

## REPORT

# THE LAUNCH OF THE D-8 CENTER FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (D-8 SME CENTER)

ABUJA, NIGERIA, 17 JUNE 2025

## I. Introduction

1. The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) officially launched the D-8 Center for Small and Medium Enterprises (D-8 SME Center) in Abuja, Nigeria, on 17 June 2025. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Investment (FMITI) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, and the D-8 Secretariat co-facilitated the launch.
2. Representatives from the People's Republic of Bangladesh, the Republic of Arab Republic of Egypt, the Republic of Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan participated in the Launch.

## II. The Launch Proceeding

3. Mr. Charles Odii, the Director General (DG)/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of SMEDAN, Ambassador Bukar Buni Hamman, the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Tukur Rilwan Muhammed, Director Trade of the FMITI, and H.E. Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, the D-8 Secretary-General, officiated the launch in a ribbon-cutting ceremony.
4. In his remarks, the DG/CEO of SMEDAN underlined that the Center will be equipped with a work plan. He invited all Member States to provide input for the work plan and to facilitate the Center's work. The Statement of the DG/CEO is attached as Annex I.
5. In his remarks, the D-8 Secretary-General lauded the Government of Nigeria for promoting SME development cooperation within the D-8 framework by hosting the D-8 SME Center in Abuja. He thanked SMEDAN for providing the office space and sustaining the Center's initial work. The Statement is enclosed as Annex-II.
6. Goodwill messages were delivered by representatives of Arab Republic of Egypt (Annex III), People's Republic of Bangladesh (Annex IV), Republic of Indonesia (Annex V), Malaysia (Annex VI), and Islamic Republic of Pakistan (Annex VII).
7. A closed session was also organized as an avenue to share the best practices among the D-8 Member States in the SME development area

8. **Bangladesh** informed the meeting that the Bangladeshi Government established the SME Foundation under the Ministry of Industry. The SME Foundation supports SME financing by providing low-interest rate credit, facilitating startup funds for the SMEs, creating a network for market access, and advancing technology for the SMEs.
9. **Egypt** informed the meeting that the Egyptian Government is prioritizing SMEs' development by enacting a dedicated law and roadmap for SMEs. The Government also established preferential treatment in obtaining licenses and documenting projects, including access to cheap finance (low rate) for SMEs. The Government also facilitated support for SMEs' access to financing by providing lower interest rate finance. The Government also offers preferential treatment, enabling the importation of raw materials for SME with lower duties, ranging from 0% to 2%. The Government also encourages production capacity by involving SMEs in the production chain and integrating them in the international supply chain through business matchmaking programs and involving them in international expos and exhibitions and trade missions abroad.
10. **Indonesia** informed the Meeting that there are two ministries responsible for the development of SMEs in Indonesia, namely the Ministry of Cooperatives and the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises. The Ministry of Cooperatives is tasked with facilitating access to the Government's resources for the SMEs, including through village-level cooperatives, to provide better documentation and suitable programs. The Ministry also facilitates digital transformation, policy development, and cooperatives for economic growth. At the same time, the Ministry of SMEs is tasked to develop SMEs by providing capacity-building programs, facilitating finance, market access, and business incubation. Among the priorities is developing SMEs' capacity in packaging, branding, and export access. SMEs in Indonesia account for 61% of Indonesia's GDP. In Indonesia, there are 64.2 billion SMES, absorbing 87% of the labor force, of which 64.9% are women. SMEs contribute 14% of Indonesian exports.
11. **Malaysia** underlined the incentives to develop SMEs provided by the government, which include tax discounts, financial incentives, grants, and access to finance. The Government also established the SME Corporation of Malaysia (SME Corp Malaysia) to facilitate matching grant provisions to enable SMEs to adopt a sound financial structure. The SME Corp of Malaysia also provides a dedicated scheme called Bumiputra Enterprise Enhancement Programme, an affirmative action, to enhance the productivity of the native SMEs. In collaboration with the Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA), the Corp also facilitates domestic investment strategic fund, high-tech fund provisions, tax incentives, and tax reliefs for SMEs in Malaysia. The two agencies also facilitate profit reinvestment to

upgrade the SMEs' production facilities. The Corp also provides pioneer status for innovative and high-tech SMEs. The Central Bank of Malaysia also contributes to Malaysia's SME development through facilitating digital economy cooperation. Among the specific programs for SMEs development are capacity-building and training programs through halal development cooperation, market access and export incentives, market development grant, and facilitation in international market promotion, and inclusion of SMEs in the e-commerce platform.

