**Welcome Address by Dr. Hamid Bobboyi, the Executive Secretary, Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC)**

At the Opening Ceremony of the International Conference on Innovations in Educational Assessment

**Distinguished Guests, Respected Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is indeed a great pleasure and privilege to welcome you all to this international conference on Innovations in Educational Assessment, which we have been given the privilege and honor to host here at our Digital Resource Center. Your presence here today reflects a shared commitment to advancing the quality of education and embracing progressive change. We gather at a time of significant opportunity for transforming education in Nigeria, and it is both timely and vital that we address the challenges and harness the potential innovations in assessment to enhance learning outcomes.

The theme of this conference, “Transforming Learning and Assessment Through the Application of Big Data and Artificial Intelligence” is very apt and underpins our collective responsibility to build a system that not only meets but exceeds global standards. We believe that an effective education system rests on the foundation of sound, inclusive, and responsive assessment practices. This conference offers a platform for educators, researchers, policymakers, and thought leaders from around the world to exchange ideas, share insights, and explore the latest tools and methodologies that can help us achieve this vision.

At UBEC, our mandate is clear: to ensure access to quality basic education for every Nigerian child. We recognize that assessment is a critical component in achieving this goal just as it is very clear to us that this can only be achieved through the use of the new and innovative approaches that emerging technologies of our times provide for us. By fully exploiting these technologies, we can better understand where gaps exist, tailor interventions to meet learners’ needs, and hold ourselves accountable for delivering on our mandate. The shift toward innovative assessments—particularly those that embrace digital technologies, inclusivity, and adaptability—will allow us to create a more equitable, data-driven approach to educational transformation.

In recent years, UBEC has initiated and supported numerous transformative reforms, all of them hinged on the sophisticated digital technologies of our times. In order to make the optimal use of these technologies, we have established the Digital Resource Centre that you are currently having this conference in. We have also initiated several digital programmes including the Smart Schools Programme (ESP) where we have 37 schools in states across the country with the latest smart technologies offering highly qualitative education to our learners, the Effective Schools Programme (ESP) that currently has 111 schools from all our senatorial districts that we are trying to upgrade to smart schools and the Open Schooling Programme (OSP) where we are using ICTs to address the needs of learners that are not in conventional schools.

Needless to say, each and every one of these programmes demands continuous and special attention to the way we evaluate learning. And it is not just how learners perform in exams but how assessments can meaningfully contribute to lifelong learning. This conference is an opportunity for us all to delve deeper into these questions and to emerge with actionable insights that will shape the future of education in Nigeria. As we embark on this journey together over the course of this conference, I encourage each of you to engage actively, share openly, and collaborate boldly. Let us leave no stone unturned in exploring pathways to enhance educational assessment, knowing that the work we do here has the potential to impact generations to come.

Once again, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to each of you for your presence and commitment. I especially thank those that have come from outside the country such as our Egyptian delegation and the many participants that are joining virtually from abroad. I also thank the International Association for Innovations in Educational Assessment for giving us the honor and privilege of hosting this conference. May I, at this juncture, formally declare this international conference open praying that it would be a catalyst for change, innovation, and a renewed dedication to the transformative power of education.

Thank you.

Hamid Bobboyi