Funso Doherty
Lagos Nigeria
email: fd@funsodoherty.org

Friday, May 16, 2025
For Immediate Release:

STATEMENT ON THE 2025 UTME CRISIS

I write to you today with a heavy heart and a deep sense of concern over the profound systemic failures surrounding this year's Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME). We extend our sincerest condolences to the family of one of our own, Faith Opesusi Timileyin – a young resident of Ikorodu, Lagos, full of promise, whose tragic passing has left her family, our community and the nation mourning. Her death, which is believed to be related to despair over her incorrectly reported UTME score, is a devastating reminder of the human cost when systems meant to uplift instead betray us.

For many young Nigerians, the UTME marks a first, high-stakes encounter with our nation's public institutions. It is a rite of passage that should be challenging, yes, but that should also be fair and transparent. Yet, year after year, it too often becomes a source of avoidable trauma. Last-minute technical glitches, scheduling chaos, and poorly managed logistics undermine students' confidence even before the exam begins. If flawed results follow, the emotional toll can be immense. Some students will be unjustly forced to sit out the subsequent year, left behind as their peers advance, while they carry an unwarranted burden of shame and frustration.

In the midst of all these I must acknowledge and commend Professor Is-haq Oloyede for his rare and commendable act of admission and accountability, an uncommon gesture in a nation where accepting responsibility is often avoided or deflected. I also acknowledge the important and sometimes thankless reforms JAMB has pursued under his leadership. But acknowledgment is only the beginning. Real accountability must be measured not in words but in action, especially when a young life has been lost and tens of thousands of others have suffered avoidable harm.

Now, with less than 48 hours' notice, nearly 380,000 affected students – 54 percent of them in Lagos – have been asked to resit the exam starting today at 6:30 a.m. This abrupt timeline has robbed them of a chance to recover, regroup, or prepare, compounding an already traumatic ordeal. Some early reports of persistent technical issues this morning can only deepen the trauma for students and their families, many of whom had to drop everything and scramble at the last minute. For students who already feel marginalized by a broken system, these logistical errors inflict real emotional pain on a deeply personal level.

We must do better. And we can.

I therefore call on JAMB and the Ministry of Education to take the following immediate steps:

Funso Doherty
Lagos Nigeria
email: fd@funsodoherty.org

I. Extend the Resit Window. Future resit arrangements must be announced with at least two weeks' notice, giving students adequate time to recover emotionally, and approach the exam with clarity and rebuilt confidence.

II. Provide Counselling Support. Partner with trained professionals to deliver free, accessible counselling to all affected candidates where indicated or requested

III. Understand root causes and Strengthen technical, procedural and Risk-Management Protocols including vendor risk management. Commission independent technical. infrastructure and process audits and publish the findings. Implement comprehensive remedial measures to prevent future failures.

IV. Engage Stakeholders. Convene a national roundtable including student input, parent-teacher associations, civil-society organizations, and technical experts to design a more resilient, transparent, and student-centered examination system.

To every affected student: I see you. I see your courage, your grit, and your perseverance. This moment does not define your future. Nigeria may have failed you today, but resilience and resolve will enable a better tomorrow.

To every parent: your advocacy matters. Your voice matters. Keep holding our institutions accountable.

And to our leaders and institutions: true leadership is not about being infallible. It is about being responsive, empathetic, committed to the people you serve, to learning and to continous improvement.

Finally, and most importantly, I urge you to keep Faith Opesusi's family and loved ones in your thoughts and prayers—may her soul rest in peace

Let this crisis be more than a moment of regret. Let it be a turning point. One where accountability meets compassion. Where leadership capacity meets service responsibility. And where our national exams finally become what they were always meant to be: a fair and trustworthy bridge to opportunity for all.

Together, let us ensure that our young people experience these early interactions with the Nigerian state not with foreboding, as painful ordeals, but eagerly, as exciting thresholds of hope and promise.

Funso Doherty.

###