**UNIZIK BUSINESS SCHOOL**

**NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY, AWKA**

**A COMMUNIQUE OF THE 2023 UBS HYBRID (VIRTUAL/PHYSICAL) INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, 25TH-26TH OCTOBER 2023**

The theme of the conference is ‘Political Transition and Economic Development: The African Experience’ with a keynote from Prof. Obiora Okonkwo, OFR. By his reference to, in his words, ‘… the immortal words of Socrates, arguably the greatest philosopher ever’, that ‘an unexamined life is not worth living’ and John Bunyan’s classic theological novel - *The Pilgrims Progress* in which the pilgrims review their life’s journey in their quest for eternal salvation, he examines the Africa political journey focusing on political transition from independence to date in which he considers the factors influencing peaceful and problematic transitions in Africa; political transitions, democratic governance and socioeconomic development in Africa and political transitions and economic development with a view to proffering the way forward. The lead paper by Dr. Oby Ezekwesili is very instructive and thought provoking. It lucidly captures the true political situation in Africa more generally and Nigeria in particular, progress made and failures recorded while directing attention to a better future of politics in Africa based on the increasing political awareness that is evident with the African populace.

The conference records a good number of impressive presentations covering political transition and economic stability of African states; public service and business environment of African states; public policies and business sustainability in Africa; business policies and governing of MSME sector development in Africa; engineering and African economic development; ICT and African digital economy; engineering, artificial intelligence and African economic development; entrepreneurial development and economic sustainability in Africa; informal sector and the African economic development; pharmaceutics and African economic development; international relation and economic development in Africa; regional economic blocs and African development; security, insecurity and foreign direct investment; gender issues in African economic development; environment, health and wellness in Africa; political discourses and African economic development; leadership issues and sustainability of the African state; legal systems and African development; knowledge economy in Africa; and linguistic situation and economic development in Africa. The dimensions of these topical issues account for constructive and technical contributions the conference has made towards elucidating the African political situation and establishing the nexus between it and her development to create the knowledge required in this critical time of her development for responsive harnessing and utilization.

**Recommendations**

Among otherthings there is the consensus that:

* Democratic institutions such as electoral commissions, judicial systems and oversight bodies be strengthened. A true independence of these institutions would yield transparency and accountability.
* Inclusive governance should be promotedfor a more robust political participation which is the panacea for any perceived or evident marginalization.
* Civic education with a strong component of voter awareness should be designed and administered especially to the lower-class population. This will engender empowering citizens about their rights and civic responsibilities.
* Non-compromised security measures are required prior, during and after elections. This could be achieved by training professional security personnel, that is, personnel with zero party interest, whose allegiance must always be to the state and constitution, not the party in power.
* Establishing institutions charged with creating and strengthening mechanisms for a peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts that arise before, during and after elections.
* Designing and instituting effective strategies for early warning systems, especially as it has to do with curbing violent protests and regional uprisings. Such systems should include productive collaboration with civil society organizations, security agencies, international partners, and local community leaders.
* Implementing international organizations recommendations on peace, political engagements and governance with a view to promoting political best practices in elections, democratic governance and democratic political transition.
* The truth about the youths being the leaders of tomorrow should be politically recognized in engaging the youths in political institutions, election and economic processes. This kind of empowerment will provide for continuity of sustenance of democratic gains and deepening of the democratic culture.
* Adopting and pursuing achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the target of resolving socio-economic issues such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, and lack of and poor infrastructural facilities, which would provide for economic development and consequently political stability.

**Acknowledgements**

The UNIZIK Business School and Local Organizing Committee highly appreciate Prof. Obiorah Okonkwo for accepting and fulfilling his acceptance as the keynote speaker at the conference. Connecting virtually enhanced the visibility of the conference. We thank Dr. Oby Ezekwesili for her scintillating and constructive virtual lead paper, which provided the logical dimensions interrogated and expounded in many of the presentations made by the conferees. More specially, we thank the Vice-Chancellor of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Prof. Charles Esimone, *FAS*, for his immeasurable support which provided the much-needed success the conference has recorded. We equally appreciate all the principal officers of the university, especially the DVC, Administration and the members of the University Council, who spared time to attend the opening ceremony. We profoundly appreciate all the awardees, Chief Obinna Iyiegbu (Obi Cubana) *Distinguished Serial Entrepreneur*; Chief Charles Odunukwe, *Dynamic Entrepreneur of Excellence*; Prof. Benjamin Osisoma, *Academic Leadership Award*; Prof. Joseph Ikechebelu, *Distinguished Medical Services Award*;Ikenna John Oguegbu Esq., *Dynamic Entrepreneurial Award*; Chief Sir Ikenna Okafor (Ide Akwaeze), *Distinguished Education and Community Service Award*; Chief Dr. Alexander Chika Okafor, OON, *Distinguished Entrepreneur*; and Dr. Clem C. Nwogbo, *Distinguished Engineering and Infrastructure Development Award*. We are hopeful you would do much more than has won you this recognition. Other awardees are Prof. Federick Odibo, *Distinguished Academic Service Award* and the past Directors of UNIZIK Business School, Prof. Ezimma Nnabuife (2011-2012); Prof. Patrick Akpan (2012-2014); Prof. Anayo D. Nkamnebe (2014-2016) and Prof. Au. Nkemdilim Nnonyelu (2016-2021), whose commitment, diligence and intellectual resources have brought the UNIZIK Business School and more generally Nnamdi Azikiwe University to the enviable positions they enjoy today in the country and the world. Finally, we thank all the conferees whose presence qualified the conference and the Chairs and co-Chairs of the parallel sessions, whose erudition substantiates the presentations as a quality harvest of academic contributions.

Prof. Ezimma Nnabuife Prof. Emma Okoye

Chair, LOC Director, UBS, Awka