



THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF NIGERIA
FEDERAL MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

SPEECH DELIVERED BY

The Honourable Minister for Communication Technology

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At

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“Internet Governance for Empowerment, National
Integration Security through Multistakeholders’
Engagement”

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PROTOCOLS

INTRODUCTION

It is my pleasure to be here once again to open this national dialogue in preparation for the eighth edition of the Internet Governance Forum.

When we gathered last year to prepare for the Azerbaijan IGF, thirty three percent (33%) of the World's population were estimated to be using the Internet including thirteen point five percent (13.5%) of people living in Africa.

The latest estimates we have today are that these numbers have risen to thirty four point three percent (34.3%) of people worldwide, including fifteen point six percent (15.6%) of people living in Africa.

In real times, this one percentage point increase of Africans using the Internet equates to an additional 26 million people. This pace of growth is truly remarkable; between 2000 and 2012, the number of Africans that use the Internet has grown by over three thousand percent (3,000%)¹.

In Nigeria we have seen the number of Internet users rise from forty five (45) million in December 2011, to forty eight (48) million in June 2012. That is three million new users in just six months.

Figures we have from the four major operators (MTN, GLO, Airtel and Etisalat) tell the same story; as at June 2012 total mobile Internet subscription stood at about twenty five (25) million, by March 2013 an additional nine (9) million new subscribers had been added bringing the total to thirty four (34) million.

¹ See Internet World Stats <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm> for precise figures

AN APPRECIATION OF THE SCALE OF THE TASK AT HAND

I have deliberately taken time to highlight the figures above in order to bring to the fore the scale of what you will be discussing today, and bring into context issues that will be discussed in Bali in October.

Most people here have heard the statistic of how a ten percent (10%) increase in Broadband penetration can result in a one point three eight percent (1.38%) increase in GDP. A more detailed look at exactly how the Internet excises its impact on countries however reveals an interesting pattern.

In developed countries, the cumulative influence of the Internet is displayed more in quantitative terms; as a tool for improving efficiency, effectiveness and productivity that is displayed in more economic terms.

In developing countries, its utility is presently displayed more in qualitative terms; as a tool used in improving social development and bringing about inclusiveness².

With approximately nine million additional people becoming Internet users each year in Nigeria, its value as a channel for achieving inclusion cannot be overstated.

In line with the theme of this forum, your discussions therefore help in ensuring that forty eight (48) million people - and an additional nine (9) million each year – are **empowered, integrated, and secured** in their use of the Internet. As opposed to *disempowered, disenfranchised* and constituting a *threat* to Nigeria and her citizens.

² See study by Dalbeg, "Impact of the Internet on Africa" <http://www.impactoftheinternet.com/>

THE GOAL OF NIGF 2013 FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE MINISTRY'S PRIORITIES

I therefore wish you success in your endeavour to harmonise the various positions you each hold with respect to:

- Digital inclusion and integration,
- Building trust, confidence and assurance on the Internet,
- Policy and regulatory model for the Internet,
- Encouraging local research on Internet development in Nigeria, and
- Addressing infrastructural challenges in the cashless society

These are indeed important issues and ones that the Ministry itself has been working towards solving.

We have made gains in reducing the digital divide and are increasing **digital inclusion and integration**. Initiatives such as the Rural Broadband Initiative have seen an extension of broadband infrastructure in rural areas. Various initiatives on the provision of Public Access Venues have seen the establishment (in total) of over two thousand, three hundred (2,300) e-Libraries, Community Communication Centres and Rural IT Centres across the country.

We have also made students a priority, expanding access in our schools and tertiary institutions; testing of a fibre-optic network connecting 27 Federal Universities is on-going and the National Research and Education Network (NgREN) will be formally launched next month.

The School Access Project and Tertiary Institution Access Project, as well as our Student Computer Ownership Programme are helping to get devices into more hands.

However we all know that providing access to devices and the Internet, even at affordable cost, is one thing; whilst adoption of these technologies and the services delivered over them is quite another. At the Ministry we believe that adoption rates will increase as **trust, confidence and assurance** in the Internet increases amongst the population. We believe people will make use of the Internet when they see that it is relevant to their needs. The Ministry is therefore supporting the creation of relevant, local content; coordinating with other MDAs to put more non-sensitive data online; putting more government services online through single-window Government Services Portal that was launched in April; as well as improving the overall security of the Governments' technology infrastructure.

The Internet has a broad range of applications and intersects various public institutions. **Setting policy and its regulation** therefore cuts across various Government institutions.

