KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY, MALLAM DIKKO UMARU RADDA, Ph.D., CON, (THE EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF KATSINA STATE), AT THE UNVEILING AND PRESENTATION OF THE KATSINA STATE MSME POLICY AND GRADUATION OF 217 EMPLOYABILITY PROJECT PARTICIPANTS ON THE 10th OCTOBER, 2024 AT THE BELLO KOFAR BAI CONFERENCE HALL, KATSINA STATE SECRETARIAT, KATSINA

Protocol,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with immense pride and gratitude that I stand before you today at this significant occasion, which marks the Unveiling and Presentation of the Katsina State nMSME Policy and the Graduation of 217 Participants of the Katsina State Employability Project. This is a significant moment in our journey to foster entrepreneurship, support MSME growth, and equip our youth with vital skills for the future.

First and foremost, allow me to express my profound appreciation to our esteemed guest speaker and the entire Katsina State nMSME community, whose collective support and commitment to progress have made this day possible.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies, and Gentlemen, our gathering today is a landmark occasion, it represents a pivotal moment in the development trajectory of our beloved state. We are gathered here not just to celebrate the achievements of these young, dynamic individuals, but also to lay down a robust framework for the empowerment of our entrepreneurs and the advancement of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through the unveiling of the Katsina State nMSME Policy.

I am proud to announce that Katsina State is the first in the country to domesticate the National Policy on MSMEs and develop our own Katsina State nMSME Policy. This demonstrates our commitment to fostering growth and development within the MSME sector, and underscores our dedication to creating a business-friendly environment. This policy will God willing be a catalyst for sustainable economic growth and job creation. • Capacity Building and Entrepreneurial Development: Our entrepreneurs will be equipped with the skills needed to thrive in today's competitive marketplace.

• **Infrastructure and Market Linkages:** Through collaboration with key stakeholders, we will strengthen infrastructure and create market opportunities for our MSMEs, particularly those in underserved and rural areas.

• **Regulatory support to ease the cost of doing business.**

I am particularly delighted that this policy is backed up by an implementation Metrix which will monitor and evaluate closely to ensure that the right impact is being made. It has been often said that this country is not short of policies, but the policies are lacking in effective implementation. Consequently, I want all relevant stakeholders to pay particular attention to the implementation Metrix. I hereby mandate the State MSME Council on MSMEs and the Katsina State Enterprise Development Agency (KASEDA) to review and assess the implementation plan on a quarterly basis and thereafter submit progress report to my office. I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the 217 young men and women who are graduating today from the Katsina State Employability Project. Your achievement is not only a personal triumph but a beacon of hope for the future of our state. You have undergone six weeks of intensive training in high-demand skills, including:

• Web Development,

• Social Media and Email Marketing,

• Graphics and Product Design,

• Entrepreneurial Development, and

• Other essential skills critical for today's job market.

This initiative reflects our commitment to equipping our youth with 21st-century skills and preparing them for the ever-changing demands of the job market. The journey you have embarked upon is the beginning of a bright future, not just for you, but for the economic and social prosperity of Katsina State.

As you go forth, I encourage you to take the knowledge and skills you have acquired and use them to make meaningful contributions to yourselves and the society at large. Whether as entrepreneurs' innovators, or leaders, you are the catalysts for change and the future of our great state.

I must acknowledge the invaluable role that KASEDA in conjunction with LEAPWORLD and the Centre for Enterprise Training and Policy Initiatives (CETAPI) played in delivering this successful program. In addition, I want to take this opportunity to call upon our development partners, stakeholders, and business leaders to continue supporting these vital programs. As we unveil the nMSME Policy today and celebrate the achievements of these young entrepreneurs, let us not lose sight of the fact that collaboration is key to achieving sustainable growth.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies, and Gentlemen, our administration is fully committed to ensuring the implementation of the nMSME Policy and scaling the Employability Project to reach even more youth and entrepreneurs. With your continued support, I am confident that we will create an economic landscape that is dynamic, inclusive, and resilient, capable of withstanding the challenges of the future. Let me conclude by once again congratulating the graduates and thanking all the stakeholders involved in today's program. Together, we will continue to build a Katsina State that thrives on the strength of its people, its businesses, and its commitment to progress.

Thank you, and May God bless Katsina State and the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Mallam Dikko Umaru Radda Ph.D., CON Executive Governor Katsina State

Furthermore, this policy is inclusive, people-centered, and built to catalyze growth for businesses, especially for our youth, women, and rural entrepreneurs. It is a product of careful consultation with stakeholders, and it underscores our administration's commitment to creating an enabling environment for business growth, reducing barriers to entry, improve regulatory frameworks, and promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship across all sectors of our economy. Overall, it is a step towards creating a prosperous Katsina where every entrepreneur is empowered to reach their full potential.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies, and Gentlemen, the Katsina State

nMSME Policy is a game-changer for driving employment, innovation, and economic resilience of our youth. It is designed to provide a comprehensive and strategic roadmap for supporting MSMEs within the state. The policy will serve as a framework for ensuring that MSMEs in Katsina State among other things have access to:

• **Finance and Investment Opportunities:** Through partnerships with financial institutions and development partners, we will enhance access to affordable credit and grants.