\*WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE GLOBAL DIRECTOR OF BRAIN BUILDERS YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (BBYDI), ABIDEEN OLASUPO AT THE PUBLIC LAUNCHING OF YOUTHGOVTRACKA CIVIC TECH PLATFORM, MENU OF COMMITMENT AND OFFICE OF THE CITIZEN ACCOUNTABILITY TOOLKIT ON THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 30TH, 2023 AT ILORIN, KWARA, NIGERIA\*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today marks a critical moment in our journey toward a more accountable, inclusive, and engaged Nigeria. As we stand at the crossroads of democracy and its dividends, it's time to reshape our collective approach towards governance. It is time to shift our focus beyond the Federal Government alone and turn our attention closer to home - to our states, our governors, and their commitments to the future of our youth.

In Nigeria, democracy is more than just a system of governance; it's a promise of empowerment, a commitment to the people. But all too often, the spotlight of citizen scrutiny has been fixated solely on the Federal Government, neglecting the impactful decisions made at the state level. This imbalance has led to unfulfilled promises, overlooked needs, and missed opportunities for progress, especially for our vibrant youth and marginalised groups.

But that must change. Tapping from the zeal and vigour of Generation Z, we are leveraging technology and citizen advocacy to hold our state governors accountable for the promises they've made for our youth's development.

We present YouthGovTracka—an innovative online platform, a beacon of hope, and a catalyst for change. This initiative, spearheaded by the Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative (BBYDI), aims to bridge the gap between our youth's aspirations and our state governor’s actions.

BBYDI has meticulously selected and trained youth focal points. You can call them warriors for change in each of our 36 states. These individuals, nurtured by industry leaders and experts, are armed not with weapons but with knowledge, determination, and a mandate—to monitor, question, and drive accountability in governance.

Technology will be our ally in this quest. Our focal points will use it to track data, enumerate the promises made and monitor their implementation. But we won't stop there. We're not just watchers; we're doers. Our focal points will spearhead community development projects aligned with our menu of commitments —projects that echo the promises made and demand accountability.

Our menu of commitments are actionable pathways designed to track the State Governors performance in the identified thematic areas. The are:

● Prioritizing Youth Voice in Governance empowers the young to shape governance processes.

● Support for Young Candidates champions and supports aspiring young politicians.

● Creating Safe Civic Spaces fortifies legal frameworks for the security of young advocates, artists, journalists, and bloggers.

● Developing Participatory Mechanisms fosters channels for young people's governance participation.

● Supporting Civil Society Organizations enables these entities to engage young people meaningfully.

● Investing in Civic Education ensures accessible civic education, especially for marginalized groups.

Also, the Citizen Accountability toolkit will guide citizens on how to articulate and demand what's rightfully theirs from the government. It's not just a guide; it's empowerment in action, fueling informed demands, and propelling responsible governance.

Accessibility is key. That's why the menu of commitments and the citizen's accountable toolkit aren't confined to the boundaries of a single language. They've been translated into our diverse local languages, such as Igbo, Hausa, and Yoruba, ensuring every citizen can engage, understand, and demand their rights.

But this isn't a solo journey. The youth focal points will engage critical stakeholders in every state, building bridges between leaders and those they lead. And we won't hide our findings. Monthly, we will publish a scorecard, a testament to the performance of our state governors—an honest evaluation for all to see.

Colleagues, in this room today, and beyond these walls, lies the power to reshape our democracy, empower our youth, uplift our marginalised communities, and hold our state governors accountable. The future of our nation isn't a distant dream; it's a shared responsibility, and YouthGovTracka is our compass, guiding us towards a Nigeria where transparency, accountability, and effective governance reign supreme.

Join us in this journey—be the architects of a better tomorrow, where the promises made today are the realities lived tomorrow. We can write a new chapter in the history of our democracy—one where every voice matters, where actions speak louder than words, and where the aspirations of our youth aren't just dreams but the bedrock of progress.

Thank you for listening.