12. **Pakistan** informed the meeting that the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), under the Ministry of Commerce, is responsible for the national SME development strategies and programs. The Pakistani Government, through SMEDA, assists in developing business concepts, provides capacity-building programs and training, and facilitates tax incentives. Among SMEDA's flagship programs is the support for women entrepreneurs' centers. SMEDA also supports international market access for SMEs through facilitating their participation in trade missions and exhibitions abroad. SMEDA also facilitates special business-to-business meetings and develops SMEs' export capacity through various training programs. Pakistan proposed that the working mechanism, plan of action, and governance of the D-8 SME Center could be established soon. Pakistan also proposed regular virtual meetings with the SME Government Bodies of the D-8 Member States to strengthen cooperation in SME development further.
13. **Nigeria** informed the Meeting that SMEDAN will organize an SME Conference in Lagos in September 2025 and extended invitation to SMEs from the Member States. The Conference will focus on SMEs in the healthcare, fashion, financing, and fintech sectors. SMEDAN also invited the D-8 Member States to utilize SMEDAN's e-commerce platform to facilitate business interactions among the SMEs from the D-8 Member States. SMEDAN also introduced the "GROW Nigerian" strategy (Annex VII), which consists of Guidance, Resources, Opportunities, and Workforce.
14. SMEDAN also invited all the D-8 Member States, including through their respective embassies and missions in Nigeria, to utilize the office space of the Center for their SME development activities. SMEDAN also proposed the establishment of a WhatsApp Group among the heads of the SME Governing Agencies of the D-8 Member States to facilitate a more effective coordination process. SMEDAN also informed the meeting that the D-8 SME Center Director, including the relevant officers, will soon be appointed to commence the Center's work. Nigeria has also expressed its readiness to nominate a Director of the Center and submit a one-year action plan for the center.

### **III. Conclusion and Recommendations**

15. The recently launched D-8 SME Center will serve as a crucial platform to further promote and strengthen the D-8's objectives to develop the capacity of SMEs across its Member States, as enumerated in the D-8 Decennial Roadmap 2020-2030. The Center's effectiveness, however, will be contingent upon the active contribution from the D-8 Member States to ensure the effectiveness of the Center's work in meeting its objectives.
16. To facilitate the D-8 SME Center's work, the following recommendations may be considered by the D-8 Member States:
  - a. Establish a WhatsApp group among the heads of the SME Governing Bodies of the D-8 Member States to facilitate a faster and more efficient coordination process.
  - b. The D-8 Member States to facilitate capacity-building programs for SMEs to be included in the D-8 SME Center's work plan.
  - c. Implementation of the "MoU between SME Governmental Bodies of the D-8 Member Countries" as one of the inspirations for the D-8 SME Center's work.

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## **ADDRESS BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL, SMEDAN, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE D-8 SME CENTER**

### **PROTOCOLS**

It is a real pleasure to welcome you all to this historic moment – the launch of the D-8 SME Center here in Abuja. On behalf of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria, I extend our deep appreciation to the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, our local and international partners, and all distinguished guests present.

The decision to site the D-8 SME Center in Nigeria goes beyond the symbolic. It is a clear recognition of the energy, innovation and resilience that define the Nigerian entrepreneurial spirit. It is also an endorsement of our nation's growing leadership in championing the cause of small and medium enterprises across the Global South.

It is worth noting that this development aligns with the vision of His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, whose Renewed Hope Agenda places enterprise, job creation and regional cooperation at the heart of Nigeria's economic diplomacy and domestic policy. Under his leadership, we are seeing a renewed emphasis on enabling SMEs to become drivers of inclusive growth, not just in Nigeria but across Africa and the broader developing world.

SMEDAN's mandate is clear: to support and grow Nigeria's SMEs so they can thrive, create jobs, drive innovation, and compete globally. But we know that no country can do this in isolation. SMEs in Bangladesh, Egypt, Malaysia and Nigeria all face similar hurdles – limited access to finance, infrastructure gaps, regulatory constraints and the pressure to compete in a fast-changing digital economy.