The National ICT Policy (approved-in-principle last year) reflects Government's position regarding the infrastructure on which the Internet is delivered. This position has been expanded upon in detail by the Presidential Committee on Broadband and clear recommendations and an action plan on how to address the **challenges facing the deployment of infrastructure** in the country are articulated in the National Broadband Plan 2013-2018.

The National ICT Policy also reflects the position of Government with respect to the applicability of ICTs to Safety and National Security. It

calls for the creation of a Computer Emergency Readiness and Response ecosystem with apex, sectoral and institutional Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERT's) that will, as needed, serve as standby teams of experts that will respond to national emergencies.

Another topic you will be discussing and which the Ministry has been working on is the **cashless or cash-light initiative** being rolled-out in the country. Certainly this represents a significant economic opportunity for the country. However, the availability of financial services via non-traditional banking channels (such as mobile phones) and the resultant changes in the business models of financial services providers also presents a social opportunity to reduce financial exclusion in the country.

Government has set a target to reduce financial exclusion from forty six point three percent (46.3%) in 2010 to twenty percent (20%) of the adult population by 2020. The ICT sector – by providing the digital (communications) and physical (retail) infrastructure - is a catalyst for the attainment of this goal. To this end the Ministry is working in partnership with the CBN on a pilot of the Implementation of the Financial Inclusion Strategy in Borno State.

Lastly, steps are being taken to address the paucity of information on the ICT sector. Whilst statistics on some telecommunications indicators are available IT specific indicators are more disparate in nature and therefore more complex to collect. The Ministry is undertaking a study that will provide baseline estimates of key elements of the ICT industry and we look forward to receiving your suggestions **on encouraging local research on Internet development in Nigeria.**

SUGGESTIONS UNDER EMERGING ISSUES

Those are some of the things that the Ministry has done and is currently doing. There are also issues that I hope will be discussed in your **“Emerging Issues”** session.

Firstly, during last year’s National IGF dialogue, Nigerians were trying to make sense of the perverted use of the Internet in perpetuating heinous crimes and distributing falsehoods. We were commiserating with the family and (real) friends of Cynthia Osokogu and with all those that have suffered at the hands of people that use the Internet for criminal activities.

This year, the news has been dominated by reports of espionage – both national and corporate; and about the surveillance of citizens by their governments.

The Internet is a double-edged sword – because it is open to all, the same platform that is revolutionising the distribution of Nigerian entertainment products is also the one used by terrorists to ‘distribute’ their ‘product’ – fear. The same way ingenuity in utilising the Internet has brought unprecedented social advancements (crowdsourcing) so too criminal networks have in an ethereal manner utilised the Internet to accomplish complex criminal acts (such as money laundering).

Creativity is being applied to achieve legal and illegal outcomes. Surveillance is taken as necessary in a world of increasing instability and terrorism. How should we – as a society - respond to this?

Fora such as this one provide a good platform to have a candid discussion of how Nigeria can find a balance between security on the

one hand, and privacy on the other; and to develop a framework that can help us move forward on this issue.

Secondly, and in line with the workshop you will be having exploring business opportunities for the youth, is the need for a clearer articulation of the importance of broadband for the youth, and specifically with reference to job creation.

Improving connectivity is driving Ministry initiatives such as microworks and eLancing, TechLaunchPad, and the establishment of incubation centres. However more understanding of the dynamism between youth and technology is required and of the untapped opportunities that exist.

Thirdly, (and finally) is the reality of the development of the Internet in Nigeria within the context of global perceptions about the country. To most if not all of us sitting in this room, of us a yearly addition of nine (9) million Internet users is a tremendous opportunity. Unfortunately, the dominant global opinion (no matter how uninformed) is that these are nine (9) million new threats.

Our IP addresses are profiled, our sites are routinely blocked, and we experience difficulties in making global online purchases. Now, on the threshold of an accelerated deployment of broadband infrastructure, is the time to pool our collective resource of technical experts, policy analysts, advocates, media practitioners, and public sector officials, to develop and implement a sustainable (multifaceted) solution that will build trust, confidence and assurance of Nigeria's presence on the Internet.

CONCLUSION

Please permit me to commend the organisers, Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), and Nigeria Internet Registration Association (NIRA), and other stakeholders collaborating with my Ministry for their patriotic commitment toward ensuring broad participation and engagement of a cross-section of stakeholders.

I can assure you that my Ministry will articulate the various submissions emanating from this Forum in the Nation's input into the Global Internet Governance Forum in Indonesia.

Do have successful deliberations, and I hereby declare the Forum open.

Thank you.