**A KEYNOTE SPEECH PRESENTED BY PROFESSOR AUGUSTINE A. UWAKWE,VICE CHANCELLOR OF GREGORY UNIVERSITY, UTURU, ABIA STATE, ON THE OCCASION OF THE FACULTY OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE MAIDEN CONFERENCE EVENT HOLDING AT ALEX EKWUEME FEDERAL UNIVERSITY NDUFU-ALIKE, IKWO IN EBONYI STATE, NIGERIA FROM 5TH-9TH JUNE, 2023**

**“Bioscience Research: A frontier for Nigerian economic diversification and sustainable development”**

It is with keen interest that I welcome everybody to the 2023 Faculty of Biological Science Maiden Conference holding within the walls of AAR University Main Auditorium.

I give thanks to the Almighty God for making it possible for these Eagles of wisdom in Nigeria to gather once again for this epoch event. It is another time to witness carefree happiness, meet others whose thoughts are to join in this infinitely beautiful conference, whose hearts unite in devotion to our common Nigeria heritage.

I also thank the stakeholders for their commitment towards moving Nigeria forward by the great example which you set us all through your wonderful vision.

Each time I am granted the opportunity to speak to this type of audience, I feel honored and elated knowing quite well that it is one of great priority as an academic.

Permit me to say that the COVID-19 Pandemic has taught the global community a great lesson in all facets of life and the Post-COVID-Era demands that every citizen of the global community has to get globally engaged.

Nigeria , for too long, has been standing on the foundation of a “ One leg economy”(mono-economy),her major source of foreign exchange being crude oil. The consequence of lack of economic diversification in Nigeria is that it has led to the weakness of the foundation of her economic transformation which has brought about slowness in the pace of progress, making her particularly vulnerable to sudden external shock as witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Our nation has also been a victim of economic recession.

For decades, economic diversification has been a policy priority for low- and middle- income economies like ours and we know that it is essential for our growth and tremendously important for our resilience. By economic diversification, we mean engaging in a critical process of shifting our economy away from a single income source towards multiple income sources from a growing range of sectors and markets. This has been a tradition applied as a strategy to encourage positive economic growth and development around the world.

Economic diversification via Bioscience research will help support multiple businesses, create a sustainable cycle of economic activity where businesses continually feed off of one another and grow larger as the economy grows, open doors for providing goods and services and enhances economic flexibility as well as scientific innovation.

We all need sustainable development in order to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs. This was the reason why Nigeria as a member of the UN participated in the UNGA in 2015 where sustainable development goals (2015-2030) were adopted to address global challenges including poverty, diseases, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation etc.

Actually, Nigeria is a developing country and has much to do to meet up with the more scientific and advanced countries. Since Nigeria is endowed with vast human and natural resources, it is therefore pertinent for us to be economically vigilant by deploying the bio economy approach via extensive Bioscience research.

Bioscience is at the core of research and innovation to cure diseases, provide safe and ample food and water and developing new sources of fuel.

A bioscience degree will enable you to explore areas of Biochemistry, Biomedicine, Cell biology, conservation, ecology, Molecular genetics, microbiology, pathobiology, physiology, bioinformatics, proteomics, genomics etc.

Major areas of bioscience research include human medical research, animal research, plant research, academic and hospital research and environmental research.

In fact you investigate life in all its forms and use your knowledge and skills to transform and improve lives.

The problems of modern civilization that will be solved through bioscience research include pollution, waste disposal, effects of over population, use of drugs, aging of the population, advances in the improvement of food supply and elimination of hereditary and tropical diseases.

One can therefore say that bio economy via extensive bioscience research is an alternative that have impacts on our natural and environmental resources, food, soil, land and livelihoods.

In a society like ours, there is need for people with appropriate knowledge and skills in pharmaceutical, medical, agricultural, industrial and scientific aspects of our economy. There is need for trained and capable manpower in handling sensitive areas linked to health, environmental conservation, teaching profession, food production, manufacturing of finished products coupled with general satisfaction with little or no importation of goods from other nations of the world.

Bioscience research is the major key needed to open the door to scientific advancement in Nigeria

I therefore urge the Government of Nigeria to promote bioscience research in its jurisdiction because it is a mandate to protect its people as a new field of study for Nigerian economic diversification and sustainable development.

Thank you.

Professor Augustine Uwakwe vc@gregoryuniversityuturu.edu.ng