This is where the D-8 SME Center becomes strategic. It offers us a platform to share solutions, harmonize standards, open up markets and leverage collective strength. With a combined population of over 1 billion people and significant trade potential, the D-8 grouping has the power to unlock a new era of South-South cooperation built on enterprise, knowledge and shared prosperity.

For us at SMEDAN, this aligns perfectly with our Grow Nigerian strategy. We are working to help Nigerian SMEs scale beyond survival – to expand their reach, raise standards and build viable businesses that can plug into both regional and global value chains. From food to fashion, tourism to tech, we are investing in sectors where Nigeria has both comparative and creative advantage.

We are also leading efforts to digitize SME operations, drive industrial linkages and lower the cost of doing business through smarter regulation and deeper partnerships. We are creating initiatives to unleash youth potential and provide greater access to markets because of our firm belief that the best way to build a strong national economy is to support people where they are and grow businesses from the ground up.

It is our hope that the D-8 SME Center will become a living hub – not just for coordination or research, but for real business matchmaking, learning exchanges and policy alignment. We must create tangible opportunities for our entrepreneurs to export to each other's countries, co-invest in joint ventures, and learn from each other's successes and setbacks.

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

This center is more than a building. It is a bridge – a bridge between continents, between policies and real impact, between big ideas and the small businesses that bring them to life. It is now our duty to walk across that bridge and build the future we want, together.

Thank you, and God bless.

**Statement by the Secretary-General of the Developing-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, His Excellency Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, at the Launching of the D-8 Centre for Small and Medium Enterprises (SME Centre) and the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of D-8 Governmental Bodies on SMEs Abuja, Nigeria, 17 June 2025**

Your Excellency, **Dr. Jumoke Oduwole**, the Honourable Minister of Trade and Investment, Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria,

Your Excellency, **Senator John Owan Enoh**, the Honourable Minister of State for Industry, Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria,

The Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment of Nigeria, ably represented by

**Dr. Charles Odii**, Director General of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN),

**Dr. Ado J G Muhammad**, the Global Director, D-8 Health and Social Protection Programme,

Excellencies, Heads of Delegation and Distinguished Representatives of D-8 Member States,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Members of the Press,

It is with great honour, and deep appreciation, that I deliver this statement, on the occasion of the formal launch of the D-8 Centre for Small and Medium Enterprises (D-8 SME Centre), and the convening of the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of D-8 Governmental Bodies on SMEs.

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to the Director-General of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), Dr. Charles Odii, for his commitment, in hosting this important Centre, and this high-level gathering.

Today's launch marks the realisation of a collective ambition to build sustainable support mechanisms for SMEs, within the D-8 framework. The establishment of the Centre, has been a dynamic process, since the idea was mooted in 2022.

## **Your Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

No doubt, SMEs are the backbone of D-8 economies. They account for most businesses, and contribute, significantly, to employment, innovation, and inclusive economic growth, across our member countries.

For instance, in Azerbaijan—our newest member—SMEs account for 99.7% of enterprises, contributing 18%, to the **GDP** and employing 44% of the workforce, in 2023. In Bangladesh, SMEs represent approximately 90% of enterprises, contributing around 25% to GDP, and employing about 40%, of the labour force.

In Egypt, SMEs make up 98% of private sector enterprises, contributing 43% to GDP, and employing over 47 million people, while Indonesia hosts approximately 66 million MSMEs, or about

95% of its enterprises, contributing significantly to the national economy.

In Iran, SMEs constitute 92% of industries, employing 45% of the industrial workforce, and contributing 17% to production, while in Malaysia's MSMEs, representing 96.9% of businesses, contributed 39.1% to GDP and employed 48.5% of the workforce, in 2023.

Nigeria's SMEs account for 96% of businesses, contributing 48% to GDP and employing 84% of the workforce, while in Pakistan's SMEs represent about 90% of enterprises, contributing approximately 40% to GDP, and employing 80% of the non-agricultural labour force.

In Türkiye, SMEs account for 99.8% of all business enterprises, contributing 54.2% to GDP, and employing 73.5% of the workforce.

Therefore, it is evident that harnessing the full potential of SMEs, is central, to realising the economic aspirations, of our Member States. More importantly, the empowerment of SMEs, directly contributes to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to poverty alleviation, decent work, gender equality, and industry innovation.

**Your Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Over the years, D-8 has taken deliberate step to build a strong foundation, for cooperation, among Member States, in the areas of SME development.

