SPECIAL ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, MALAM DIKKO UMARU RADDA, PhD, CON (THE EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF KATSINA STATE), AT THE 1ST KATSINA MSME AWARDS & DIKKO SOCIAL INNOVATION ACADEMY GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD AT THE GOVERNMENT HOUSE BANQUET HALL, KATSINA, ON MONDAY, 2OTH OCTOBER 2025

Protocols:

It is with great honour and a deep sense of fulfillment that I stand before you this evening at this historic event — the **Maiden Katsina State MSME Awards and the Graduation Ceremony of the Dikko Social Innovation Academy** with the theme: *"Celebrating Innovation and Enterprise for a Prosperous Katsina State"*

Tonight, we gather not only to celebrate achievement, but also to celebrate hope, resilience, and the spirit of innovation that defines the people of Katsina State.

Your Excellency, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, when we came into office, we were clear on our mission — to build an economy that empowers people through enterprise and innovation. That decision led to the creation of the Katsina State Enterprise Development Agency (KASEDA) — a vehicle that now drives our state's MSME growth, job creation, and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Two years later, I can proudly say that this was a strategic and deliberate decision that is yielding visible results. Under the

leadership of the Executive Director/CEO (Hajiya Aisha Aminu), KASEDA has become one of the most vibrant enterprise agencies in Nigeria. Through her team's hard work, the Agency now has a Five (5) Year Strategic Plan that aligns perfectly with my administration's broader development agenda. I want to sincerely commend her leadership and dedication — KASEDA has proven that with the right structure and the right people, government can deliver effectively.

Your Excellency, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, among our most innovative achievements is the Dikko Social Innovation Academy (DSIA) — a bold initiative that gives young people from underserved backgrounds the opportunity to design and implement solutions to our community challenges.

We began this journey by sending three young Katsina State indigenes to Uganda to understudy the globally recognized Social Innovation Academy model. The goal was to replicate it here — and today, I am proud to showcase the first set of graduands from the academy.

Your Excellency, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, we are now graduating our first cohort of 18 fellows who have spent six (6) months undergoing intensive hands-on training in problem-solving, design thinking, and social entrepreneurship. Many of them started with little confidence — some couldn't even stand before a crowd — but today, they are leaving as innovators, public speakers, and social entrepreneurs ready to solve real problems in their communities. The number is intentionally small

because the training requires full participation and high level of concentration. Moving forward, the plan is to graduate more cohorts in a set year.

I want to specially encourage His Excellency, the Vice President, to consider adopting this model for national replication. It is a powerful way to empower young people, especially those who do not have access to the same exposure or resources as others.

To our graduating fellows — I say congratulations. You are the pioneers of a new generation of change makers. Your journey may not be easy, but with discipline, commitment, and God's guidance, success will follow you. We will continue to support you every step of the way.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, tonight, we also celebrate excellence in business through the First Katsina State MSME Awards. This ceremony honours our entrepreneurs — the men and women driving our local economy, creating jobs, and redefining innovation from the grassroots.

To all awardees — we are very proud of you. Your achievements prove that Katsina State entrepreneurs can compete anywhere in the world. This award is not only about recognition — it is about motivation. We want our young people to see your success and believe that they, too, can achieve greatness through hard work, creativity, and integrity. This will now be an annual event — one that celebrates excellence, showcases success, and motivates

others to aim higher.

Your Excellency distinguished ladies and gentlemen, being the maiden award ceremony, we are donating a car to the overall best winner to encourage other small and growing businesses to aim for the sky. It may be your turn to win a car in subsequent edition. In this regards I want to encourage other corporate bodies and partners to complement our efforts by donating prizes.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, none of this progress would have been possible without collaboration. Through strong partnerships with the Bank of Industry, Sterling Bank, UNDP, SMEDAN etc., we have:

- Launched a ₦5 billion MSMEs Development Fund — the first of its kind in the state's history.
- Disbursed a N500 million managed fund for youth and women entrepreneurs.
- Partnered with UNDP for ₦542 million in support to MSMEs in conflict-affected LGAs.
- Conducted the MSME Census and Cluster Mapping, giving us reliable data for planning.
- Established the Dikko Business Development Service Corps, helping businesses access finance and meet compliance standards.

These partnerships are helping us to create a stronger, more sustainable MSME ecosystem.

Your Excellency, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, permit me to pause here and express my deepest appreciation to His Excellency, Senator Kashim Shettima, GCON, the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Your Excellency, your presence here today is a powerful statement of your unwavering commitment to MSME development in Nigeria. When I first approached you and requested that you kindly extend your visit to Katsina State — to not only attend the National MSME Clinics but also stay overnight to grace this event — you smiled and said simply, "Dikko, anything that supports MSMEs, I say yes." And true to your word — here you are with us today.

That, Sir, is leadership in action.

Your decision to spend the night in Katsina State for this occasion — despite your tight national schedule — means a lot to us and to every entrepreneur gathered here tonight. Your consistency, humility, and hands-on support for the MSME ecosystem across Nigeria have made you the true champion of enterprise development in this country.

I must also add that the people of Katsina State and our Kanuri brothers and sisters from Borno State had shared a long history of friendship and mutual teasing. **We often say, *"When a Kanuri man promises, he does not just keep the word — he multiplies it."* Your Excellency, you have once again lived up to that reputation!**

On behalf of the Government and people of Katsina State, I thank you profoundly. Your support means everything to us, and we assure you that Katsina will always remain a loyal partner in advancing national enterprise development.

Distinguished guests, tonight is a celebration of progress, partnership, and purpose.

To our development partners — thank you for your support.

To our entrepreneurs — thank you for believing in your dreams.

To our graduands — thank you for showing that innovation can rise from anywhere.

And to His Excellency, the Vice President — thank you for inspiring us with your vision and for saying "yes" every time MSMEs call.

Together, we will build a Katsina where innovation thrives, businesses prosper, and every young person has a chance to succeed.

Thank you.

God bless Katsina State.

God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.