

**CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON SERVICE PROVISIONING  
WITH  
RESPECT TO THE CHALLENGED GROUP**  
(Persons with Disability and the Elderly)

ORGANISED BY

**NIGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

BEING WELCOME ADDRESS DELIVERED

BY

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NIGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

AT

Golden Gate Restaurant Ikoyi, Lagos.

On Thursday, July 31, 2008

## **Introduction**

Ladies and Gentlemen you are welcome to this very important gathering which I consider our collective effort towards **ensuring the provision of enjoyable telecoms services to Challenged Group (persons with disability) and elderly** in our society.

Globally, an estimated 600 million people live with disabilities with two-third of that number in developing countries. The United Nations estimates that over 10% of a nation's populations have disabilities. In Nigeria, this group constitutes 20% of the population, making it a very significant proportion of the market segment.

The elderly constitute yet another estimated 5%, bringing the total estimated number for Challenged Group of persons as provided for in the NCA 2003 to 25%. You must agree with me that this calls for attention and we must rise up to the challenge of providing services that address the needs and concerns of this group.

As you are aware, the Challenged Group are adequately provided for in Nigerian Communications Act, 2003. To be Precise, Section 1 (h) provides specifically to "**ensure that the needs of the disabled and elderly persons are taken into consideration in the provision of communications services**"

Furthermore, section 15(2) of the Consumer Code of Practice Regulation (CCPR) states that "**Licensees shall comply with any specific obligations that the Commission may impose on operators in respect of special services of service arrangements for subscribers with disabilities.**

## **NCC's Initiatives**

In recognition of the requirements of the Act regarding this group and also in line with the NCC's Consumer Centric approach, the Commission has taken a number of initiatives geared toward assisting Challenged Group and the Elderly persons in the areas of telecoms service provisioning. Lately, the Commission held fact finding meetings with the challenged group to establish their areas of difficulty, expectations from service providers and for the regulator to initiate friendly policy that will address their concerns.

Without any doubt in my mind, telecommunications is an essential infrastructure of the information economy; any persons that lack sufficient access to modern telecommunications network, **for any reason** will find it difficult to effectively integrate into the information society. Our meeting today is perhaps to pioneer ways of relieving the burden of challenged group in telecoms sector and to also set the stage for other sectors to follow.

The Commission's investigations revealed that current practices by the operating companies do not sufficiently address the concerns of persons with disabilities and the elderly in our society.

We live in a global village where ICTs have a direct impact on a nation's ability to improve the economic well being of her people and compete globally. It is on this note that I want to share with you other plausible initiatives around the world.

From our research findings, USA, Japan, India and Ghana have concerns to promote measures for making telecoms services more easily usable and accessible to everyone, including the elderly and challenged group.

The few examples above are pointers to the fact that the time has come for us to expeditiously initiate policy that will give succor to the challenged and elderly in our society

To address this imbalance, the Commission in consonance with its participatory regulation approach to policy formulation considers this consultative meeting critical.

### **NCC Contact Centre**

It is my pleasure to announce to you that the NCC has concluded plans to launch two NCC Consumer contact centers in Lagos and Abuja.

The NCC multi media contact centre initiative is aimed at providing increased access to telecommunications services to the consumer.

The center is established for the following reasons:

- 1) To create more channels for the consumers to reach the Commission
- 2) To serve as a new avenue for the dissatisfied consumers to seek intervention and redress from the Commission
- 3) To ensure easy access for consumers to lodge complaints and pursue resolution of issues that have not been satisfactorily dealt with by the service providers.

I believe this segment will proffer workable modalities that will seamlessly interface the operators call centers with the NCC contact center.

Once again I welcome you all to this unique gathering, it is my expectation that we will have a wonderful and stimulating session in today's deliberation.

**Thank you all for your kind attention.**

Engr (Dr) Ernest C Ndukwe  
EVC/CEO  
Nigerian Communications Commission.