

**FCDO Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) opening address
(Delivered by Susan Mshana, Deputy Development Director at the British High
Commission, Nigeria)**

Distinguished panel members, guests, ladies and gentlemen. Good morning to you all, it is my pleasure to be here with you, and thank you for inviting me to speak.

On behalf of the British High Commission in Nigeria, I would like to share with you today some thoughts on the UK's vision on Science, Technology & Innovation; the role of open science in delivering our vision; our offer to our Nigerian friends and allies; and how we see the LIBSENSE programme fitting with our ambition.

With regards with the UK's vision, Science, Technology & Innovation (ST&I) is at the heart of UK government policy. It underlines our integrated approach to be a global force for good, and in our pursuit of common international interests. We believe in the transformative power of ST&I to change the lives of the world's poorest and drive forward shared prosperity; and through modern partnerships, we will secure global resilience with our partners in Africa.

The UK is committed to championing progress towards a more open, equitable and secure research ecosystem that is more inclusive of developing countries, to support greater collaborations on science and technology.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, publishers made papers and preprints open access, given the importance of science and knowledge to inform action. We need to apply the same urgency to the wider issue of scientific access.

We will pursue open science-based bilateral and multilateral partnerships to confront modern global challenges such as health pandemics, food insecurity and malnutrition, climate change and resilience, geopolitical threat to sustainable peace, and shaping norms, standards, and regulations for new and emerging technologies.

On all these strategic interests, the UK is committed to being a reliable and trusted partner. We will offer our world class expertise and robust capabilities, connecting our scientific resources and industries to our international partners, here in Nigeria and across the African continent, in order to tackle our joint priorities.

Let me now highlight our offer to Nigeria and what I think is most pertinent to the open science agenda. Nigeria is a critical ally of the UK, and our priorities are:

Firstly, to deliver high quality research for development. We know that Scientific research is a catalyst to innovation and discovering emerging technologies. It can also help us identify promising life changing technologies that can be scaled up or brought to market. That is why we support demand driven, locally led, rigorous scientific research that responds to your contextual needs. The number of university scientists ranked within the top 3% globally was 372, including 3 scientists from the University of Oxford and University of Ibadan respectively. We hope to utilise this unique comparative advantage to drive global growth in ST&I.

Secondly, we want to strengthen the research and innovation ecosystem to create an enabling environment so that ST&I can flourish and deliver impact. For quality research to be generated, there needs to be the right architecture, systems, and regulations in place to support it so that component parts can harmoniously interact. We realise that structural needs differ between our countries. Therefore, we support tailored interventions that are appropriately targeted to your needs.

Thirdly, our next priority is to invest in mainstreaming gender to ensure that women and girls, as well as other marginalised and vulnerable groups, can achieve their maximum potential. Social equality and inclusion are long standing uncompromising UK values. We believe firmly that everyone should benefit from development and be included in the transformations that ensue from ST&I.

Finally, we want to increase the accessibility and uptake of scientific evidence through open science and science communication. We believe that scientific knowledge should be accessible to enable collaboration and foster innovation. Hence this strategic collaboration with LIBSENSE, Eko Connect and in extension the plethora of strategic government partners to strengthen the capacity for open science within academia in Nigeria while providing a platform for policy direction in this regard. The UK is proud to be part of this collaboration and we will continue to support such programmes.

We view scientific research and innovation as integral to growing our economies, protecting our shared values, and strengthening our collective resilience and security. We focus on the principles and outcomes that enable a flexible framework, one that upholds the principles of Open Access while recognising and supporting the diversity of Open Access approaches globally and ensuring continued importance of human and Intellectual property rights, and national security.

We are leaders in development because it is the right thing to do, committed to using our global voice for public good, creating modern partnerships that give precedence to local ownership and needs, and offering unmatched breadth and quality of support to our partners. In the pursuit of our vision, we will be patient because we know that it takes time to achieve sustainable and transformative impacts.

Thank you for your attention.