



**AMERICAN CULTURAL WEEK, ABUJA
EMPOWERING YOUTH: PUBLIC - PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS
MICROSOFT NIGERIA/LEAP AFRICA/UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
11 A.M., FEBRUARY 25, 2008**

Remarks by Mosun Layode, Executive Director, LEAP Africa

The United States Ambassador to Nigeria, members of the diplomatic corps, special guests, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the Board and staff of LEAP Africa, I would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the United States government for its grant of \$70,000 to support the Employability Programme.

Leadership, Effectiveness, Accountability & Professionalism (LEAP) Africa is a nonprofit organisation, which is committed to inspiring, empowering and equipping a new cadre of leaders in Africa. LEAP recognizes that leadership development is critical for nation building and wealth creation. As a result, it offers leadership training programmes and coaching services for business owners, social entrepreneurs and youth. It is committed to equipping these critical stakeholders with the skills, tools and support that they require to serve as change agents.

Since its inception in May 2002, LEAP has successfully held its programmes for entrepreneurs and youth in eight Nigerian cities in collaboration with non-profit organizations and leading financial institutions. These programmes have enhanced the life and leadership skills of over 2,800 youth and business owners. LEAP has also trained over 10,000 individuals through its participation in local and international training events. In turn, many of LEAP's beneficiaries have initiated high-impact change projects in their companies and communities. LEAP has also pioneered training on ethics, through its Integrity Institute, offered in five Nigerian cities. Our core programmes are funded by the Ford Foundation, the U.K. Global Opportunities Fund, Citigroup Foundation, Nokia, and the World Bank and are supported by many Nigerian organisations.

Given our status as a non profit organisation with limited resources, we appreciate the importance of collaborations with individuals and other organisations that share our vision and are committed to effecting positive change in society. As a result, we are delighted to collaborate with the United States Government, Microsoft and the International Youth Foundation to launch the Employability Programme.

The Employability Programme was developed as a result of the high unemployment rate in Nigeria. According to the Ministry of Education, only 14 percent of the 148,000 youth that graduate from Nigerian tertiary institutions annually are able to find gainful employment. Unfortunately, a sizeable 53% remain unemployed, while 9% are under employed. This creates a vicious cycle of poverty, crime and violence in our communities.

LEAP Africa Ltd/Gte

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