2ND MAY, 2020.

**TITLE: GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A MEDICAL FACILITY TO COMBAT COVID-19 IN THE SOUTH-SOUTH REGION.**

Your Excellency, Miracle Deputy Governor Bayelsa state, senator Lawrence Ewhrudjakpor, my colleagues, members of the National Assembly here present, Fred raise to power two. The secretary to the Federal Government of Nigeria, Mr. Boss, Mustapha here represented again by my colleague, the Honorable Minister of Education, honorable Chukwuemeka Nwajuba. My brother, the Opuabadi, the Honorable Minister of State for petroleum, Chief Timipre Sylva. The right honorable speaker of the Bayelsa State House of Assembly, The chairman, House Committee on Health and other members of the Bayelsa State House of Assembly. The secretary to the state government, right honorable Friday Konbowei Benson, The head of the service, the group managing director of NNPC, Mr. Mone Kyari, the Executive Secretary the Nigerian Contents Management Board, our own brother, son of the soil, engineer Simbi Waibote, now adopted son of the soil, the GGM Mappings Mr. Bala wanti, the MD Nigerian Agip Oil Company here represented by Mr. Chindum AJabo, the Chief of Staff, Deputy Chief of Staff, Government House principal secretary, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Health and other permanent secretaries here present, invited guests, members of the fourth estate of the realm, ladies and gentlemen.

I welcome you to Bayelsa state. and a very good afternoon to all of you. First, let me thank God for granting you journey mercies all the way from Abuja to our dear state Bayelsa, here in Yanagoa.

This groundbreaking ceremony by the oil industry to combat COVID-19 with such a gigantic and huge medical infrastructure for the south-south region, and located in our state, we can only say thank you. And we appreciate the Federal Government of Nigeria. Beginning with Mr. President and of course, the man we can jokingly call the deputy president because he's the Deputy Minister of State only to Mr. President, our own son Sylva Timipre. In the same vein, I wish to thank and appreciate the Nigerian AGIP Oil company, the operators of the oil and gas industry and all their co-operators for agreeing and choosing to locate this very critical facility in Yenagoa.

And by so doing, they are also trying to write their name in the sands of history, bringing in a difference in the lives of the people of Yenagoa, Bayelsa state. The south-south and indeed, Nigerians.

Bayelsa state has been a profitable and hospitable environment, the much we know, for the Nigerian AGIP oil company and we aim to keep on deepening these cordial relationships.

Thomas Kali once said that “ he who has help, has hope. And he who has hope has everything ”. I'm especially pleased to be here today as we break the ground for the construction of this structure, because it is in line with the covenant we have as a government, with the people of Bayelsa state to provide the best health care possible and by extension, fulfill our commitment to build sustainable prosperity for all our people. We further identify that this undertaking is not merely about buildings, It is more about the people. The significant measure and magnitude of this project are self-evident but it is more about consolidating and improving the health of our people and the health of our communities.

As we acknowledge always that all is well, today's event is also significant for another reason. Not only are we breaking the ground on the site physically, but it also reinstates and demonstrates necessary cooperation on CSR ( Corporate Social Responsibility) that must exist not only for the oil and gas industry, but all businesses across the country with the people as a covenant.

It is important to recall the words of the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres when he presented his report on the socio economic impact of COVID-19. Shared responsibility according to him, is global solidarity. This is not only a health crisis, but a human crisis, a job crisis, a humanitarian crisis and a development crisis and it is not just about the most vulnerable, this pandemic shows that we are all at risk because we are only strong as the weakest health system.

Its unprecedented scale demands an unprecedented response. What we are doing here today is actually an unprecedented response. The Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic is the defining global predicament of our time and the greatest challenge we are faced in several generations. Countries are locked down; Travel is severely restricted, traditional heavens are compromised. If these episodes have thought us any fundamental lesson, it is that for those of us in positions of authority, our efforts to affect positive change must be deliberate and urgent in fulfilling the obligation, it should be a timely reminder that we as a government and businesses must be more concerned in making the decisions and taking the right steps that create inclusive and sustainable opportunities for all our citizens in Bayelsa state. The Bayelsa state government took proactive actions to strengthen surveillance to our boundaries with neighboring states to prevent the spread of Corona virus into our state, with the diligence of the state Task Force on COVID-19, headed by my humble self, and the cooperation of citizens who are largely successful in these quests, however, we are now dealing with a new reality with the confirmation of an index case and four other members of the index case family. So, the timing of this event when the dynamics as altered is most welcomed. It emphasizes the point that we have a shared responsibility in combating this unseen adversary. COVID-19 is much more than a health crisis, putting countries it touches under duress. It has the potential to make devastating social, economic, and political crisis that will leave serious distortions in the fabric of any society. Providing this assistance to keep the virus in-check is a commendable one.

May I on behalf of the good people of Bayelsa state and the government of Bayelsa state, and indeed, on behalf of the south-south states, express my most sincere gratitude for your obligation, insight and service to our zone and particularly to our state. Long leave Bayelsa state, Long leave the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Thank you.