

## PREAMBLE

The Fourth Africa Internet Summit and Exhibition (AFRINET 2005) with the theme “*Sustaining the Growth of ICT Access in Africa*”, organised by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) in collaboration with the Nigeria Internet Group (NIG), Federal Ministry of Communications (MOC) of Nigeria, International Telecommunications Union (ITU), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO), Africa Telecommunications Union (ATU) and the West Africa Telecommunications Regulators Association (WATRA), held February 22-24, 2005 at the Sheraton Hotels and Towers, Abuja, Nigeria.

The Summit was declared open by the Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar with the Honourable Minister of Communications of Nigeria, Chief Cornelius Adebayo as the Chief Host. Delegates included African ministers, regulators, telecommunications administrations, international development partners, multilateral agencies, ICT service providers, academia, civil society groups and Africans in the Diaspora, among other stakeholders.

## OBSERVATIONS:

Participants at AFRINET 2005 considered a number of issues and came up with the following observations:

- African nations have witnessed considerable progress in the growth of ICT, particularly in the area of digital mobile telephony services. However, the huge ICT potentials remain grossly under-explored.
- In spite of perception that Africa is a high-risk investment zone, the continent has enormous potentials to generate local and foreign investments
- ICTs are veritable platforms to drive regional integration and cooperation among economies of African states.
- Africa’s contribution to content on the Internet is very marginal, representing only 0.2 per cent of total Internet content. That position needs to change based on effective intervention by stakeholders

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

Through presentations, discussions and responses from the panel the following noteworthy recommendations were made as mechanisms to sustain the growth of ICT access in Africa:

- African governments must match words with action to ensure quick delivery of ICT dividends to their citizens.

- Africans should participate actively in global ICT policy formulation process and governance issues, especially those affecting their future.
- African governments should accelerate the implementation of Universal Access in the provision of ICT services to quickly bridge the Digital Divide between the urban centres and rural communities.
- There is a need to upgrade the curricula of African educational institutions from primary to tertiary levels to reflect developments in ICT and make computer education mandatory in all schools.
- There is need to develop human capacities for Africans to take advantage of outsourcing opportunities that are available globally.
- Appropriate laws should be enacted to protect online transactions and ICT infrastructures from abuse.
- Cross-border initiatives at resolving common regulatory challenges such as WATRA and SATRA should be encouraged.
- African governments should urgently reform their power sector to allow for private investment and achieve stable electricity supply which is a prerequisite to accelerated growth of ICT sector.
- While external assistance is required to grow the local ICT market, African governments must adopt a conscious approach at de-emphasizing dependence on foreign aids to develop their ICT sectors.
- Healthy competitive terrains remain key to driving investment; governments must evolve policy frameworks that discourage monopolies. Policy and regulatory reforms adopting Deregulation and Liberalization as cardinal points must be ensured or continued where such already exist.
- Private/Public Partnership (PPP) should be encouraged and strengthened in deploying infrastructures and services to a wide spectrum of the African market.

- Constructive engagements between public and private sectors is essential to fostering growth in the ICT sector; private players need to actively adopt common positions on issues and engage governments on matters affecting the sector.
- To continuously encourage investments, level playing fields for all players must be guaranteed by the regulatory institutions.
- Africa's ICT environment being a part of the global ICT landscape requires that national ICT policies and regulations be made to conform to international benchmarks.
- Technology neutrality must be taking into consideration in formulating regulatory policies for emerging technologies such as VoIP, Wifi, WiMAX, among others.
- Satellite technology holds high prospects to open up rural communities and improve universal access. Therefore, policies on VSAT deployment should be liberalised.
- Well-articulated and effective ICT policies and effective implementation of these policies will promote Africa's competitiveness in the new Information Society.
- Local skilled manpower should be explored and encouraged in the deployment of ICT infrastructure and services in Africa.
- Tax regimes in the ICT sector should be made friendly and multiple taxations eliminated.

The Summit concluded with the holding of the first African ICT Consumer Parliament, bringing together regulators, operators and consumers to discuss areas of possible improvement in the growing Nigerian telecommunications industry.

