

Members of the Management of the ICPC – the various Directors and Heads of Units present: HOD, Admin; HOD/PE; HOD/Education; HOD/F&A…

Other members of the University and the ICPC communities

Gentlemen of the Press

Other invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasureto welcome all distinguished participants and guests to this programme.

During the next two days, we shall be working with the distinguished helmsmen and women in our Universities in this country to fashion out responses to a worrisome development that has gradually found its way into the Nigerian higher education system during the past several years. Corruption.

In recent years, doubts have been raised about the extent to which the qualifications being paraded by the graduates of our tertiary institutions are true reflections of their abilities and achievements while they traversed the corridors of our tertiary as undergraduates.

Corruption in any form is unacceptable, but corruption in our tertiary institutions strikes at the very heart of the future of this country.

The programme we are running this week for our universities and, subsequently for the Polytechnics and Colleges of Education in the next few weeks, is one that is knowledge-driven.

Consequent upon several petitions received by the ICPC and the regulatory authorities in the Nigerian tertiary education system – the NUC, the NBTE and the NCCE, the ICPC in collaboration with the NUC conducted a pilot study of corruption in three of our universities reflecting geopolitical and proprietory differentiation: North, East, West, and Federal, State, Private respectively. The findings were truly worrisome reflecting infractions in various areas noted in our invitation to the Vice-Chancellors when requesting nomination for participants for this programme. The details of the background to this exercise as encapsulated in the findings of the University Systems Study and Review will shortly be presented by the Board Member who coordinated the process, Professor Olu Aina, OFR.

Today and tomorrow, we will be focusing on Academic Integrity – what has gone wrong, and how we can retrieve our system from the throes and pains inflicted upon it by the monster called corruption.

In putting together this programme, I must acknowledge here the great support we, at the Anti-Corruption Academy of Nigeria have received from the Honorable Chairman of the ICPC, Barrister Ekpo Nta and the Board, as well as from the Management of the Commission and several staff members. The ICPC Chairman has been particularly encouraging while also challenging us. For him – and for me, the future of the battle against corruption would have to be fought in the hearts and minds of people through creating and fostering attitudinal change, reorientation of values, and through capacity building to tackle the phenomenon head on at every stage and level of the Nigerian society. Enforcement is good but prevention through education is even better.

I must acknowledge the support of the resource persons who are facilitating various sessions of this two-day programme. The resource persons have been selected based on their expertise and track record of commitment to integrity of academic processes. Attention has also been paid to their current and/or previous roles within the higher education system and their ability to impact and add value to the process. I am deeply grateful to all of them who accepted the challenge of contributing their quota to the process of tackling a problem that is eating into the fabrics of our tertiary education system.

I must also appreciate my colleagues at the Anti-Corruption Academy. Their commitment and support are worthy of great commendation.

Before I conclude these remarks, I like to throw a challenge to the participants that are here. In most instances, participants attending workshops such as this are usually excited by the themes and discussion. However, 99% of them would fail to do anything about the issues upon returning to base. The essence of this workshop is to begin the process of effecting a change of direction in relation to the issues to be discussed here, in our institutions. It would amount to a supreme waste of time and valuable resources if we return to our institutions and return to life as usual. We at the Academy are prepared to work with individual institutions and groups of institutions in replicating the workshop at institutional levels to reach the real people on the ground. The participants have been carefully selected and we believe they should be able to lead the process of cascading the discussion down to colleagues in our various institutions. It is my earnest plea that you would not allow this process to be an exercise in futility.

Even as we look forward to fruitful deliberations over the next two days, I thank you for your attention.

Professor Sola Akinrinade, FNAL

Provost