For instance, the inaugural D-8 SMEs Governmental Bodies Meeting, was held in Iran in December 2010. This was followed by seven other meetings of the D-8 SMEs Governmental Bodies, two of which were hosted by Nigeria in 2012 and 2014. Nigeria also

hosted the D-8 Task Force Meeting on SMEs in Abuja, in November 2017.

Secondly, the D-8 SMEs development cooperation, is also equipped with a Memorandum of Understanding, between SME Governmental Bodies, of D-8 Member Countries. This was signed in 2015. Most member states are signatories to the MoU.

Thirdly, the First D-8 Forum on SMEs and Health Market, was organised by D-8 Health and Social Protection Programme (D-8 HSP), in collaboration with SMEDAN, in Abuja, in October 2022. As a follow-up to the forum, D-8 HSP is working to speed up Business to Government interaction, in the area of medical consumables, between Nigeria and Egypt.

These platforms, **Excellencies**, have allowed Member States, to exchange best practices, and explore innovative solutions, for the growth of the SME ecosystem.

### **Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The establishment of this D-8 SME Centre, reflects our shared resolve to implement the vision, adopted by our Leaders, at the 11<sup>th</sup> D-8 Summit, in Cairo, in December 2024, which was held under the theme: ***"Investing in Youth and Supporting SMEs: Shaping Tomorrow's Economy."***

Therefore, it is our hope that this Centre will collaborate with national SME agencies in our member states to promote **research, training, policy harmonisation, data sharing, and project incubation**, in the area of SME development.

Also, we hope that the Centre, working in collaboration with national SME agencies in the member states, would be able to address some of the challenges faced by our SMEs, including inadequate access to finance, low managerial capacity and limited access to markets and technology.

As we look ahead, I urge all Member States to remain committed to supporting the Centre's programmes, in order to ensure the Centre's potential, is fully realised. Together, let us provide our entrepreneurs, especially our youth and women, with the tools they need to thrive, in an increasingly complex, and competitive, global environment.

I thank you for your attention.

Honorable Delegates, Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam SG D-8 Organization,

Dr. Charles D. G of SMEDAN,

Distinguished Guests

The launch of the **D-8 SME Center** and the convening of the **SME Bodies of the D-8 Member States** mark a pivotal moment in the collective pursuit of inclusive economic growth among our nations. This initiative reflects a shared commitment to empowering small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which make value added to GDP on our countries — the SMEs is considered as backbone of job creation and innovation across the D-8 member states.

By establishing a dedicated SME Center, the D-8 is not only creating a hub for policy coordination and capacity building, but also signaling a renewed focus on fully **implementation of D-8 PTA, digital trade, and cross-border collaboration**. This move is especially timely, given the global economic headwinds and the high impact on SMEs in developing economies.

The meeting of SME governmental bodies alongside the launch ensures that this isn't just a ceremonial gesture—it's a coordinated effort to align national strategies, share best practices, and accelerate implementation. With Nigeria taking this initiative role, the D-8 is poised to unlock new opportunities for its member states and foster a more resilient and interconnected SME ecosystem.

It's a bold step forward—and one that could redefine how emerging economies harness the power of small businesses for sustainable development.

Thank you

## **Speech by Mr Mahbubur Rahman, Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Bangladesh**

### **At the Launching of the D-8 Centre for SMEs**

**Abuja, Nigeria | 17 June 2025**

Honourable Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,  
**Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullah, and a very good morning to you all.**

On behalf of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, I convey our deep appreciation to the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for their gracious hospitality and commendable efforts in organising this significant event. I also thank the D-8 Secretariat and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) for their vision and commitment in initiating the establishment of the **D-8 Centre for SMEs**.

Bangladesh strongly supports this important initiative. We believe that the creation of this Centre marks a pivotal step in institutionalising SME cooperation within the D-8 framework.

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### **Excellencies,**

In Bangladesh, Small and Medium Enterprises are the lifeblood of our economy. SMEs account for over 25% of our GDP and contribute approximately 40% of employment. Like in many of other countries, SMEs in Bangladesh represent not only economic productivity but also social resilience and inclusive growth.

Yet, as in other developing nations, SMEs continue to face challenges in accessing finance, technology, skills, and global markets; the COVID-19 pandemic could worsen in several parts of the world further exposed these vulnerabilities.

