



CREATING NEW CHANNELS OF OPPORTUNITIES IN THE COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY, BEING A PAPER DELIVERED BY THE EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIRMAN, EVC, AT THE TECHNOLOGY TIMES FORUM, HOLDING IN LAGOS ON FEBRUARY 10, 2011

Ladies and gentlemen, let me formally greet you and sincerely thank the organizers of this conference, *Technology Times*, for giving me an opportunity to give my roadmap for the telecommunications industry as the EVC of the Nigerian Communications Commission. Let me also thank other speakers and discussants for offering to share this platform with me.

So many issues occupied my attention when I came into the Commission. First administration issue was the 2010 Budget that wasn't passed on time by the National Assembly, and second, was the SIM Card Registration that became very controversial as it was misunderstood.

The first huddle was scaled late in the year when the Budget was passed and solving the first huddle also partly resolved the SIM card issue. I am happy to announce at this forum that only yesterday, the Commission entered into agreement with seven organizations that will execute the project in different parts of the country.

They are SW Global (South East), PNN (North Central), JKK (South West), and Chams (Lagos). Others are: DATAGROUPIT (North East), EAGLE/CBC (North West) and E-KENNETH/SageMetrics (South South).

The activities of the contracting partners will be coordinated by KPMG, an international professional services firm with a member firm in Nigeria. The firm will provide end-to-end project management coordination of the entire project. Contract span is six months. It is our considered opinion that KPMG will rely on its global experience to ensure conformity with our agreement with the service providers.

There was also the issue of quality of service (QoS) by the operators for which we have taken various measures but first let me quickly outline the direction of the Commission in the days ahead. Without compromising the health and welfare of the industry and with the overall interest of the consumers in mind, the Commission will focus on the following areas:

- Broadband Development and National Connectivity
- Consolidation of Mobile Wireless Services
- Vigorous Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement of Regulations and Directions
- True Competition apropos the benefits of the Consumers
- Enhanced International Relations

BROADBAND DEVELOPMENT AND NATIONAL CONNECTIVITY

One of the primary responsibilities I envisage during my tenure will be to ensure that we continue to build capacity in the communications industry, capacity that can impact both on city and rural dwellers. In this direction we shall pay very serious attention to the development of broadband for both fixed and wireless services. We shall work and collaborate with stakeholders to set up broadband projects across the country. Apart from voice connection that is getting matured, a robust broadband will reduce the cost of bandwidth and make it easy for people to access data services with less stress.

In a 2010 report, titled *The Future Built n Broadband*, members of the Broadband Commission for Digital Development – a collection of Political, Business leaders and NGOs had this to say: Meanwhile, in this second decade of the 21st Century, the digital divide continues to be a development divide that must be quickly bridged. We firmly believe that today, the social and economic development of every country on earth will depend on accessible and affordable access to broadband networks, based on a multi-lingual approach, as the basis of human opportunity for all citizens – wherever they live and whatever their circumstance

Mindful of this, the group stated in its declaration that: We firmly believe that with the strategic and innovative use of broadband ICTs, the international

development community can move beyond 'business as usual' and that it will be possible to achieve the inherently interlinked MDG agenda by 2015 to address the existing and emerging global challenges.

In the area of broadband, there has been little impact. Africa still lags behind when it comes to fixed (wired) broadband. Although subscriptions are increasing, a penetration rate of less than one per cent illustrates the challenges that persist in increasing access to high-speed, high-capacity Internet access in the region. So says the ITU.

That is not what we want to be known for, although this is reality at the moment. We are determined to make an impact like we have done for mobile technology. Like in Estonia, Finland and Spain where access to the internet has been declared as legal rights of citizens, we are aiming at similar impact in the long term.

Let me also add here that just a few days to the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, the international community is already buying into our broadband plan, once again demonstrating the strategic importance of the Nigerian market to the global community. Already there are a number of organizations calling to meet with the Commission for us to discuss what role they can play in the country's broadband plan. We will attend all these discussions with open mind.

