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PRESS RELEASE

BSN COVID-19 RESPONSE

On behalf of the Chairman Board of Trustees (BoT), Prof. Vincent Ado Tenebe (FBSN), the National Executive Council (NEC) and the entire members of the Biotechnology Society of Nigeria (BSN) across the Country and in Diaspora, we wish to extend our deepest grief and solidarity to all our compatriots; the President, Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency Muhammadu Buhari and fellow Nigerians as the world grapples with ongoing COVID-19 outbreak and its devastating disruptions in our country. While taking this moment to condole with those who have lost family members and loved ones due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we commend the initiatives of the Presidential Taskforce, National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and all other stakeholders in the collective fight against COVID-19 since the first index case was reported in Nigeria on February 27, 2020.

As a frontline scientific body of professionals, BSN expresses profound gratitude to all those fighting the deadly corona virus and prays that the Almighty God continues to protect them and their loved ones. As partners in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, BSN has been developing a national response strategy to the crisis to advance different intervention areas where it can contribute in mitigating the resultant disruptions and shocks, as its contribution to safeguarding our country from the deadly novel coronavirus.

Drawing from insight and experiences of its several professionals in different fields of scientific endeavor, BSN is positioned to contribute to slowing down the transmission of the virus and its management.

The society counts on her members with expertise in various fields (e.g. food and agricultural biotechnology, industrial biotechnology, environmental biotechnology, and medical biotechnology) and would harness their talents in supporting national efforts towards containing COVID-19 and mitigating its impact in our country.

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Recognizing that biotechnological tools and approaches are deployed to achieve robust outcomes in arresting the spread of the virus and its attendant consequences in the short and medium term, BSN offers itself to play key roles in the following areas:

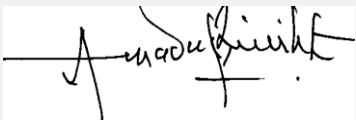



1. Present qualified members to undertake coordinated and reinforced laboratory testing of COVID-19, starting from sample collection to qPCR analysis.
2. Galvanize BSN members to develop alternative techniques that will speed up testing of COVID-19 samples. Besides the use of Rapid Diagnostic testing for COVID-19, key members of BSN are in the process of developing alternative testing kits capable of detecting antigens from COVID-19 samples. These members are willing to support government's efforts in synergy with NCDC and other relevant authorities.
3. Steer efforts of BSN members capable of developing therapeutics from indigenous natural products against this deadly virus. Currently, various herbal therapies known to be efficacious against viral infections and symptoms of COVID-19 are being developed (and other herbal remedies have also been identified and proposed for further validation). A specific case in point is that of one of our members who has successfully submitted an anti-COVID-19 mixture to the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Research and Development (NIPRD) for further evaluation following efficacy study of the mixture on different viruses of the respiratory tract and other organisms.
4. Sensitize BSN affiliated molecular laboratories nation-wide to support government efforts of testing COVID-19 samples. These labs could be accredited by relevant authority for rapid screening of samples. It is important to mention that Nigeria is not short of molecular biologists, several of whom are members of BSN and are willing to contribute with their expertise towards curtailing this pandemic. For example, a team from one of BSN affiliated laboratories in Benin is currently developing and evaluating cost effective PCR diagnostics to circumvent the shortage of functional qPCR machines in the Country.
5. Present its members, who have begun researches in vaccine development using various biotechnology and molecular biology techniques, to collaborate with all relevant bodies including the private sector, towards fast-tracking the development and use of innovations to combat the pandemic.
6. Make available, its database of identified members with special competencies in infection prevention and control (IPC) both at community and personal levels. These members have been mobilized to be on the



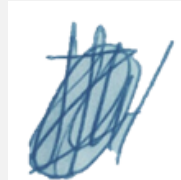


standby to be incorporated into the national response team and offer their experiences in IPC, epidemiology and surveillance, having acquired experience internationally during the earlier outbreaks of Ebola virus in various countries in West and Central Africa.

7. Support BSN-affiliated laboratories to offer relevant capacity building packages to personnel involved in the national response. The Society has been training manpower in the field of molecular biology over the years and remains willing to further enhance the country’s workforce.
8. Embark on stakeholder engagement activities around generation and dissemination of knowledge products for advocacy, risk management, foresight analysis, back-stopping exercise, peer-review processes and preparation of personal preventives.

A BSN Covid-19 Response Committee comprising highly competent Nigerian Scientists is in place to help our Country’s efforts towards strategically containing the effect of this pandemic in the short and medium term.

BSN Covid-19 Response Committee

<u>Name-Role</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Signature</u>
1. Prof. Ebiamadon A. Brisibe, - Chairman	Dept. of Genetics & Biotechnology, University of Calabar & MD, Bio-therapeutics Research Laboratory, ACR Technologies Limited, Calabar	
2. Dr. Charles Oluwaseun Adetunji - Secretary	Ag. Director of Intellectual Property & Technology Transfer, Edo University Iyamho	
3. Prof. Ebenezer Olatunde Farombi, FAS- Member	Dept. of Biochemistry, University of Ibadan	
4. Prof. Nwadiuto Esiobu Member	Director, Microbial Biotech Laboratory, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Florida, USA / & President, Applied Biotech International Nigeria Ltd, Wuye, Abuja	

5. Prof. Hajiya Mairo Inuwa Member	Director, Centre for Biotechnology Research & Training(CBR&T), Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	
6. Dr. Abdulrazak Ibrahim Member	Editor-in-Chief, Nigerian Journal of Biotechnology, Dept. of Biochemistry, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria / Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), Ghana	
7. Dr. James C. Igwe Member	PRO/Liaison Officer, BSN Secretariat, Abuja	
8. Prof. Ogonnaya Ogbu Member	Virologist, Dept. of Applied Microbiology, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	
9. Prof. Lawrence Okoror Member	MD, Biosolution Laboratory Ltd., Akure	<i>Prof. Lawrence Okoror</i>
10. Prof. Dennis E. Agbonlahor FAS Member	MD, Lahor Research Laboratories & Medical Centre, Benin City & Member, Ministerial Expert Advisory Committee on COVID-19 Pandemic Response	



Prof. Benjamin Ewa Ubi
National President, BSN



Mr. Yarama Ndirpaya
National Secretary, BSN

- CC:
- i. Presidential Taskforce on Covid-19
 - ii. His Excellency, Dr. Ogonnaya Onu, The Hon. Minister for Science and Technology, FMST, Abuja
 - iii. DG, Nigeria Center for Disease Control, Abuja