ADDRESS OF THE PROJECT LEADER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN’S OPEN DATA RESEARCH GROUP, DR. (MRS.) OMEMOGO VERONICA MEJABI, ON THE OCCASION OF THE STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP HELD IN ABUJA, NIGERIA ON APRIL 7, 2014

Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Communication Technology and Keynote Speaker,
Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Information,
Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Finance,
Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research, Technology and Innovation), University of Ilorin,
Director General, Federal Radio Corporation,
Director General, Nigerian Television Authority,
Director General, Voice of Nigeria,
Director General, Budget Office,
Guest Speaker and ODDC Research Mentor & Peer Supporter,
Unilorin ODDC Group Members,
Unilorin Visiting Team,
Members of the Academia,
Members of Civil Society,
Gentlemen of the Press,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Members of my research team and I, give all glory to God for making this day a reality and especially for bringing us safely from far and near to be part of this event.

2. I am particularly grateful to Dr. Tunji Olaopa, Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Communication Technology, for graciously accepting to be the Keynote speaker at the Workshop.

3. As researchers based in the State of Harmony, Kwara, the task of finding a befitting venue to host the Workshop in Abuja was daunting and we are most grateful to Dr. Folasade Yemi-Esan, Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Information, who approved the National Press Centre as the venue for the workshop, as part of her Ministry’s contribution to the success of the workshop. For this, I say a big “Thank you”.
4. The role of our Vice-Chancellor, Prof. AbdulGaniyu Ambali, in providing an enabling environment that has made today a reality cannot be over-emphasised. The fact that he has asked a Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University to be here to represent him is evidence enough and we are happy to be here in company of Professor Felix Oladele, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research, Technology and Innovation).

5. To the distinguished personalities here present, from all walks of life, representing different stakeholders - from Government to Civil Society, from the Media to Independent experts - I want to say that without your cooperation, this Workshop would have remained a proposal, because there wouldn't have been anything to report. I also want to thank you for deeming it important to come and discuss our findings from the research and make sure your perspective is reflected in the final recommendations that emanate from the study.

6. It is indeed a pleasure to be amongst so distinguished an audience to do something which is not too common amongst researchers in Nigeria. We are here today to present a snapshot of the results from our research on the Investigation of the Use of the Online National Budget of Nigeria, which is part of the ODDC network.

7. Ladies and Gentlemen, ODDC stands for 'Exploring the Emerging Impacts of Open Data in Developing Countries', and the funding for this work has been provided through the World Wide Web Foundation supported by grant 107075 from Canada’s International Development Research Centre (web.idrc.ca). You can find out more at: www.opendataresearch.org/emergingimpacts

8. I must appreciate the presence of Dr. Maurice McNaughton who has flown from across the world to be with us today from far away Kingston, Jamaica, where he is the Director of the Centre of Excellence, Mona School of Business & Management at the University of the West Indies. Dr. McNaughton is our Research Mentor and Peer Supporter who together with the ODDC Research Coordinator at the World Wide Web Foundation, Mr. Tim Davies, have done a lot to ensure that our research would make a difference in the lives of the people of Nigeria.

9. Our case study focuses on open budget data of the Government of Nigeria and we are attempting to determine: how the public engage in the discussions of the national budget data; the degree of awareness of open data by the public; the potential of open data to drive good governance; the
intermediaries in the flow of budget information; and the challenges to effective use of such open budget data.

10. You will see from the results to be presented later in the day that Nigeria is ripe for the Open Data movement which is being embraced by many Governments of the world. Nigerian citizens are hungry for various types of data to be made public. From the Sure-P expenditure at the State and Local Government levels to data on spending by all public office functionaries in all sectors of the economy. Furthermore, lack of awareness of what to do with the data, illiteracy and apathy were identified as factors impeding against the use of the online data. The results also show that Open Data and the Freedom of Information Act reinforce each other.

11. I encourage participants to see today’s Workshop as a learning opportunity as well as an avenue to make your opinions heard through the various channels by which these research results would be disseminated. I urge you to engage in the discussions with sincerity and enthusiasm and to have a good time while doing so.

12. It is a privilege to have you all distinguished personalities grace this opening ceremony and I welcome you to this Unilorin ODDC Open Data Stakeholders’ Workshop.

THANK YOU.