Against this backdrop, the launch of a dedicated **D-8 Centre for SMEs** is both timely and visionary. We commend Nigeria's offer to host the Centre and appreciate the Secretariat's efforts in aligning its objectives with the Sustainable Development Goals, especially those on decent work, innovation, and inclusive economic growth.

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**We welcome the Centre’s proposed five core functions**—Information and Advisory, Networking and GVCs, Business Development Services, Financial Modelling, and Research and Advocacy—as outlined in the revised concept note.

However, to ensure real impact, we suggest three areas of focus:

1. **First, digital inclusion.**

We propose the Centre to prioritize digital tools to support SMEs in marketing, supply chain integration, and access to e-finance. A regional D-8 digital SME platform would help overcome traditional barriers and reduce costs.

2. **Second, capacity building and skills development.**

Bangladesh supports the creation of regional training programs on SME governance, entrepreneurship, and export readiness. We encourage collaboration with existing institutions in Member States to avoid duplication and build synergy.

3. **Third, structured access to finance.**

Many SMEs are bankable in spirit but not in form. The Centre must work with regional development banks and financial institutions to create blended financing models. Public-private partnerships will be essential to mobilise affordable credit and investment.

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**Excellencies,**

Bangladesh is willing to actively support the operationalisation of this Centre. We are prepared to:

- Nominate focal points from our SME Foundation and the Ministry of Commerce to coordinate with the Centre’s Secretariat;
- Contribute knowledge resources and case studies of successful Bangladeshi SMEs;
- Participate in joint programs, fairs, and exchange activities hosted by the Centre.

We also call for an early finalization of the **Headquarters Agreement** and encourage the appointment of the Centre Director at the earliest. The sooner the Centre becomes

operational, the faster we can begin delivering results to our entrepreneurs.

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**Excellencies,**

Let me take this opportunity to echo a broader vision: the promotion of intra-D-8 trade among SMEs should not be viewed in isolation. This effort must be synchronised with our trade frameworks—particularly the D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA).

Currently, under the PTA, tariff reductions are modest—starting at a minimum of 10%. However, unless these reductions approach zero, the private sector, especially SMEs, may not find the PTA commercially attractive. This is one of the main reasons traders still bypass the PTA framework.

**Therefore, we propose that the SME Centre work in tandem with the D-8 Supervisory Committee to advocate for the gradual evolution from a PTA to a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with eventual tariff elimination.** This would significantly enhance competitiveness and position the D-8 as a compelling trade bloc for SMEs.

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**In conclusion,** let me reaffirm Bangladesh's strong commitment to this noble undertaking. The establishment of the D-8 SME Centre is more than an administrative exercise—it is a call to unlock the boundless potential of our people, our products, and our partnerships.

Let us make this Centre a catalyst for innovation, inclusivity, and internationalisation of SMEs across our Member States.

I thank you all.

**Assalamu Alaikum.**

**Indonesia's Remarks in the Occasion of the  
Launching Ceremony of the D-8 SME Center**

**Abuja, 17 June 2025**

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***Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh. May peace be upon us all.***

***H.E. Ambassador Nura Abba Rimi, Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria;***

***H.E. Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam, Secretary-General of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation;***

***Distinguished delegates of the D-8 Member States, Ladies and Gentlemen;***

***Good morning,***

- 1) Indonesia warmly welcomes and congratulates the inauguration of the D-8 SME Center, a significant initiative championed by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN). This milestone reflects our shared commitment to empowering SMEs as vital pillars of our economies.
- 2) In Indonesia, SMEs are truly the backbone of the economy—contributing over 60% to the national GDP and employing nearly 97% of the workforce. I believe this is also the case with other countries where SMEs representing the vast majority of businesses, contributing significantly to GDP and employment. Furthermore, SMEs also play a critical role in driving innovation, job creation, and inclusive growth.
- 3) In this regard, we hope that the D-8 SME Center will serve as a strategic platform for member states to harmonize policies, share best practices, and build stronger SME ecosystems. Such a platform is essential to provide the support and infrastructure SMEs need to thrive and compete globally.
- 4) Indonesia believes the Center will be a catalyst for deeper collaboration, capacity building, and knowledge exchange across the D-8, fostering greater value chain integration and enhancing our collective economic resilience.
- 5) Following the conclusion of the 8th Session of the Supervisory Committee of the D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement (D-8 PTA) yesterday, we sincerely hope that the D-8 SME Center will enhance SME participation in cross-border trade and play a meaningful role in advancing the long-term objectives of the D-8 PTA.
- 6) Once again, we extend our sincere congratulations and full support for the success of the D-8 SME Center.

