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**ADDRESS BY THE GUEST OF HONOUR, BARR. BOSS GIDA MUSTAPHA,  
SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERATION AT THE 47<sup>th</sup>  
GRADUATION CEREMONY OF THE AIR FORCE INSTITUTE OF  
TECHNOLOGY, KADUNA**

**PROTOCOL**

It is a great privilege for me to be here today at the 47<sup>th</sup> Graduation Ceremony of the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), Kaduna. I am grateful to the leadership of the Nigerian Air Force and the Institute for giving me the honour to serve as the Guest of Honour at this Ceremony. An honour which I receive with upmost humility and I am glad to be in your midst.

2. Let me this opportunity to appreciate the presence of all Nigerian Air Force and AFIT partners who have travelled from far and near to grace this occasion. Your presence here today is an indication of your relationship and your willingness to contribute to the development of aviation in Nigeria of which the Air Force Institute of Technology and indeed the Nigerian Air Force are major stakeholders. I will not forget to mention the graduands on whose course we are all gathered here today. I heartily congratulate you for achieving this feat.

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3. The topic for discussion at this year's Graduation Ceremony is: '**CIVIL-MILITARY PARTNERSHIP: TOWARDS A THRIVING AVIATION INDUSTRY IN NIGERIA**'. This topic is not only apt but also quite timely. It encapsulates the global shift towards a genial and cordial synergy between the military and civil society. In keeping with the global trend of encouraging civil military synergy, in December 2017, the President and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, Muhammadu Buhari, assented to the bill upgrading AFIT to a degree awarding university. This nexus between the military and the civilians is best encapsulated by the AFIT example where the military is at the fore of aviation technology development and education which in turn feeds the civil aviation industry. I am also aware that recently the Nigerian Air Force in collaboration with AFIT graduates built the **TSAIGUMI**, an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), which was launched by Mr. President. This is a good example of military and civil partnership in the aviation industry where the products of military engineering like the TSAIGUMI can be retrofitted to serve civilian purposes like pipeline monitoring and surveillance, remote border patrol, election monitoring and other civilian applications. This will serve to improve our indigenous technologies and reduce dependence on foreign products thereby hedging our foreign reserves. The aviation industry demands high security especially in light of global challenges where airplanes and unmanned aerial vehicles have become tools of subversion and crime. This necessitates an overhaul of civil aviation to become more security conscious. This can be principally achieved by deliberate

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domestication of aviation applications and services through active civil military partnerships.

4. As you are all aware, many Nigerian airlines are currently being managed and maintained by foreign personnel, which is not correct. I want to join my voice with the effort of the Hon. Minister of State (Aviation) to encourage Nigerians to take up that challenge and bring the jobs back home where airline maintenance and operations are handled by locals. You may recall that efforts are being made to resuscitate the National carrier with the launch of the Name on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, 2018. Extensive plans are already underway to achieve this very laudable project by a President who has the welfare of his people in mind. This must be exciting news for AFIT as it is expected that majority of the workforce for that airline would be Nigerians. Considering the cost of training aviation personnel against the economic realities of Nigeria, the military must be equipped to train and supply personnel to the civil aviation industry. AFIT is therefore uniquely positioned to bridge that gap where security and commercialization of aviation meets to expand the frontiers of the industry.

5. AFIT as I stated earlier is poised to achieving a lot of milestones which will impact very positively on the aviation industry. However, developing indigenous capacity no doubt requires unity of purpose and synergy of efforts among the various stakeholders in the Nation's aviation sector. With the upgrading of AFIT to a university status, I charge you all staff, students and now graduates to raise to become globally competitive and paint the name of your alma meter and of course, Nigeria on the skies. As you move into the world from here, please note

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that the Federal Government has various youth empowerment initiatives like N-Power and You Win Connect. You are all qualified and encouraged to participate in these programmes and use the knowledge acquired here to make a difference in the Nation.

6. Concerted strategies must be adopted to focus on bridging the knowledge and skills gap of Nigerian aviators in line with international standards. One of the policies of Mr. President is to create indigenous technological capacity both in the military and civilian space in Nigeria. This can be evidenced by the creation of specialized tertiary Institutions of the Army, Navy and Air Force by Mr. President. Stakeholders in the industry which include both military and civilians must also engage in joint research efforts and enhancement of quality personnel to manufacture aviation products for use in Nigeria and to export our technology and services to other nations of the world.

7. I am particularly glad to note that the Air Force Institute of Technology has over the years undertaken great and numerous strides in aerospace technology and management studies under the supervision of the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) and is now upgraded to a degree awarding institution under the National Universities Commission (NUC). AFIT has indeed become a Centre of excellence for scholarly discourse on aviation related issues and development of the much-needed manpower for the aerospace industry in Nigeria. I realize that you are in a unique position of being the only tertiary institution that provides training leading to the award of academic qualifications in the aerospace field, not only in Nigeria but in the entire West African sub-

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region. You have not failed in this endeavour, judging by the number of the graduates you have produced since your transformation from Technical Training Group to Air Force Institute of Technology. I expect more from you, for to whom much is given, much is expected. As a university now, the skies should be your takeoff point.

8. Now to you AFIT graduates for whom we are gathered today, you are a mix of both the military and civilian. You have been trained with utmost care, attention and precision to meet the needs of the burgeoning aviation sector. Remember you are well equipped to fill in the specialized gaps in the industry. As you all graduate today, I wish you the very best as you go forward. The school has trained you under the strictest academic and social environment. I expect that you have imbibed the discipline of the military and will use it to distinguish yourselves in the larger society as you set out to conquer the world.

9. Once more, I congratulate all of you especially the staff, family and friends of graduating students. I am very delighted to partake in this occasion and I wish you more success in the years ahead.

10. Thank you and God bless you all.