Opening Address

by

Hajia Queensley S. Seghosime, mni, MSc, FCA
62nd President and Chairman of Council
The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria

at the

Opening Ceremony

of the

56th Annual Accountants' Conference

Theme: Beyond Numbers: Strengthening the Economy, Securing the Nation

held at

Bola Ahmed Tinubu International Conference Centre Abuja

on

Tuesday, October 20, 2026

The Special Guest of Honour, Executive Chairman, Nigeria Revenue Service, Dr Zacch Adelabu Adedeji

Your Excellencies, the Governors of Edo State; Lagos State; and other States

My Lords Spiritual and Temporal

Our Royal Fathers Here Present and Joining Online

The Honourable Minister of Education and ICAN's Coordinating Minister, Dr Mauroof Olatunji Alausa

The Honourable Minister of Finance and Coordinating Minister of the Economy, Mr Taiwo Oyedele, FCA

The Honourable Minister of Power, Mr Joseph Olasunkanmi Tegbe, FCA

Other Honourable Ministers and Commissioners Here Present

Distinguished Senators and Honourable Members of the National Assembly Here Present

Right Honourable Speakers and Honourable Members of the State Houses of Assembly Here Present

The Executive Secretary, Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria, Dr Rabiu Olowo, ACA

The President, International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), Mr Jean Leon Marie Del Bouquot

The President, Pan-African Federation of Accountants (PAFA), Mr Walid Ben Salah

The President, Association of Accounting Bodies West Africa (ABWA), Mr Leslie Williams

The Chairman, Body of Past Presidents, Senator Felix K. Bajomo, mni, FCA, PP

The Vice President of ICAN, Mazi Etofolam Osuji, mni, DBA, FCA

The First Deputy Vice President, Chief Oye Akinsulire, PhD, FCA

The Second Deputy Vice President, Mr Tajudeen Olayinka, FCA

The Immediate Past President, Mallam Haruna Nma Yahaya, mni, PhD, FCA

The Honorary Treasurer of the Institute, Dr Njum Nnennaya Uma-Onyemenam, FCA

Council Members Here Present

Representatives of all the Professional Accountancy Organisations here present or joining online

Presidents of Sister Professional Institutes from within and outside Nigeria

The Executive Secretary Association of Accounting Bodies West Africa, Dr Abel Aig Asein, Ph.D., FCA

The Registrar/Chief Executive, Lanre Olasunkanmi, PhD, FCA

Distinguished Guest Speakers and Esteemed Discussants

Members of the 56th Annual Accountants' Conference Committee

Distinguished Professional Colleagues here present and joining online

Eminent Invited Guests

Members of the Press

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great privilege, on behalf of the Governing Council and the over 72,000 members of The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria, to welcome you to the 56th Annual Accountants' Conference. With about 12,000 delegates registered, physically and virtually, from across Nigeria and beyond, this Conference remains one of the largest gatherings of professional accountants on the African continent.

We are deeply honoured by the presence of our Special Guest of Honour and of distinguished leaders from government, the legislature, business and the international accountancy community. Your participation affirms that the strength of our institutions and the progress of our nation are inseparable.

Consider a farmer who cultivates her land in safety, a graduate who finds meaningful employment, an entrepreneur who invests with confidence, and a family with dependable access to essential services. They may never read an economic report. Yet they are the people for whom every policy and every reform must ultimately deliver.

For the true measure of national progress is not simply what our economy produces, but what that progress makes possible in the lives of our people.

This is the deeper meaning of our Conference theme: ***Beyond Numbers: Strengthening the Economy, Securing the Nation.***

Nigeria stands at a defining moment. Reforms are under way, difficult decisions are being taken, and the economy recorded growth of approximately 4.2 per cent in the first half of 2026. We acknowledge these developments and the responsibility borne by those entrusted with national leadership. Yet our ambition must reach beyond improved indicators, to productive employment, thriving enterprises, stronger institutions and better living standards for every Nigerian.

As Nigeria looks towards the 2027 general elections, we are reminded that the enduring strength of a nation rests on institutions that command public trust, policies that outlive political cycles, and a shared commitment to the national interest.