***Thank you.***

***Wassalamu'alaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.***

***Note: Please check against delivery.***

**Statement by H.E. Aiyub Omar, The High Commissioner of Malaysia to Nigeria at the D-8 SME Center Launch in Abuja on 17 June 2025**

His Excellency Ambassador BB Hamman

Representative Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

His Excellency Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam

Secretary General of the D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation

Dr Charles Odii

Chief Executive Officer and Director General of Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests, Business Partners, and Friends,

Assalamu Alaikum and a very good morning to you all.

It is both an honour and a pleasure to stand before you today on this momentous occasion—the launching of the D-8 SME Centre. Today is not just a mere launching but the beginning of new possibilities, partnerships, and prosperity.

On behalf of the Government of Malaysia, I wish to extend our heartfelt congratulations to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), and the D-8 Secretariat for bringing this important initiative to fruition. This Center stands as a resounding testament to our shared belief in the transformative power of SMEs as drivers of inclusive economic growth across the D-8, in line with the 11th D-8 Summit's theme of "Investing in Youth and Supporting SMEs: Shaping Tomorrow's Economy."

In Malaysia, SMEs represent more than 97% of enterprises and contribute significantly to national GDP, employment, and innovation. As such, Malaysia welcomes the establishment of the D-8 SME Center and acknowledges the importance of this

initiative as a practical step toward strengthening SME ecosystems, supporting cross-border collaboration, and building economic resilience within the D-8 amid the ever-changing headwinds of global trade.

As we move forward, let us make this Centre not only a marketplace—but a meeting point for cultures, a home for entrepreneurs, and a bridge between nations. May it become a catalyst for inclusive growth, innovation, and long-lasting prosperity.

Once again, please accept our warmest congratulations and sincere best wishes for the success of the D8 SME Centre and may it flourish and fulfill its mission for many generations to come.

Thank you.

**Remarks of the Additional Secretary (TD),  
D-8 Small and Medium Enterprise Center Launch  
Abuja, Nigeria | 17 June 2025**

**Assalam-o-Alaikum and Good Morning everyone,**

Honorable Director-General of SMEDAN, Mr. Charles Odil,  
Distinguished D-8 Secretary-General, Ambassador Isiaka Abdulqadir Imam,  
Esteemed Representatives of D-8 Member States,  
Government Officials, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is both an honour and a privilege to stand before you today on behalf of Pakistan at this momentous occasion—the historic launch of the D-8 Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Centre in Abuja. This landmark initiative signifies a bold step forward in our shared mission to promote economic cooperation, drive innovation, and achieve inclusive growth across the Developing Eight (D-8) member states. Today’s ceremony is not merely the opening of an institution; it is the birth of a collaborative platform that will shape the future of SMEs within our bloc, fostering prosperity and resilience in our economies.

Small and Medium Enterprises are the lifeblood of our nations, they are the engines of job creation, the incubators of entrepreneurship, and the catalysts for sustainable development. In Pakistan, SMEs constitute nearly 40% of the GDP and employ over 80% of the non-agricultural workforce, making them indispensable to our economic fabric. From bustling urban markets to rural workshops, these enterprises embody the spirit of innovation and determination that defines our people.

Yet, despite their immense contributions, SMEs often face formidable challenges like limited access to finance, regulatory hurdles, and difficulties in penetrating international markets. These obstacles stifle growth and hinder their ability to compete on a global scale. It is precisely for this reason that the establishment of the D-8 SME Centre is so crucial. By addressing these barriers collectively, we can unlock the full potential of our SMEs, transforming them into powerful vehicles for trade expansion, poverty reduction, and regional economic integration.

The D-8 represents a dynamic alliance of nations rich in diversity, resources, and complementary economic strengths. Our collective market spans over 1.1 billion people, presenting vast opportunities for intra-bloc trade and investment. However, to fully harness this potential, we must strengthen SME collaboration, facilitate knowledge transfer, and create an enabling environment for cross-border enterprise.

Pakistan stands firmly behind these objectives and is eager to contribute actively to the Centre’s success. Our government has already taken significant strides in SME development through initiatives such as the National SME Policy, which focuses on enhancing access to credit, simplifying taxation, and promoting digital transformation. Additionally, programmes like Kamyab Jawan (Successful Youth) and the Prime Minister’s Youth Business Loans are empowering a new generation of entrepreneurs with the tools they need to thrive.

