

## Ground-breaking Ceremony of the Godfrey Okoye University – European Business Park

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*18 November 2021, Enugu*

Mr. Vice President Prof. Osinbajo, Your Excellency Minister Onyeama, Your Excellency Governor Ugwuanyi, Executive Secretary Prof. Rasheed, Vice Chancellor Prof. Anieke, Dear Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a big honour and a great pleasure for me to join you today in the ground-breaking ceremony of the “Godfrey Okoye University – European Business Park.” This is a special moment for our joint ESME initiative, but it also a special moment for my organisation, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, ICMPD.

We all know that migration is a highly complex subject, but also a highly contested one. Migration connects people and links communities, countries and continents. It provides opportunities but it also poses challenges. It is shaped by powerful drivers, ranging from demography and socio-economic development to individual motivations and aspirations, the effects of conflict and the consequences of climate change. It involves many actors at the individual, political and economic level, whose objectives may be different and sometimes conflicting. Migration brings us together, but sometimes it also drives us apart.

It is the task of my organisation to develop solutions for migration challenges; and it is our conviction that the best solutions are indeed the ones that bring us together, that are based on a shared understanding, on common interests and on a spirit of respect and partnership. We believe in these values, but we also believe that this is the best way to find solutions that actually deliver on the ground.

It was more than a decade ago that ICMPD experts together with other researchers and analysts started to develop first ideas on skills partnerships, intelligent return policies and public-private partnerships in the context of migration governance. They looked at the complexity of the migration issue and came to the conclusion that the most promising way to address related challenges is to foster targeted dialogue, to focus on economic aspects, to involve the private sector, to promote investment and vocational training and to build broad coalitions between a wide range of actors and stakeholders.

When we first published these ideas, we raised a lot of interest. However, this interest was rather limited to discussions between experts and among academic circles. To be honest, not many thought at that time that such ideas would see implementation in the foreseeable future.

The challenges seemed too complex and the concepts and ideas seemed too ambitious. But today, thanks to your trust, endurance and generous support, we can proudly say that the vision has become a reality.

The public-private partnership initiative “Eco-Social Market Economy – ESME”, and today’s ground-breaking ceremony of the “Godfrey Okoye University – European Business Park” are concrete expressions of our joint vision and of our joint achievement. The opening of the Business Park will be a major step. It will serve as a landmark and as the main engine of the other ESME components, the “Centre of Practical Skills” and the “Start-Up Centre”, whose aim it is to provide sustainable livelihoods, to encourage investment in Nigeria, to provide opportunities for returnees, to enhance women participation in the work force and to develop concepts for legal and circular migration. And I am convinced that the ESME trainees that will study here will very much appreciate the impressive infrastructure that is developing and the beautiful surroundings that will continue to make this park a special place.

A project like ESME would not be possible without the great support of a long and impressive list of partners and friends. For this support, I want to sincerely thank the President of Nigeria and the Nigerian government, the European Investment Bank, the Austrian Development Bank, the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Austria Wirtschaftsservice. Of course I want to thank the Godfrey Okoye University, all local stakeholders and Austrian investors, that are “patrons” of the Business Park, and all the private companies in Nigeria and from abroad that have already signed up to the initiative or will do so in the future. Without you, none of this would be possible. Last but not least, I want to thank my ICMPD colleagues for their hard work and strong commitment to make this initiative a successful one.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I can assure that the migration world follows this project very closely. It is one of the first of its kind. It has shown that broad partnerships across continents and between the spheres of policy, economy and academia can really function. And it has proven that great ambition can be the basis for great things to happen. I am convinced that the approach, the method and the experience of this initiative will be a starting point for many follow-up programmes. But I am also convinced that they will form the basis for the formulation of key principles for modern migration partnerships and for the governance of international migration as a whole.

Thank you.