

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF BUDGET AND NATIONAL PLANNING – ZAINAB AHMED (MRS) DURING THE SECOND EDITION, NUTRITION WEEK CELEBRATION HELD ON 2ND OCTOBER, 2017 AT THE SANDRALIA HOTEL, ABUJA.

I am delighted to welcome you all to this very important event – commemoration of the second Nutrition Week – 2017. We are gathered here today to talk around a silent national emergency – MALNUTRITION.

2. Nigeria is home to the third largest number of chronically undernourished children globally, with about 2.5 million children under 5 years affected by Severe Acute Malnutrition. If nothing is done, 1 in 5 (500,000) children will die annually (global nutrition report, NDHS 2013 report). Malnourished children tend to have lower Intelligent Quotient (IQ) and impaired cognitive ability with resultant negative effect on their performance in school and productivity in later life.

3. No developmental programme is complete without a package for nutrition improvement. Under constitutional democracy, the right to food and nutrition is the most important right of all rights, therefore every human rights agenda must accommodate issues of food and Available evidence shows that investments in nutrition prevents undernutrition, builds human capital, boost shared prosperity and improves health outcomes. Returns from programmes for improving nutrition far outweigh their costs while delay/failure in addressing malnutrition attracts disproportionately high costs in terms of higher budget outlay as well as lost GDP and this makes investment in nutrition imperative in the much desired economic recovery and growth in the country as encapsulated in the ERGP 2017 2020.

4. Celebration of the Nutrition Week was approved by the Honourable Minister of Budget & National Planning – Senator Udoma Udo Udoma in 2016 as an annual event to provide platform for intensifying awareness on the importance of food and nutrition on child's survival women nutrition and its

impact on development, productivity, economic growth and national development. The maiden edition – 2016 which was a huge success witnessed the launch of the revised National Policy on Food and Nutrition as well as investiture of the Wife of the President – Her Excellency, Hajia Aisha Buhari as Nutrition Ambassador of Nigeria. This second edition themed: “Improved Nutrition and Empowerment” with the slogan ‘Healthy Diet, Healthy Living’ aims at building on the gains of the maiden edition.

5. To commemorate the 2017 edition of the Nutrition Week, a number of activities have been articulated which include this Press briefing, road walks, advocacy in churches and mosques as well as symposia and public enlightenment campaigns aimed at behaviour change towards healthy diets by the general public.

6. The revised National Policy on Food and Nutrition which was launched as a 10-year blueprint during the 2016 Nutrition Week has been disseminated nationwide as part of the strategy for ensuring its smooth implementation. It is reported that almost all the States have been able to domesticate the Policy and have gone ahead to develop their specific costed plan of action. This is heart-warming as it demonstrates ownership across the States of the federation. Other dividends arising from the launch of the revised Policy included the development of sectoral strategies in line with the policy by Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development, Health and others. Partners are also keying into the approved Policy to situate their various interventions to push the frontiers of the fight against malnutrition in Nigeria. However, to avoid being caught up in the euphoria of celebrating mediocrity, the Ministry has added a milestone in coming up with the draft implementation plan for the Policy which will soon be finalised. I would therefore like to acknowledge the contributions of various stakeholders as well as technical assistance provided by our Development Partners.

7. Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the Nutrition week celebration has further proved our collective commitment to ensure optimal nutritional status for all Nigerians and while looking forward to an eventful Week, I would like to congratulate on behalf of the Ministry of Budget and National Planning, all the Ministries here represented, the Nutrition Society of Nigeria and in deed all stakeholders who have worked assiduously in making sure this event is successful. I would also like to extend my deep appreciation to members of the press for honouring our invitation.

On this note, may I formally declare this year's Nutrition Week Celebration open.

8. Thank you.