OPENING ADDRESS BY THE NATIONAL CHAIRMAN, ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN TOWN PLANNERS IN NIGERIA (AWTPN) TPL. (DR.) VERONICA UGONMA OKOYE FNITP, AT THE 5TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) HOLDING AT SHEBA CENTRE IKEJA, LAGOS ON THE 26TH OCTOBER.

1.0 WELCOME ADDRESS

Distinguished members of the Association of Women Town Planners in Nigeria, esteemed colleagues, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is with great pleasure and a deep sense of responsibility that I welcome you to the 5th Annual General Meeting of our great Association. First, I give thanks to Almighty God, whose grace has sustained us through another remarkable year. I also thank each of you who have travelled from across the length and breadth of Nigeria to be here. Your presence is a testament to your commitment, passion, and belief in the vision of AWTPN.

I wish to place on record my sincere appreciation to the Lagos State Chapter of AWTPN for graciously accepting to host this year's Annual General Meeting. Hosting an event of this magnitude demands commitment, sacrifice and a great deal of planning, and the Chapter has risen to the challenge with admirable dedication, professionalism and grace. To the Chairperson, the Local Organising Committee and every member of the Lagos State Chapter, I say a heartfelt thank you. Your teamwork, generosity and hospitality have made this gathering possible. Today, as we mark our fifth AGM, we celebrate our members who continue to distinguish themselves in public service, private practice, academia and community leadership.

In the course of this address, I will report on our programmes and partnerships, our membership growth and welfare initiatives, our financial standing. I will also outline our priorities for the year ahead. I am immensely proud of what we have achieved together, and I commend every member, committee and branch for their dedication, sacrifice and teamwork.

Since Inception, the administration has been guided by the **CREATIVES VISIONARY GOALS (CVG),** which provides the framework for activities and aspirations. Through collective effort, commitment and support from members, we have recorded notable achievements during the period under review.

2.0 CREATIVES VISIONARY GOALS (CVG)

The **CREATIVES VISIONARY GOALS (CVG)** was adopted as the central framework for our administration. It represents our determination to promote creativity, innovation,

professional excellence, inclusiveness, and sustainable development within the Association. The acronym stands for:

C – Collaboration with NITP and Stakeholders to ensure full implementation of 1992 URP law

R – Roll out programmes and initiatives that reinforce solidarity and mutual support within the association

E – Empowerment of members through Capacity building and professional engagement

A – Advocacy for fair representation of women and strengthening their voices within the profession and beyond

T – Training and Retraining of members to ensure our members are relevant despite technical advancement

I – Inspiration to motivate the next generation of town planners and leaders

V – Visionary action that charts new frontiers and secures a stronger future for the Association

E - Enlightenment through school outreach programmes

S – Sustainable mentorship

The CVG has provided direction for our programmes, capacity-building initiatives, advocacy activities, welfare interventions and professional engagements. It has also encouraged greater member participation and strengthened the spirit of collaboration within AWTPN.

3.0 ELECTION AND INVESTITURE

I was elected National Chairman of the Association of Women Town Planners in Nigeria (AWTPN) on 26th October 2025, in Abuja, at an election that reflected the confidence, unity and democratic spirit of our members. The investiture ceremony subsequently took place on 27th November 2025, in Umuahia, Abia State. It was a colourful and memorable occasion, graced by distinguished members of the Association, dignitaries from the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners and partner organisations, and well-wishers from across the country.

On behalf of my executive team, I sincerely thank our hosts in Abia State for their generous hospitality and the warm reception extended to us. I pay tribute to the past National Chairpersons and executive members whose vision, sacrifice and leadership brought AWTPN

to where it is today. Their legacy continues to inspire us. I also thank my fellow executives, committee chairpersons and branch leaders, whose commitment and teamwork have made it possible to achieve so much within this period.

4.0 ONLINE TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Capacity building remained a central component of our activities during the period under review. The Association organised and participated in online professional development programmes designed to equip members with the knowledge and skills required for effective professional practice. These programmes allowed members across the country to learn, share experiences, and grow together, irrespective of distance or location.