CONSOLIDATION OF MOBILE WIRELESS SERVICES

While it is widely acclaimed that we have done well in mobile technology, at the Commission we are very mindful that so much still remains to be done. Otherwise the complaints about drop calls and quality of service would long have ceased. But they persist and every phone user bears the nightmare. In the past we have taken some strategic measures to ameliorate the situation, like setting of Consumer Parliament where subscribers are encouraged to look at their service provider in the face and tell them what is wrong, and Consumer Affairs Bureau to entertain customer care issues. However the operating environment still remains an issue. We are not going to allow this to continue. We have set out a number of Quality of Service (QoS) Performance Indices for which we are going to hold the

operators responsible. We are currently consulting with stakeholders to discuss issues of monitoring and enforcement.

VIGOROUS COMPLIANCE MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT OF REGULATIONS AND DIRECTIONS

Ten years is old enough for the industry to mature. The Commission has given considerations to the pioneering status and efforts of the operators and now believe very strongly that time has come for vigorous enforcement of its mandate to ensure that telecom consumers are better served. In every sector of the economy the consumer is always king. This has not happened in the telecommunications industry.

The Commission has responsibility for the development and monitoring of performance standards and indices relating to the quality of telephone and other communications services and facilities supplied to consumers in Nigeria and having regard to the best intentional performance indicators.

TRUE COMPETITION FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE CONSUMERS

A time-tested position of the Commission is that only true competition can lead to a proper balance in the market place and provide affordable services for Nigerian telecommunications consumers. While I will want to stress here that the deregulation of the industry in 1992 obviously opened competition in the sector, let me also quickly add for emphasis that the Commission will assure constant and adequate regulation to ensure that no monopoly threatens the market. For this to happen we have to ensure that the relationship between operators is healthy even as the relationship between operators and the regulator has to remain healthy. While we had advocated that healthy competition and proper regulation will ensure product availability and price affordability by consumers, a position that was understandably criticized, we are happy to observe that recent developments in the market where competition is bringing down prices is most welcome and have the full support of the regulator. We on our part will continue to create activities that will further positively affect pricing in the market.

ENHANCED INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Last week in Abuja when we hosted the 1st African Group Preparatory Meeting for World Radio Communication Conference (WRC-12) under the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) and the NEPAD Forum in Abuja, somebody from the media asked me why we should be hosting the forum. I told him that since countries are recognized under regions by the ITU, Nigeria wants to be in a position where it can significantly contribute and if possible control some of the activities and positions that the continent will be taking to the global body. For this to happen we have to make sure that we play at the global level by hosting and attending conferences and events and be able to contribute constructively. For every programme attended there has to be a measured target and a planned return. Within the Commission we have taken measures to ensure that every programme must come with its own benefits. There is a permanent group catering for the country's interest in this respect. We are mindful of our population and position in Africa, we are also mindful of the strength of our market and we want to appropriate all the accruing benefits and advantages.

We are not only a regulator; we also on behalf of government seek to attract investments to the country. Apart from granting licenses to operators, it is also our responsibility through participating in international programmes to market the country to telecommunications investors. The current investment figures bear ample evidence that the Commission has succeeded in contributing to investment drive.

Also in trying to occupy a centre point in international discourse and activities, our delegation met recently in Mexico at the ITU Plenipotentiary 10 Meeting with the Secretary General of the International Telecommunications Union, ITU, Dr. Hamadoun Toure, for the Digital Bridge Institute, DBI, to be conferred the status of Centre of Excellence. Discussions were very encouraging, we expecting a response from the organization. The two meetings last week in Abuja – ATU and NEPAD - and our present position in supplying the chief executive of the West Africa Telecommunications Regulatory Assembly, WATRA, clearly demonstrate the serious and very relevant roles we want to play in these organizations.

Let me once again thank the organizers of this programme for the opportunity to air my views, and to also thank you all for listening to me. It has been my pleasure sharing this moment with you.

Dr. Eugene Juwah, February 8, 2011

