



MAINTAINING STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, BEING WELCOME REMARKS BY DR EUGENE JUWAH, EVC OF THE NIGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION AT THE SPECIAL RETREAT FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MEMBERS, HOLDING AT UYO, AKWA IBOM.

Honourable and Distinguished members of the Communications Committees of the National Assembly, let me thank you for the opportunity provided by your august gathering at this beautiful city of Uyo, capital of Akwa Ibom State for us to share ideas about the Communications industry. It is most kind of you to leave your very busy schedules in Abuja in order to share this moment with us for the love of the Communications industry and our country.

The National Assembly remains very vital in our march to provide affordable and pervasive telecommunications services in the country for reasons that are very obvious; the major one being that the law which sets up the Nigerian Communications Commission (the NCA 2003) is an Act of the National Assembly; and that law has been described as one of the best in the world, having guaranteed the effective autonomy and regulatory independence of the Commission. For this, I wish to put on record my commendation for your vision and astuteness, which laid the foundation for the phenomenal success that is the telecoms sector today, even while challenges yet remain.

Let me share an experience with you. While visiting the Nigerian Pavilion on the Nigeria Day at the ITU Telecoms World which held in Geneva October last year (2011), the ITU Secretary General, Dr Hamadoun Toure was full of praises for the country's telecommunications industry which recorded globally acknowledged results for several years successively, explaining that the development wasn't accidental or by dint of luck. In his explanation the growth is traceable to the transparency with which the NCC has conducted its activities and the regulatory independence granted it by the Nigerian Government; that government, ladies and gentlemen, include those of you who are gathered in this hall.

Since coming to the Commission, I have maintained that my tenure will focus on six main areas, namely: (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.

Some steps we have taken in the very recent past have helped towards realising these broad policy directions we have set out for ourselves. To this end, I am happy to announce to you that the SIM Card Registration which is a major project embarked upon by the NCC on behalf of the Nigerian Government is heading towards a home run. The exercise formally ended in December. We are right now

harmonising the data captured by the Commission and the operators, after which we shall embark on personal verifications of all the registered SIM Cards. The figures we have at the moment are very encouraging. This final phase which begins shortly will take a couple of weeks. When this is done all numbers not registered will be barred from the networks. We chose to be very meticulous with the exercise knowing the importance and implication of the entire process, and also for the overriding reason of giving every subscriber a chance to get his/her SIM Card registered.

The contract for Number Portability (NP) has been awarded and is scheduled to commence in the final quarter of the year. 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.

Recently our Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement Unit had embarked on a lot of enforcement activities, and in one of such actions the office of a major GSM operator in Abuja was shut down. 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 will be pursued.

We have laid out comprehensive plans to further excite the Communications sector. We have broad plans for Broadband deployment to enable us create a major impact across the country. 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 and teledensity which currently stand at 95, 886, 714 and 68.49% respectively.

We want big stories to be written of the country's Communications industry once more and for the global community to always recognise Nigeria as a destination country for telecommunications investment. We want the Nigerian subscribers to enjoy the best of services; but this is not possible without your support.

There is a new phrase in the industry called 'Regulatory Capture'. This happens when the regulator is unnecessarily burdened and trammelled by unnecessary distractions and superfluous laws. We are satisfied with the legal document setting up the Commission though now deserving of a review to strengthen it for better performance having now being in operation for almost ten years. We are quite pleased with the role of the National Assembly and would continue to count on them as partners in this enterprise. But we need to appeal that you will need to do more to protect the Commission and the entire Communications industry for it to remain a reference point for other sectors of the economy.

Thank you for listening and I wish us all frank and fruitful deliberations.

God bless Nigeria

Dr Eugene Juwah,
Uyo, Akwa Ibom State
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