Our responsibility is not merely to prepare Nigeria for the next election, but to help build a Nigeria that will prosper well beyond it.

National security today extends beyond the protection of lives and property, to the security of our food systems, energy supplies, digital infrastructure, livelihoods and institutions. A secure environment enables enterprise to flourish. A productive economy creates jobs. Credible institutions sustain both.

Beneath all of this lies one indispensable foundation: trust.

Trust that public resources will be responsibly managed. Trust that investments will be protected. Trust that institutions will act with integrity. And trust that the sacrifices of today will deliver a better tomorrow.

Trust is the true currency of every economy. It cannot be printed, borrowed or decreed. It is earned, report by report, audit by audit, decision by decision. And once lost, it is recovered only at great cost.

This is where our profession bears a profound responsibility. Public confidence in financial statements, in public accounts and in the tax system rests, to a large degree, on the integrity of the Chartered Accountant.

Every report we prepare, every audit we sign and every piece of advice we give is a promise to the public that the numbers can be believed.

That is why our ethical standards are not a rulebook to be consulted only in difficult moments. They are the values that shape who we are: integrity when no one is watching, objectivity when interests compete, and the courage to say no when yes would be easier. Accountability is not a burden imposed by regulation. It is the very reason society entrusted this profession with its confidence.

As artificial intelligence transforms the way we work, these values will matter even more. Machines can process information at extraordinary speed, but they cannot carry the moral responsibility of a signature. Our greatest contribution will lie in sound judgement, in asking the right questions and in helping leaders make better decisions.

Our greatest professional value will not be measured only by what we can calculate, but by what we have the courage to question and the wisdom to improve.

Permit me to pay tribute to the men and women who give life to these values every day: our members.

In the public service, you steward the nation's finances and bring discipline to budgets and public accounts at every tier of government. In our legislative houses, you bring rigour to appropriation and oversight. In industry and private enterprise, you lead finance functions, build businesses and create jobs.

In practice, you uphold the integrity of financial reporting. In academia, you shape the minds that will lead this profession tomorrow. And across the diaspora, you carry the name of ICAN with distinction.

To every one of you, wherever you serve: your Institute sees your work, values your sacrifice and is immensely proud of you. I invite this great assembly to join me in applauding you.

Under our Presidential Strategic Doctrine, ***WE ARE ICAN***, we are strengthening competence, advancing ethical leadership, embracing innovation and deepening our commitment to the public interest. This Conference is a practical expression of that doctrine, designed to deepen the knowledge of our members and sharpen their competence in their various fields of practice.

Yet no profession can transform a nation acting alone. Government must strengthen the environment for growth. Businesses must invest responsibly. Institutions must uphold accountability. And every citizen must contribute to the progress we seek.

The sessions ahead will examine the critical choices that will shape Nigeria's economic future and national security. As we engage with our distinguished speakers and panellists, I invite us to reflect on three questions:

What must we do differently?

What must we do better?

And what must we begin doing together?

For the value of this Conference will be measured not by the quality of our discussions alone, but by the difference our ideas make in our institutions and in our nation.

I commend our distinguished speakers and the Conference Planning Committee, chaired by Dr Tobi Ayodele Abiola, mni, FCA, for a programme worthy of the moment, and I thank our partners and sponsors for making this gathering possible.

Nigeria's future will not be determined by the challenges we describe, but by the choices we make and the actions we take.

For ultimately, the greatest account we shall ever render is not merely of the resources entrusted to us, but of the future we helped to make possible.

Let that be our responsibility. Let that be our contribution. Let that be our legacy.

And let the nation know, with confidence, who we are.

We are the conscience behind the confidence.

We are the profession behind progress.

We are ICAN.

Thank you.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, it is now my singular honour and privilege to respectfully invite our Special Guest of Honour, **Dr Zacch Adelabu Adedeji, Executive Chairman of the Nigeria Revenue Service**, to formally declare the 56th Annual Accountants' Conference open.

Distinguished Sir, the floor is yours.

Hajia Queensley S. Seghosime, mni, MSc, FCA
President and Chairman of Council, ICAN
Tuesday, October 20, 2026