We are keen to share our experiences with fellow D-8 members while also learning from their successes. There is much we can gain from one another. As we embark on this journey together, let us commit to the following priorities:

1. Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships – Governments must work hand-in-hand with the private sector to create SME-friendly policies, reduce bureaucratic red tape, and incentivise investment.
2. Leveraging Technology for Inclusion – Digital platforms, e-commerce, and fintech solutions can democratise access to markets, particularly for women-led and rural enterprises.
3. Enhancing Regional Trade Connectivity – Simplifying customs procedures, harmonising standards, and reducing non-tariff barriers will enable SMEs to trade more freely within the D-8 bloc.

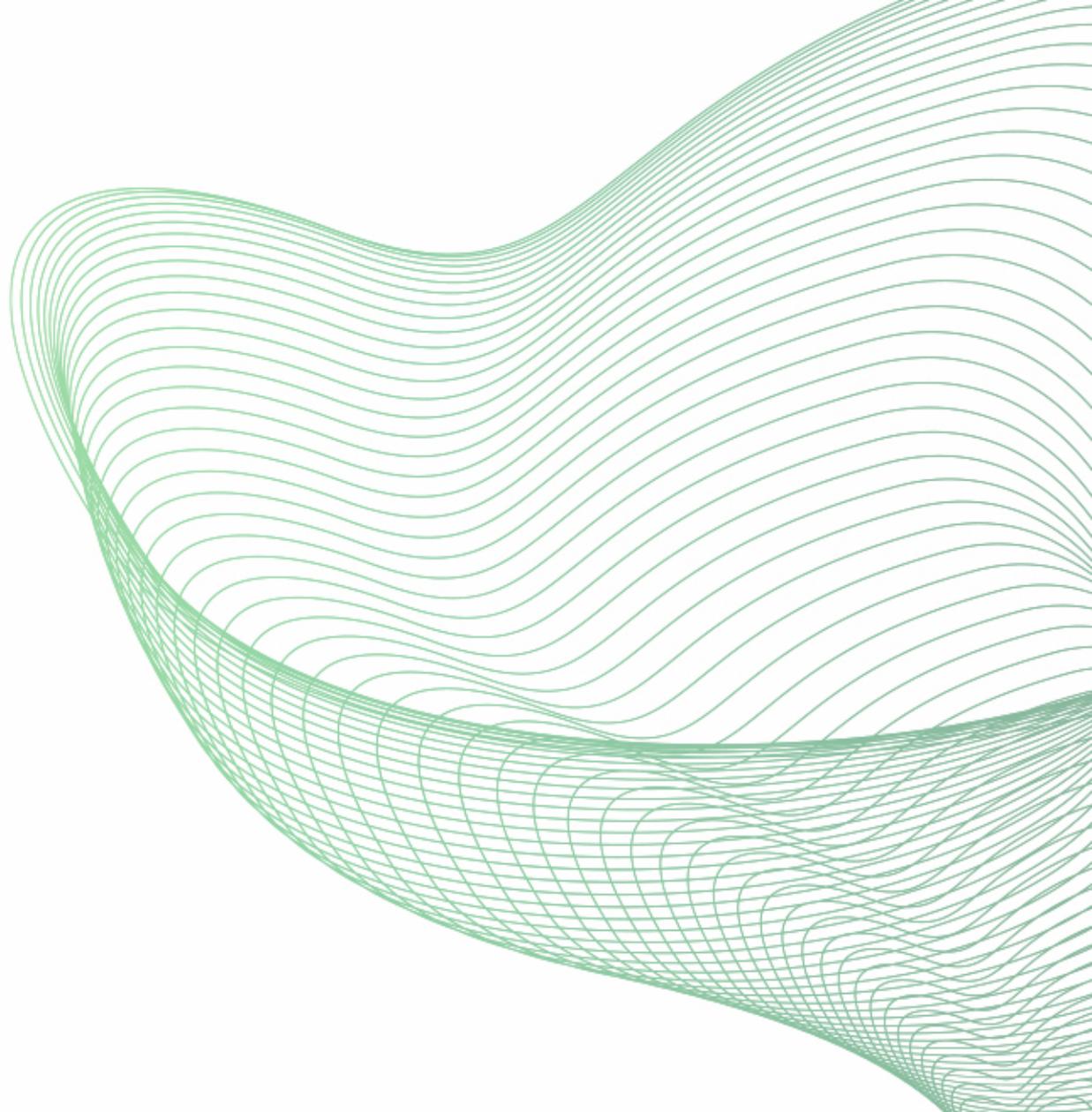
Before I conclude, I would like to extend Pakistan's deepest appreciation to SMEDAN (the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria) and the D-8 Secretariat for their visionary leadership in bringing this Centre to fruition. Their dedication exemplifies the spirit of collaboration that defines our organisation.

