MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS

SPECIAL REMARK

BY

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HON. MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS

AT THE

AFRINIC

27TH PUBLIC POLICY MEETING AFRINIC-27

HELD AT

RENAISSANCE HOTEL

38/40 ISAAC JOHN STREET, IKEJA GRA, LAGOS

THEME: *TAKING THE AFRICAN INTERNET TO THE NEXT LEVEL THROUGH POLICY, COLLABORATION AND EDUCATION*

Protocols:-

The Chairman AFRINIC and President of NIRA,
Members of the Board of AFRINIC
Mr Alan Barret, CEO AFRINIC
Distinguished members of the AFRINIC Community
Other Regional Registries present,
Members of the Global Internet Community,
Members of the Nigerian Internet Community,
Members of the Press Corps,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to join you today and it is a great pleasure for me to welcome you all to the mega-city of Lagos in Nigeria for this AFRINIC-27 Public Policy meeting, which has been carefully convened for the next few days.

It is heart-warming to see the significant progress that your community has made, and the great impact that your work is making, especially on the growth, adoption and utilization of the Internet in Africa, despite the very many problems that face us as a continent.

I congratulate all members of the AFRINIC community for your leadership in the African Internet Ecosystem, and your continued hard work to unite the African Technical Community to drive the growth of the Internet in Africa.

Coming to Nigeria for your meeting this time, will no doubt bring all our efforts into focus, celebrate our modest achievements as a nation, and also motivate the players to double their efforts. I am aware that in the course of the meeting, you will have Training sessions, workshops, technical presentations, various working group discussions, including the AFRINIC Government Working group, as well as special sessions for new comers.

Issues that are important to us as a people, include, and is not limited to the following:

Building a digital economy

We have embarked on a journey towards building a Smart Digital Nigeria as enshrined in the ICT Strategic Road map 2017-2020. This Road map is consistent with the Economic Recovery and Growth Plan of the Federal Government. We envisage a knowledge-based society where our people can consummate transactions electronically anytime and anywhere.

Accessing these services will require widely available high speed connectivity and Smart technologies which will ultimately facilitate effective time and resource management thus improving the well-being of our citizens.

The Ministry under my humble watch has attained some major milestones in its mandate of developing the telecoms and ICT sector.

(i)   Nigeria's Active Mobile-Broadband Penetration has increased within the space of one year from less than 10% in 2015 to 20.95% in 2016 and 21.8% presently indicating consistent growth.

(ii)   Nigeria's Internet Penetration reached a milestone of 47.44% making it Africa's highest and 10th globally.

The bulk of these data subscribers are on 3g Technology, with a good number of Telecommunication providers now offering 4GLTE services. It is our belief, that as a nation, Broadband Internet Access should become a right of citizens, just like water and air.

Nigeria has attracted investments of over $2.2Billion in submarine cables in the last five years. Active submarine cables into the country now include SAT3/SAFE, GLO-1, ACE, MAINONE and WACS with many other cables under construction.

As part of our efforts to bridge the digital gap between our various communities, Government has established the Universal Services Provision Fund (USPF) which continues to help develop the under-served regions of Nigeria, making Telecommunications available to every Nigerian.

We have invested in a data communications Satellite and the state company, the Nigeria Communications Satellite Company (NIGCOMSAT)

that serves both the public and private sector, is helping to reach the very remote parts of the country.

We do have a National Broadband Plan, and a Broadband Council that is driving the implementation of the broadband plan. Under this plan, The Nigeria Communications Commission is required to license new infrastructure companies called INFRACOs to fill critical infrastructure gaps and enable broadband services on a wholesale basis by sharing infrastructure to lower the costs to end users.

It is expected that all these efforts will help Nigeria transition to a digital and knowledge-based economy that gives the private sector the latitude to innovate and makes it very easy to access Government services. We are pursuing this plan with earnest and will be glad to learn from your experiences.

Creating Confidence for Nigerians Online

Government is aware of the difficulties faced by Nigerians in transacting businesses online. IP addresses that are traceable to Nigerians or Nigeria, are sometimes restricted or outrightly blocked by major e-commerce sites.

We are aware of the negative activities of some users; so, Government has taken cyber-security with all seriousness and has enacted the cybercrime act that leaves no hiding place for online criminals. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has been very active in bringing many criminals to justice in this regard.

I am pleased to inform you that we are consistently improving our information systems security to increase the confidence of Nigerians and foreigners who want to do business with Nigeria online. With the abundance of talents in Nigeria, the global community stands to benefit from our skills-force and our abundant market. It is a new Nigeria.