A notable highlight was the online lecture held on 29th March 2026, with the theme, **"Balancing Career and Home Making: Overcoming the Fears of Modern Professional Women."** The programme provided an important platform for discussing the challenges faced by professional women in balancing career responsibilities with family and personal commitments. It encouraged open, honest, and practical conversations on how women can thrive in their careers without compromising their well-being or their homes. The programme was moderated by Tpl. Prof. Grace Olukoi, FNITP, the first National Vice Chairman.

We were privileged to have three accomplished and experienced professionals on the panel:

i. Tpl. Taiwo Olurin, FNITP
ii. Tpl. Lami Ayuba, FNITP
iii. Tpl. Uche Ngene, MNITP

4.1 NITP AT 60 WEBINAR

As part of activities commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP), AWTPN organised a webinar on Thursday, 30th July, 2026. The event was our contribution to the celebration of six decades of service by the Institute, and a reaffirmation of the role of women in the growth and development of the planning profession.

The webinar had the theme, **"NITP and National Development: Enriching Gender and Social Inclusion."** The programme attracted 80 participants, comprising AWTPN members and professionals from other fields. We were honoured by the presence of the National President of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners, **Tpl. Dr. Chime Andrew Ogbonna, FNITP**, and the Chairman of the NITP 60th Anniversary Committee, **Tpl. Dr. Moses**

Ogunleye, FNITP. Their presence underscored the importance of the webinar and the Institute's support for the work of AWTPN. The webinar was also attended by past Presidents of the Institute and representatives of sister professions, whose participation enriched the discussion and reflected the collaborative spirit of the built environment family. The Keynote Speaker was **Tpl. Prof. Adakemi Olusa**, FNITP, while **Tpl. Prof. Grace Olukoi**, FNITP, served as the Moderator.

The Discussants were:

i. Tpl. (Mrs.) Bello Risikat Bukola, FNITP
ii. Tpl. Rekiyat Ahuoiza Fache, FNITP
iii. Tpl. Prof. Joy U. Ogbazi, FNITP

The webinar was insightful and engaging and further demonstrated AWTPN's commitment to professional knowledge sharing, gender advocacy and the advancement of inclusive planning practice.

4.2 AGM ONLINE LECTURE

As part of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) programme, an online lecture was organised on 18th October. The lecture was themed **"The Integration of Social Inclusion in Regional Planning and Development: Prospects and Pathways."** The guest lecturer was Tpl. Dr. Franca Unekwu Agamah, who examined how social inclusion can be embedded in regional planning and development processes. The lecture highlighted the opportunities that inclusive planning presents and outlined practical pathways for ensuring that all segments of society, particularly vulnerable and marginalised groups, participate in and benefit from development outcomes. The session was well received by participants, who engaged actively through questions and contributions. It provided useful insights for planning practitioners and reinforced the need for inclusive approaches in regional development.

4.3 MCPDP 2026

AWTPN members also participated massively in this year's Mandatory Continuing Professional Development Programme (MCPDP) activities, held in three zones, namely Kaduna, Ado-Ekiti and Abakaliki. The strong turnout reflects our members' commitment to continuous learning and to meeting their professional obligations as registered town planners. Some members also contributed actively by serving on various committees, demonstrating

their commitment to the success of the programmes and the advancement of the planning profession.

Their dedication and teamwork were evident in the smooth conduct of the events, and I commend each of them most sincerely. On behalf of the Association, I also appreciate the members who travelled from far and near to take part in these programmes, and I congratulate the organisers of the MCPDP for a successful series of events.

5.0 INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Women's Day, held on 8th March, 2026, was celebrated by AWTPN in all the states. The 2026 theme was **"Give to Gain,"** a call for generosity, collaboration and collective support to expand opportunities for women. The celebration recognised the contributions, achievements and resilience of women, and highlighted the need for greater inclusion and participation of women in professional and developmental processes. Activities held included:

i. **Visits to schools**, where members encouraged the girl-child and introduced young people to the planning profession.

ii. **Visits to the less privileged**, with words of encouragement and donated items.

iii. **Visits to prisons**, offering hope, goodwill and support to inmates.

iv. **Market cleaning exercises**, promoting environmental sanitation and showcasing the role of planners in creating clean and orderly public spaces.

v. **Visits to old people's homes**, where members spent time with the elderly and brought them gifts and cheer.