Pakistan reaffirms its unwavering commitment to this collective endeavour. Together, we can transform the D-8 SME Centre into a beacon of innovation, shared prosperity, and enduring partnership. Let us seize this opportunity to build a future where our SMEs—and, by extension, our economies—thrive in an interconnected and competitive world.

Thank you very much.



# **GROW** **Nigerian**



# Introduction



In line with its founding act, SMEDAN is tasked with nurturing the growth and sustainability of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Nigeria. SMEDAN acts as a catalyst for growth and prosperity by supporting SMEs, which are the backbone of the country's economy, thereby contributing to **job creation, poverty alleviation and rural industrialisation**, and overall economic advancement in Nigeria.

This encompasses policy formulation and implementation, capacity-building initiatives, facilitating access to finance and markets, infrastructure development, and advocating for MSME interests.

# Current Landscape



**96%**

of Total Businesses  
in Nigeria



**49.78%**

Contribution to  
National GDP



**59M+**

Employed (76% of  
workforce)



**10-15%**

Manufacturing  
Output



**50%**

Industrial Jobs  
Created



**55%**

In Wholesale/Retail  
Trade Industry



**7.64%**

Of Total  
Export Income



**23%M 72%F**

Between  
20 - 60 years old

# Identified Challenges



**Inadequate Financing:**  
Difficulty accessing capital and funding for business ventures.



**Regulatory Burdens:**  
Issues like multiple taxation, high registration costs, and bureaucratic bottlenecks



**Limited Infrastructure:**  
Inadequate physical and technological infrastructure, especially in rural areas.



**Limited Access to Technology and Innovation:**  
Insufficient access to cutting-edge technology and innovative resources.



**High Operating Costs:**  
Challenges with high costs of raw materials, energy, and overall business operations



**Lack of Skills:**  
Lack of skilled workforce and training opportunities.



**Poor Market Access:**  
Difficulty reaching customers and accessing markets

# Our Theory of Change

**GROW Nigerian** is SMEDAN's strategic blueprint outlining plans to accelerate economic growth by providing vital resources to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in key sectors of the Nigerian economy. It proposes our theory of change which holds that by providing adequate **Guidance, Resources, Opportunities, and Workforce Support (GROW)**, SMEs can overcome common obstacles and experience growth.

If SMEDAN, in collaboration with **key partners and stakeholders**, empower entrepreneurs with the right combination of what they need to grow - knowledge, capital, team support, access to market, network and ecosystem support - their growth will be accelerated and they will build sustainable businesses that will create jobs, improve our quality of life and deliver value for all.

# GROW

Guidance



Resources



Opportunities



Workforce Support

Providing small businesses with expert advice, mentorship, and strategic direction to navigate challenges and maximize growth potential.

Equipping small businesses with essential tools, funding, technology, and infrastructure necessary for operational efficiency and sustainability.

Creating platforms, networks, and market access opportunities for small businesses to showcase their products/services, collaborate, and expand their reach.

Offering training, skill development programs, and resources to empower entrepreneurs and their teams, fostering productivity and innovation within small businesses.

## Focusing on eight critical sectors, the **GROW Nigerian** strategy is distilled into the following themes:



**Eat Nigerian**  
Agriculture  
value chain



**Wear Nigerian**  
Fashion and  
Textile  
Industries



**Visit Nigerian**  
Tourism  
and  
Hospitality



**Produce Nigerian**  
Manufacturing  
and Production



**Teach and Learn Nigerian**  
Education



**Watch and Listen Nigerian**  
Digital Media  
Economy



**Patronise Nigerian**  
Connecting  
Buyers to  
Sellers



**Digitize and Innovate Nigerian**  
Innovation and  
new tech  
adoption



**Thank you.**