Transition from IPv4 to IPv6

With the ever-increasing number of new devices being connected to the Internet every day, there is a need for more addresses than the IPv4, the primary communications protocol that we depend upon.

I have been informed that IPv6, has been designed as an evolutionary upgrade to the Internet Protocol and will open a pool of internet addresses which is mega times larger than the total pool of about 4.3billion IPv4 addresses. This means that the total number of possible IPv6 addresses is virtually inexhaustible in the foreseeable future.

We recognize the fact that the uptake is still low in Nigeria and that there is the need to step up awareness of and capacity building in this regard. The Ministry of Communications supports initiatives that improve the accessibility of services and encourages the use of equipment and services that would be compliant with IPV6.

Government has established the National IPv6 Council to provide leadership and strategic planning for IPv6 implementation in Nigeria. The Internet Exchange Point of Nigeria announced a few months ago that it had successfully migrated its network to IPV6.

Nigeria needs IPv6 to get our huge population online, we need it urgently as we embrace advancements such as our Smart city initiatives. IPv6 is the future of networks globally and a key communication enabler for building an Internet of Things (IoT).

I want to charge AFRINIC, NiRA and other relevant organizations to step up the awareness and advocacy campaign to ensure that ISPs, telecommunications operators, Banks and educational institutions among others migrate to IPv6. There should be more awareness and capacity building through organizing seminars and trainings incorporating IPv6 into our tertiary education curriculum. Government will provide some profit incentives to the Internet Industry to encourage them to deploy IPv6 based Infrastructure.

Internet Governance

We recognise the fact that Internet governance includes more than Internet naming and addressing. It also includes other significant public policy issues such as critical Internet resources; the stability, security, safety and continuity of the Internet; and developmental aspects and issues pertaining to the use of the Internet. Definitely, developing these

policies will require wide public consultations with all stakeholders. I am pleased that you will do a lot of these in the course of the next few days.

We acknowledge, as a nation, the bottom-up multi-stakeholder, consensus-based principles on which your community operates, and we did not hesitate as a nation, to set up and give NIRA the necessary support to operate with the same guiding principles to manage the nation's Top Level Domain, the ".ng".

I was made to understand that NiRA will continue its efforts to engage the industry in a multi-stakeholder approach to develop plans that include forward looking capacity building efforts, awareness programmes and assessment of relevant technologies all around its mandate.

Child Online safety

As a multicultural and deeply religious nation, we have the moral responsibility to protect our culture, youths and other vulnerable groups on the Internet.

We take the issue of Child online safety very important and will continue to do all that is necessary to ensure that our youths are engaged in the right direction and without exploitation or cyber bullying.

It is important that we use the Internet as a tool to drive the education of our people and assure their socio-economic advancement in an inclusive manner. The task of improving the lives of the vulnerable and the underprivileged is not for the Government alone, it is for all stakeholders.

Internet for All

The Internet is no doubt critical to Education, Health, Agriculture and many other sectors of our economy. I have no doubt; we are making progress though slowly. We cannot but embrace the 21st century IP concept to learn and impact our generation as we move along.

Many still don't have access to the Internet. When people get connected, they can achieve extraordinary things. The Internet belongs to everyone.

Continue the public and stakeholder engagements that will facilitate the growth and adoption of the Internet as a tool for enhancing the quality of life of our citizens. We welcome positive ideas that will bring development and growth to Nigeria through ICT.

At the just concluded 5th meeting of the National Council on Communication Technology held in Katsina State, NITDA and NiRA co-presented a memo on effective and efficient utilization of Nigeria's country code Top level domain (ccTLD.ng) resource at both the public and private sectors. Council endorsed that all public sector corporate and non-corporate entities in Nigeria must embrace the local content initiatives of government by conducting their official businesses through robust website platform that end with (.ng).

Conclusion

Our focus is on the need to uplift the lives of the people of Nigeria in particular and African in general. In this respect we are encouraged by the considerable demand that exists in Africa, and beyond, to utilize affordable ICT solutions in everyday life.

Your meeting in the next days should further explore ways for African nations to quickly leverage the Internet to achieve a better life for our citizens. I eagerly await the recommendations which I strongly believe will add a lot of value to the implementation of our ICT road map.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of NiRA in hosting this meeting. I would like to thank the organizers for inviting me to be a part of it. I wish all the participants good luck and may you have enriching and fruitful meetings.

I thank you all for your kind attention