



BRIEF REMARKS BY DR EUGENE JUWAH, EVC OF THE NIGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION TO THE ABUJA BUREAU CHIEFS AND IT REPORTERS ON FEBRUARY 21, 2012 AT THE TRANSCORP HILTON, ABUJA.

Distinguished members of the press, it is my delight to welcome you to this forum. I thank you for giving us this opportunity to meet with you today. You will agree with me that this meeting has long been expected but could not happen owing to exigencies of schedules. So, I am glad this is happening now, albeit after a year in office. However, like the saying goes, it is better late than never.

On coming into office there was a long list of expectations, of things I must pay urgent attention to in order to make the industry better for operators and subscribers. What I did immediately was to articulate six focus areas that could spearhead urgent intervention in the industry. They include (1) Consolidation and Integration of Mobile Wireless Services including Quality of Service; (2) Fixed Line and Broadband Deployment for National Development; (3) Enhanced Competitive Market and Choice for the Consumer; (4) Vigorous Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement of Regulations and Directives; (5) National Connectivity for Accelerated Growth; and (6) Enhanced International Relations.

A primary decision towards realising the foregoing policy direction was the SIM Card Registration. If you recall the exercise began on March 28, 2011. The process of budget approval was quite long and controversial, and there were doubts about the feasibility of the project. Ladies and gentlemen I am happy to announce that the SIM Card Registration project will soon come to an end. As we speak we have a combined registration of 110, 433, 976 SIM Cards that have been registered and the data is going through processing and cleaning at the NCC. The registration was variously carried out by the NCC contractors and the network operators. We are shortly going to commence verification of the SIMs before a number can be said to be duly registered. With the country's telephone penetration standing at 95, 886, 714 lines, there is already clear evidence of multiple registration. These would be eliminated to create a database of integrity and credibility. As the exercise comes to a close, subscribers whose SIM Cards are not registered will be deemed not to be interested in the process or that the SIMs have been abandoned, and will be disconnected.

At the launch, we noted that apart from helping to enhance security in the country, it will facilitate the collation of data by the Commission of phone users in the country, and enable operators have predictable profiles about the users in their networks; the SIM Card registration exercise will also enable the Commission to effectively implement other value added services like mobile Number Portability, which from current schedule shall commence in the last quarter of the year. The contract has been awarded. Mobile Number Portability will broaden the choice available to subscribers and on its own impose a code of behaviour on the operators who will want to provide top notch services in order to retain their subscribers. The success of Number Portability also rides on successful registration of SIM Cards and creation of SIM Card data base of integrity. As I have already told you, we are doing that at the moment.

Without a doubt, mobile Number Portability will impact on the quality of service on our various networks although other cardinal steps are being taken to ensure that our service providers are constantly kept on their toes to make them give the best services to their subscribers. To this end the Compliance and Enforcement Unit has been strengthened to enable the Commission enforce its regulations and directives. Recently the Unit had embarked on a lot of enforcement activities; you must be aware of such activities all over the country. It was a painful action to take but we realise that if we have to confront some key problems facing the industry like quality of service, some organisations and individuals must be pulled into line, which process would invariably cause some discomfort and corporate embarrassment, not to mention financial loss. However, that notwithstanding, going forward more vigorous enforcement actions are continuing. Only last Friday, 17th February 2012, the Commission's Enforcement Unit carried out enforcement actions against some mobile device dealers who flood our markets with non type approved devices, which in turn affect quality of service of the various networks.

We have laid out comprehensive plans to further excite the Communications sector. We have broad plans for Broadband deployment to enable us create an impact in the whole nation. To implement this we have adopted the open access model as platform; we are also looking at resuscitating the Fixed Line sector by giving out new licenses and in doing this, increase telephony penetration. The success of this twin action will give Nigerians an enhanced choice of products and services, reduce overreliance on mobile services and encourage internet usage.

With an intensely busy short lifespan of just over ten years, the Nigerian Telecommunications industry has been hailed globally as a beacon of light in the African continent and one of the fastest growing in the world. Affirming this in October last year at the ITU Telecom World in Geneva, the ITU Secretary General, Dr Hamadoun Toure, noted that the successive growth recorded wasn't by dint of luck but traceable to the transparency with which the NCC has conducted its activities and the regulatory independence granted it by the government.

Let me add here if only for the records that whatever we have achieved at the Commission was possible because the Nigerian media from day one adopted the telecommunications industry as their own and decided to build it along with the Commission. We are grateful for the immense support we have received from you. However, the days ahead are going to be fraught with myriads of activities and more challenges. Growth in the sector will encourage more investment. We call on the support of the media in that quest. We need to keep this industry together. On our own we promise to always come to you with details of our planned activities.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen of the media let me allow you to have your lunch. Thank you for listening.

God bless Nigeria.

Dr Eugene Juwah,
Abuja, FCT.
February 21, 2012