SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY, THE EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF KATSINA STATE, MALLAM DIKKO UMARU RADDA PhD. CON AT THE ROUNDTABLE MEETING WITH THE RURAL ELECTRIFICATION AGENCY (REA) AND RENEWABLE ENERGY SERVICE COMPANIES (RESCOS) ON 24TH OCTOBER, 2024 AT TRANSCORP HILTON HOTEL, ABUJA.

Protocol

It is a great pleasure to present this address to you all at this important roundtable meeting between the Katsina State Government, the Rural Electrification Agency (REA), and the Renewable Energy Service Companies (RESCOs). We are gathered here today with a common goal to accelerate energy access for our Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), and for our unserved and underserved communities in Katsina State, under the framework of the National Electrification Strategy Implementation Plan (NESIP).

Energy is not just a means to light up homes; it is a catalyst for economic growth. Access to reliable

electricity will empower our Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, enabling them to expand operations, increase productivity, and create more jobs for our people. By providing electricity to commercial clusters, we are not just powering businesses—we are powering the dreams and aspirations of countless entrepreneurs who are the backbone of our economy.

We acknowledge that achieving our vision of universal energy access is not something the state can do alone. This is why we have convened this meeting with developers, Rural Electrification Agency, and State officials, led by myself, to discuss clear opportunities and support mechanisms for mini-grid development. Our goal is to create a pathway for sustainable electrification projects that not only power homes but drive local economic growth, entrepreneurial development, and improved livelihoods for our people.

Earlier today, I had the pleasure of engaging with various stakeholders in a focused discussion on MSMEs development in Katsina State. I am pleased to share that we received high-level commitments from those stakeholders, pledging their support towards enhancing the growth and sustainability of MSMEs in our state. As we turn our attention to this crucial roundtable on renewable energy, I am optimistic and eager to receive similar, if not even greater, commitments from the RESCOs and other stakeholders present here today. Your active participation and support will be vital in achieving our vision for widespread energy access that will power our MSMEs and drive economic growth in Katsina.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, while the renewable energy sector in Katsina State presents tremendous opportunities, we acknowledge that there are challenges that need to be addressed. Accessing finance, managing community expectations, and the

high costs of initial infrastructure are a few of these challenges. However, these challenges are not insurmountable, especially when approached through collaboration and innovation.

Katsina State is uniquely positioned geographically to harness renewable energy resources, particularly through solar and wind energy. Our state enjoys one of the highest levels of solar irradiation in the country, making solar power a reliable and sustainable option for electrification projects especially due to the rising demand for electricity in our rural communities and MSMEs. This presents an opportunity for developers to tap into a growing market while contributing to the socio-economic transformation of our state. Additionally, our wind energy project in Rimi is a promising initiative that we are eager to concession to qualified partners for improved efficiency and service delivery.

To expedite this process, we seek REA's active role in providing technical advice and support to ensure the concession is concluded efficiently. We believe that this project, along with other renewable energy initiatives, will be key to transforming our energy landscape and driving local economic growth.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, we must acknowledge the crucial role that the REA has played in bringing electricity to critical facilities across Katsina State. Notably, under the COVID-19 and beyond initiatives, the REA facilitated the electrification of several Hospitals and Primary Healthcare Centers, ensuring that these vital institutions had reliable power. This intervention not only improved healthcare delivery but also demonstrated the impact of strategic partnerships in uplifting our communities. We are committed to making them sustainable.

In light of our shared goals, I appeal to the REA to consider siting more projects in Katsina State. With necessary incentives and the improved security environment, we believe there is an excellent opportunity to expand the reach of the NESIP initiative in our state. Our people are eager to benefit from the positive impact that these projects bring.

Katsina State recognizes the pivotal role of energy in driving economic growth, enhancing productivity, and improving the quality of life for our people. To this end, my administration is committed to creating an enabling environment that encourages investment in renewable energy projects. We are prepared to offer a range of incentives to attract developers to Katsina State, including but not limited to:

i) Land allocation at subsidized rates for renewable energy infrastructure development, to enable swift

project setup, ensuring that suitable sites are available for energy infrastructure.

ii) Fast-track approval processes through a dedicated desk for renewable energy projects, ensuring that developers can navigate regulatory requirements with ease.

iii) Logistical support, such as assistance to secure storage for equipment and assistance in community engagement to ensure smooth project implementation and local support.

iv) Facilitation of power purchase agreements with local businesses, providing a ready market for electricity and ensuring a steady revenue stream for energy producers.

Additionally, we are committed to providing security guarantees for your investment and workforce. The security situation in Katsina has improved significantly, thanks to enhanced security operations and community engagement efforts. Our

local communities are safer, and we are dedicated to creating a secure environment where businesses can thrive without fear.

I want to assure all developers and stakeholders present here today that the safety of your investment, infrastructure, and manpower is our priority. We are committed to working closely with security agencies to ensure that your operations are secure and uninterrupted.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, sustainability is at the heart of our approach to energy access. We are committed to ensuring that the impact of ongoing and future projects endures for the long term. To this end, we are proposing that completed projects be handed over to our newly created Asset Management Company and State Rural Electrification Board, which will be responsible for maintaining and managing these energy assets. This

ensures that projects continue to serve their intended purposes well beyond their initial implementation.

By working with REA, we aim to establish a sustainability framework that guarantees long-term functionality and effectiveness. We believe that every project going forward must include a clear sustainability structure, including local capacity building, community ownership, and regular performance monitoring.

As a demonstration of our commitment to this partnership, the Katsina State Government will proactively identify viable and sustainable sites for renewable energy projects. We will also work diligently to identify and map commercial industrial clusters that would benefit from stable and affordable power, providing developers with clear opportunities to deliver impactful solutions.

Our goal is to ensure that developers have a clear path to success in Katsina State, backed by a

supportive government, an eager market, and the right infrastructure.

Katsina is ready for business, and we will do everything possible to make your investment in our State a worthwhile and memorable experience. We believe that with the support of the RESCOs, REA, and other partners, we can achieve energy sufficiency, drive MSME development, and uplift the lives of our people. Already we have completed the mapping of viable clusters in the State and part of our strategy to support them is to provide affordable and sustainable energy solutions.

Ladies and gentlemen, this roundtable marks the beginning of a new chapter in our journey towards universal energy access and economic transformation. By working together, we can create sustainable electrification projects that power progress, unlock new economic opportunities, and improve the quality of life for all our residents. Let us

seize this moment and move forward with determination and purpose.

Thank you, and I look forward to a productive and collaborative discussion.