

# KEYNOTE ADDRESS

By

**ENGR ERNEST C. A. NDUKWE, OFR**  
Executive Vice Chairman/CEO  
Nigerian Communications Commission

On

**ELIMINATING REGULATORY BARRIERS TO REGIONAL  
INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

At the Occasion of the

**WATRA/ECOWAS 1<sup>ST</sup> MOBILE ROAMING  
CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION**

HELD AT

ECOWAS COMMISSION, ABUJA  
13 -14 Sep. 2007

## **ELIMINATING REGULATORY BARRIERS TO REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **PROTOCOL**

I am delighted to be here in the midst of delegates from National Regulatory authorities of the West African sub-region to discuss the issue of Eliminating Regulatory Barriers to Regional Integration and Development at the 1<sup>st</sup> WATRA/ECOWAS roaming conference.

The conference theme is on the imperative and the need to Roam and effectively communicate within the West African Sub-Region.

While admittedly we have fifteen (15) member states in the West Africa Sub-Region, ICTs are global and know no boundaries. If we are to benefit from the tremendous benefits accruable from massive deployment of ICTs within the region, we must have in place, a common policy that promote regional cooperation. This is vital to the economic development of the members states, and we must put in place such polices that are aimed at eliminating regulatory barriers to regional integration and development.

Treating ECOWAS as a single market offers the following significant advantages:

- A large market permits economies of scale – by aggregating traffic beyond the levels that could be attained in smaller markets
- Geographical Reach Spreads Environmental Risk
- Marginally attractive areas can get advanced, sophisticated services at low marginal costs – investors that would have ignored small markets that appear less attractive on stand-alone basis can address them within the larger market on an incremental basis
- Common Policies, procedures and laws reduce entry costs for Service Providers/Investors. This has the potential to offer the “one network” concept that will provide seamless roaming across national boundaries as well as reduce deployment costs and lower tariff paid by subscribers.

To be able to achieve these objectives requires a collective will that will see to the enthronement of common Policy and Regulatory platform across the sub-region. It was to achieve this that WATRA was formed Abuja in 2000 and the constitution adopted in Ouagadougou in 2002. I am happy to note that as of now thirteen (13) countries have assented to the WATRA constitution and are full

members of the Assembly. A number of operating companies have also joined as sector members.

The WATRA constitution requires amongst others, the need for harmonization of regulations for telecom service delivery and pricing in the sub-region and the need to promote the establishment and operation of efficient, adequate, and cost effective telecommunications networks and services.

We are pleased with the achievements made by WATRA so far, and we look forward to more to successes in the future.

Regulators generally play an active role in the policy formulation including legislative input in laws that are ultimately passed by parliaments, expectedly as they relate to ICT or specifically telecommunications. Such laws to be passed are expected to:

- Encourage harmonization and incorporation of international best practices.
- Foster public-private partnership and private investment
- Remove barriers to competition
- Deployment of modern ubiquitous networks to facilitate commerce
- Rapidly development of convergent network

- Accelerated adoption of new technologies to drive innovation, commerce and growth.
- Achieve full interconnectivity and seamless international roaming
- Achieve a reputable universal access level

Achievement of these laudable objectives will surely enhance telecommunications development and penetration within the West Africa Sub-Region.

At the formation of WATRA, we had looked forward to numerous operators, operating across the various countries, we are proud to note that significant achievement has been made in the following areas.

- Celtel - currently operating in – Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Senegal and Burkina Faso
- MTN – Nigeria, Cote d'Ivoire, investcom a subsidiary with operations in Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Republic and Liberia.
- Direct on PC – Nigeria, Ghana (ISP)
- Glo – Nigeria, recently acquired a licence in Benin, working towards a licences in Ghana and Togo.

Operating across various geographical boundaries will be greatly enhanced if:

- Legal and regulatory policies are substantially harmonized
- Common spectrum policies adopted
- Common standardization and type approval policies
- Substantially common licence framework
- Common interconnect and tariff issues
- Acceptable dispute resolution process and procedure.

While we commend the efforts of WATRA, we also commend the work of ECOWAS Secretariat in conjunction with World Bank for the project on Harmonization of Telecommunications Policies in ECOWAS.

The harmonization report amongst others, recommended the need to

- Design a strategic plan for the ICT and telecom sector as a regional policy statement
- Adopt a common framework for open and non-restricted access to modern telecom networks for regional connectivity
- Develop private-public partnerships
- Create a technical commission (ICT Dispute Resolution Commission)

- Develop a scope of work and tools for ECOWAS to monitor the harmonization process
- Development and implement a program for capacity building both for National Regulatory Agencies and ECOWAS

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, in order to timely eliminate regulatory barriers, the following identified stakeholders must implement these actions.

- WATRA & NRA's – Adoption of harmonized policies and international best practices
- NRA
  - Proactive role in advising Government in respective Jurisdictions
  - Implementation of common regulatory principles in respective jurisdiction
- Member States
  - Implementation of harmonized policies in respective jurisdiction
  - Enactment of relevant laws, in respective countries.
  - Adoption of one market approach
  - Compliance with ECOWAS directive
- ECOWAS
  - First track harmonization and

implementation of omnibus protocol and programme directive relating to ICT and telecommunications sectors.

- Ensure implementation in Member States.

If these role identifications are faithfully implemented in a timely manner, we would have succeeded in Harmonizing and eliminating Regulatory barriers to regional integration and development.

While we commend the marginal progress that has been achieved in the past six years, we still believe more needs to be done to fast track the process.

Finally, when the question is asked - when should the barriers be eliminated? - my clear answer is the time is now and if fully implemented, we will witness a common market with more operators operating across the sub-region.

Thank you.

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Executive Vice Chairman/CEO  
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