These activities reflect the true spirit of AWTPN and of this year's theme: women planners who give of their time, talent and resources, and whose commitment to inclusion extends to the most vulnerable members of society. I commend the Chapters and members who organised and took part, often at personal cost, and I thank all who contributed time, resources and goodwill.

6.0 WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

The Association commemorated World Environment Day on 5th June, 2026, as part of its commitment to environmental sustainability, healthy communities and responsible environmental management. The activities included tree planting, sanitation exercises and

awareness on proper waste disposal. These initiatives were designed to encourage members and the wider community to adopt responsible environmental practices and contribute to the creation of cleaner, healthier and more sustainable settlements. As part of this activity,
The National Chairman, **Tpl. (Dr.) Veronica Okoye**, led the School of Environmental Design and Technology (SEDT), together with the Rector, Ogbonnaya Onu polytechnic Aba to the new campus for a tree-planting exercise. The event was widely covered by the media, which gave valuable visibility to the Association and to the role of town planners in environmental stewardship.

7.0 ADVOCACY AND PLANNING

Advocacy remained a key component of the Association's activities during the period under review. Efforts were directed towards strengthening the voice and visibility of AWTPN within the planning profession and society, and towards ensuring that the interests and contributions of women town planners receive appropriate recognition.

In collaboration with the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP), the Association advocated the implementation of the Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law of 1992. The collaboration also extended to sister bodies, namely Women in the Built Environment (WIBEN) and FEMinWASH, the Network of Female Professionals in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). The Association also engaged in advocacy planning aimed at creating greater opportunities for collaboration, participation and professional advancement of members.

8.0 PARTICIPATION IN NITP COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

During the period under review, I attended the Council Meeting of the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP) held in Abuja. A significant achievement at the meeting was the presentation of a proposal for AWTPN to have voting rights at the NITP Council. The proposal was accepted, subject to confirmation and ratification at the next Council meeting, scheduled to take place in Lagos. This is an important step towards strengthening the participation and institutional representation of women town planners within the professional body.

This achievement would not have been possible without our women representatives in the Council, who ably supported the proposal and consistently championed the cause of women within the Institute. I sincerely thank them for their commitment and dedication. I also

appreciate the President and members of the NITP Council for receiving the proposal with an open mind and for their goodwill towards the Association.

AWTPN is optimistic that we will have more women representatives in the Council this year. We will continue to work with the Institute to ensure that the voice of women is heard, valued and reflected in decisions that shape the future of the planning profession.

9.0 MEMBERS' WELFARE

Members' welfare remained an important priority of the administration. Attention was given to the wellbeing of members, particularly during periods of personal difficulty and loss. As part of this commitment, visits were made to AWTPN members who lost their dear ones. These visits provided an opportunity to offer condolences, encouragement and moral support to the affected members. We pray that God will comfort the bereaved and grant the departed eternal rest.

During the period under review, AWTPN, ably represented by the National Chairman and other members, attended the retirement and birthday celebration of our pioneer National Chairman, **Tpl. (Mrs.) Bello Risikat Bukola, FNITP**. It was a joyful occasion to honour a woman whose vision and leadership laid the foundation of our Association. On behalf of all members, I congratulate her on a distinguished career and a milestone birthday, and I wish her good health, peace and fulfilment in retirement.

10.0 BEREAVEMENT

It is with a heavy heart that I report that the Association lost three of its members and five spouses of members during the period under review. We mourn them, and we stand with their families in this time of sorrow.

Members who passed on

1. Late Tpl. Jolaoluwa Itunu
2. Late Tpl. Temitope Anjorin
3. Late Tpl. Esther Ayoyinka Alabi-Agi

Spouses of members who passed on

1. Husband of Tpl. Beauty Legborsi Toghi Kenneth
2. Husband of Tpl. Deborah Joshua

3. Husband of Tpl. Khubura
4. Husband of Tpl. Amina Agella
5. Husband of Tpl. Queen Phillps

The leadership and members of AWTPN acknowledge the contributions these members made to the Association and the planning profession. We continue to extend our heartfelt condolences to their families, colleagues and loved ones. May God comfort all who mourn, and grant the departed eternal rest.

