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16<sup>th</sup> January 2024

#### IMMEDIATE PRESS RELEASE

Our children are our most important national assets, the key to the future of our country. Unfortunately, we do not have all the time in the world to tweak them and point them and the nation in the right direction. So, when we talk about poor health indices such as high newborn, infant, and under-5 mortality, we have an idea of the significantly little time we have to play around with. Now is the time to act. The year 2030 is around the corner when we should have lowered under-5 mortality to a maximum of 25 child deaths per 1000 live births, and neonatal mortality to a maximum of 12 newborn deaths per 1000 live births. Presently, the number for under-5 mortality is 102 and that for newborn is 34. It is obvious we have an uphill, albeit not an insurmountable, task ahead.

We implore all the states in the country to domesticate the Child's Right Act now. I personally feel uncomfortable that we are still pleading about this crucial issue. Child's Right Act (2003) is the law that guarantees the rights of all children in Nigeria. We urge the states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Gombe, Kano and Zamfara to adopt and domesticate the Child's Right Act immediately. It is heartwarming that 31 states have adopted the Act. PAN implores these states to implement the provisions of the Act to the best of their abilities.

Brain drain is putting extreme pressure on our health care system and on health workers remaining in the country. The situation is dire, and I want the nation's leaders to urgently work out pragmatic solutions to produce a national environment that is conducive for growth, development, and productivity. I dare say that some of these solutions are staring us in the face, requiring only political will to act decisively. We should not leave it until we reach the elastic limit, the point of no return, the state of irreversible shock.

We have an unacceptable 6.2 million children in Nigeria who have never received any vaccine or missed almost all their vaccine. These so-called zero-dose children are one of the main reasons we are having outbreaks, such as diphtheria in some parts of the country. We need to reach every child in the country, irrespective of their location with vaccination and health care to guarantee the optimal wellbeing of each Nigerian citizen. This will require that we play catch-up with the vaccination programme, spread awareness about the immeasurable benefits of vaccination, and counter all misinformation and disinformation that are designed to keep the Nigerian child from getting vaccinated. All hands will be needed onboard, our traditional and religious leaders, community mobilizers, social influencers, and security personnel. PAN will continue to do all within

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its power to encourage our colleagues to remain in the fray to promote the health of the Nigerian child.

The Paediatric Association of Nigeria heartily commends the government and people of Lagos State on the tremendous effort being put in place to promote and safeguard the optimal health of children in the state.

Long live Lagos State!

Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!

Prof Olufemi Ogunrinde, President, Paediatric Association of Nigeria