SPEECH OF HIS EXCELLENCY, MALAM DIKKO UMARU RADDA, PhD, CON, THE EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF KATSINA STATE DURING THE VISIT OF THE GATES FOUNDATION POLIO OVERSIGHT BOARD MEMBERS IN KATSINA STATE

Protocols:

It is my great honor to welcome our esteemed guests and partners from the Gates Foundation to Katsina State, the home of Hospitality. Your visit today, in deed underscores the shared commitment we all have in global polio eradication initiatives ensuring that our State and the country remain polio free while the spread of circulating Variant Polio Virus is interrupted. I want to particularly appreciate your efforts in the strengthening of our health system in Katsina through various interventions and support

including establishment and maintenance of Polio Emergency Operation Center through eHealth Africa from 2013 to date. This important Center which is currently undergoing expansion through your support has remained pivotal and critical to various successes recorded in numerous public health emergency responses in the State.

Katsina State has made significant progress in improving healthcare delivery, especially in the areas of primary healthcare revitalization, immunization and disease surveillance which is complemented by environmental surveillance. Despite these efforts, we recognize that challenges still remain; notably

1)vaccine hesitancy or noncompliance resulting from misinformation and cultural beliefs in certain communities like Kudu 3 Ward in Katsina LGA

2)Suboptimal routine immunization uptake – Some LGAs having high number of Zero dose children due to various barriers.

3)Hard-to-Reach Areas due to insecurity– Some settlements, particularly in rural and security-compromised areas, have limited access to healthcare services.

In response to these challenges, the Katsina State Government through the Ministry of Health and Primary Health Care Agency with support from our developmental partners has intensified its efforts

through numerous innovative strategies which include among other things;

- ✓ Engagement with Traditional and Religious Leaders – to mobilize the communities and influence public perception in order to promote vaccine acceptance and resolve noncompliance
- ✓ Use of innovative strategies like papalolos , attractive pluses , deployment of noncompliance resolution teams to high risk wards during campaigns using resources from State Counterparts and partners
- ✓ Expanding the surveillance network in all communities especially in partially and inaccessible communities which lead to high case

detection investigation and response by the Rapid Response

- ✓ Using IEV (Identify, Enumerate and Vaccinate) strategy in high risk wards
- ✓ RES (Reach Every Settlement) Strategy where our vaccination teams with support from security agents were able reach and vaccinate children in security compromised settlements across the state
- ✓ Routine Immunization Intensification – using optimized out reaches deploying health workers to reach and vaccinate children in various communities especially the Zero dose Surveillance

From the forgoing, it is unequivocally undisputable to say that the fight against any disease including Polio Variants cannot be won by the government alone. We deeply appreciate the continued support of the Gates Foundation and all other partners supporting us in this endeavor. Your technical assistance, funding, and strategic guidance have been instrumental to our success so far.

On this note, I want call on you and seek further collaboration in:

- Sustaining and improving surveillance and immunization outreach programs, especially in hard-to-reach and security compromised communities.

- ❖Enhancing innovative strategies to combat vaccine hesitancy and noncompliance
- ❖Strengthening healthcare infrastructure to ensure sustainability beyond Global Polio Eradication Program

In conclusion, let me reaffirm our unwavering commitment to ending Circulating Mutant Polio Virus outbreak in Katsina State. My administration will continue to prioritize immunization and ensure that every child, regardless of location, has access to life-saving vaccines. We will continue allocating resources for immunization and disease control. We will continue to strengthen our healthcare workforce to improve service delivery. For us this battle is not

just about eliminating or eradicating a disease; it is about securing a healthier future for our children and generations to come. With strong collaboration, commitment, and determination, I am confident that we will overcome all our challenges. Once again, I want to sincerely thank the Gates Foundation and all our partners for their invaluable support. Together, we will ensure that our beloved state remain polio free and circulating Polio Variant transmission is interrupted permanently God bless Katsina State!

God bless Nigeria!