11.0 FINANCIAL STRENGTHENING

During the period under review, efforts were made to strengthen the financial capacity of the Association. The financial position and activities of the Association are further detailed in the report of the Financial Secretary, which will be presented to this meeting. I urge members to study it carefully and to contribute to the discussion that follows. I wish to particularly acknowledge and appreciate the members and all State Chapters who made freewill donations to the Association. Their generosity and commitment have contributed significantly to the ability of the Association to implement its programmes and meet its responsibilities. May God replenish all that you have given and bless the work of your hands.

I also thank the Financial Secretary and the Treasurer for their diligence and transparency in managing the Association's resources. We remain committed to prudent financial management, accountability and the judicious use of funds. I appeal to all members and Chapters to keep their dues up to date and to continue supporting the Association, so that we can achieve even more in the coming year.

12.0 FELLOWSHIP SELECTION

One of the notable achievements during the period under review was that AWTPN recorded the highest number of Fellowship applications to the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners (NITP) of these, 30 AWTPN members were elected as Fellows of NITP. This achievement is a reflection of the growing professional confidence and advancement of women town planners within the Association. It also demonstrates the commitment of our members to professional excellence and continuous growth. Fellowship is a mark of distinction earned through years of dedicated practice, and it positions our members to take on higher leadership roles within the profession. I heartily congratulate the 30 members who have been elected, I also commend every member who applied, and I encourage those who were not successful

this time to remain hopeful and try again. I thank the members who encouraged, mentored and guided their colleagues through the process. Let this be a source of inspiration to our younger members, who can look to their seniors and see what is possible.

13.0 THE WAY FORWARD

As we move forward, the Association will continue to focus on strengthening professional capacity, improving members' welfare, deepening advocacy, promoting gender and social inclusion, strengthening institutional partnerships, and increasing the visibility of AWTPN within the planning profession and the wider society. We shall also pursue initiatives that promote environmental sustainability, innovation, professional excellence and the meaningful participation of women in planning and development processes. To achieve these goals, members should prioritise the payment of their dues, which fund our programmes and move the Association forward. I call on every member and Chapter to remain united and committed, so that together we can take AWTPN to greater heights.

14.0 APPRECIATION

I sincerely appreciate all members of AWTPN for their support, cooperation and commitment throughout the period under review.

I particularly thank the members who contributed financially, participated actively in our programmes, served on committees, represented the Association at professional engagements, and supported the administration in the implementation of the CVG goals. I also acknowledge the dedication of the Executive Committee, our State Chapters, past National Chairpersons, and our partners in the Nigerian Institute of Town Planners and sister professional bodies.

To my wonderful Executives who made this **[CVG]** a reality, I say a big thank you for your teamwork, loyalty and sacrifice:

i. Tpl. Dr. Okoye Veronica Ugonma:ional Chairman
ii. Tpl. Prof. Olukoi Grace Olufunmike : National 1st Vice Chairman.
iii. Tpl. Danladi Mairo National 2nd Vice Chairman
iv. Tpl. Olayinka Bello Bolanle : National General Secretary
v. Tpl. Dr. Osuji Sabina Chiaka Nnenne: Assistant General Secretary
vi. Tpl. Ayuba Mercy Steven : Financial Secretary
vii. Tpl. Chukwu Ebere Harriet : National Treasurer

viii. Tpl. Muhammad Oyindamola Mubaraka: Public Relations Secretary

ix. Tpl. Dr. Obet Ekaette Ekaeda : Auditor

x. Tpl.Ativie Precious Odegua : Welfare .

xi. TPL. Rekiyat Ahuoiza Fache : Ex-Officio.1

xii. Tpl. Dr. Ekwuribe Constance Chinwe: Ex-Officio 11

Thank you for listening, and God bless you.

Once again, you are all welcome to the 5th AGM of AWTPN.

Tpl. Dr. Veronica Ugonma Okoye, FNITP

National Chairman

Association of Women Town Planners in Nigeria (AWTPN)