Strengthening Nigeria's Academic Publishing Ecosystem– The Role of the APC (Academic Publishing Centers) Network in National Development: Speech by the Executive Secretary, Arc Sonny S.T. Echono, Tertiary Education Trust Fund at the National Open Access Stakeholders Conference 2025, October 6-7, 2025 holding at the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)

Protocol

The distinguished Vice Chancellor, National Open University of Nigeria, other distinguished Vice Chancellors here present, Directors of Academic Publishing Centers, esteemed colleagues from our universities and research institutions, respected partners from Nigeria and abroad, ladies and gentlemen.

Introduction

It is a privilege to stand before you today to reflect on a matter that speaks directly to the soul of our nation's knowledge economy: Strengthening Nigeria's Academic Publishing Ecosystem and the Role of the APC Network in National Development.

For many years, our higher education institutions have produced abundant research, yet too often these outputs remain hidden and locked in theses on dusty shelves, or published abroad at great cost, with limited access at home. The result is a paradox: knowledge created in Nigeria does not sufficiently serve Nigeria.

As the agency entrusted with the mandate to intervene in providing funds to positively shape the future of our tertiary educational institutions, TETFund is duty bound by its mandate to change this story.

The APC Network – Building Sovereignty in Publishing

In recognition of the above challenge amongst others, TETFund established the **Academic Publishing Centers (APCs)** across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. These centers provide editorial support, professional peer review, and modern publishing facilities to ensure that our scholars can produce high-quality works that meet global standards.

Already, the APC at Minna has pioneered a collaborative publishing platform that empowers authors, editors, librarians, and designers to work together seamlessly. Through it, open access books are being published in weeks rather than years, and myths about open access—that it lowers quality, ends print, or undermines prestige—are being decisively put to rest.

But books are only one part of the picture. Across our universities, other community-driven platforms are emerging—supporting journals, repositories, and digital course publishing. Together, these efforts form the backbone of a sovereign Nigerian publishing ecosystem.

The Role of TERAS – A National Hub

In furtherance of our efforts to ensure these innovations are aggregated, connected, sustained, and made discoverable, we are ensuring this is part of our ICT road map as envisioned in the **TERAS Platform** —Tertiary Education Research Applications and Services.

TERAS is our national digital hub, already delivering plagiarism detection, federated repositories, sponsored data, aggregated journals amongst other digital educational resources and services. It is designed not only to host the outputs of APCs, but also to integrate the full spectrum of scholarly communication—books, journals, institutional repositories, and even courseware.

Imagine: a thesis digitised under TERAS, transformed into a peer-reviewed open access book at an APC, complemented by journal articles, deposited in repositories, and indexed for global visibility. This is the full publishing lifecycle we are building—a system where every Nigerian research output can find its place and serve our national development. This is the vision of our present Board of Trustees.

A National Development Call
This is imperative for our national development given that an education system dependent on imported textbooks and foreign publishers cannot truly be sovereign. Accordingly, an affordable, openly accessible academic works widens educational opportunities for our students whilst reducing inequality and ensuring locally authored content reflects our context, our languages, and our realities.

Our knowledge economy depends not just on books, but also on journals, repositories, and digital learning resources. Each of these is a building block of national capacity. Together, they ensure that Nigerian scholarship is visible, competitive, and relevant both at home and abroad.

The Community's Role

TETFund's role is supportive however the academic community must take ownership as highlighted below.

- **Vice Chancellors** must integrate open publishing into institutional policies and promotion criteria.

- **Authors and researchers** must commit to bringing their manuscripts into these platforms so their ideas can shape the national collaboration and ecosystem.

- **Librarians and editors** must uphold quality and metadata standards so that Nigerian scholarship is visible to the world.

- **Innovators and developers** of open academic infrastructure -- whether in book publishing, journals, repositories, or courseware -- must continue to build boldly, knowing that they have our support.

- **Global partners** must walk with us to align our efforts with international best practices.

Our role as TETFund is to catalyze and sustain by providing the strategic outlook and funding frameworks that allow these systems to flourish.

Conclusion – From Pilots to Policy

 Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, strengthening Nigeria's academic publishing ecosystem is not a luxury. It is a necessity.

Through the APC Network, community-led platforms for journals, repositories, course publishing, and availability of all these on TERAS, we are laying the foundation for a sovereign and sustainable scholarly ecosystem.

This is how Nigeria will move from pilots to policy. From scattered initiatives to a coordinated national framework. From dependence on foreign publishers to a confident, sovereign publishing system that serves our people and contributes to the world.

Let us seize this moment, commit to this vision and ensure that Nigerian scholarship is not only produced in Nigeria, but published, preserved, and proudly shared with the world.

Thank you as I wish us fruitful deliberations that will strengthen our academic publishing ecosystem.