SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE FIRST ROUNDTABLE WITH ACADEMIA, INDUSTRY AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS IN THE NORTH CENTRAL REGION

BY

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ON

SYNERGY BY ACADEMIA, INDUSTRY AND REGULATOR AS ACCELARATOR FOR INNOVATION, INDUSTRY GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY.

Protocols

It is a great pleasure meeting with you this morning for the fifth Roundtable with Academia, Industry and other Stakeholders for the North Central Region, holding here in Minna, Niger State; the "The Power State". My dear colleagues in academia, industry stakeholders and other sector representatives here-present, you are welcome to this event.

It has been an exciting experience for me thus far leading a foremost African regulatory agency like the Nigerian Communications Commission. The Commission has been driving an industry that is now undoubtedly the main catalyst for social and economic transformation in the country.

The advancement of technology across several spheres of human endeavor has created new industries, opportunities, new knowledge areas and challenges. This has increased the speed at which alignment between the different stakeholders in the economy needs to take place to ensure no aspect of our development is left

lagging. Traditionally, as we all know, Regulation lags innovation. Thus, in the fast-evolving technology ecosystem, the need for regulators to raise their game to ensure regulations are relevant to existing realities is pertinent. This will ensure that the maximum benefit in innovation can be harnessed, and the potential risks mitigated on a timely basis.

In general, the academia is a key driver of innovation in all spheres of human endeavor. But in specific terms, the ideas, inventions and improvements that emanate from the academia are required by industry for improved efficiencies and productivity. With these in mind, the regulator as a critical component of any ecosystem aims to ensure all stakeholders are protected and the industry nurtured for maximum benefit to business and society.

Similarly, the growth of new technologies such as internet of things (IoT), Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cloud Computing, increased delivery of speed by various broadband technologies like 4G and 5G technologies, advancement in processor and other electronics technologies have led to huge opportunities and risks. Hence, the need for collaboration between academia, industry and regulators to ensure these technologies can be properly harnessed and standards built in such a way that is beneficial to all stakeholders. The potential opportunities and important aspects that should be considered by all stakeholders are critical aspects that academia are invited to research and proffer pragmatic solutions.

A peep into our desired future:

The future is something we should be ready for, and adapt to, or we should see the future as something which we can create. And I believe this morning I am in the presence of people who believe in improving the future through research and

innovation. In this regard, I want to look at three (3) areas which are fundamental to the future. Firstly, I want to briefly look at innovation in terms of new ideas in Information and Communication Technologies. Secondly, I want to look at Industry growth in terms of building capabilities and stronger industry systems through a collaborative, academia-industry-led approach. I will also want to look at sustainability. For technology to be sustainable, it should imply that using it does not have any long-term adverse effect on the environment. And thirdly, perhaps the most important for this forum, I want to look at the role of the regulator in promoting synergy between the academia and the Industry.

Innovation is seen as a way to breakout from the old and embrace the new technologies. "Innovate or Die" is a slogan used by many business enterprises. In order to survive, the industry needs to embrace innovation. If I take this into perspective, innovation to telecommunication companies can be a linear machine to deliver what they deliver best. Every telecom provider will aspire to transform into that new agile future-looking Telecommunication Company. Recognizing this increasing phenomenon, the Commission has, among other things, directed funds to encourage innovation by boosting research and development in Universities across the country. I am glad to say that our Universities are making good progress in Information and Communication Technology research and development.

Faced with the challenges which are posed by the theme of this Forum, it is clear that, the Commission, will have to make a commitment not only to the success of the Industry, but also to facilitate the contributions from academia, ensure sustainability and economic growth. The Commission strives to ensure the

engagement of all stakeholders on improving efficiency and impacting consumers positively.

The Telecommunications industry for example has enormous potential for enabling environmental, social and economic benefits through broadband connectivity. As it continues to experience exponential traffic growth, network energy consumption is emerging as a critical issue. In the last two decades, Telecommunication has emerged as a key driver of economic and social development in an increasingly knowledge-intensive global scenario. It is said that "The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it". To sustain the standard of living of an ever-increasing Nigerian population, a strategy for continual development in Telecommunication technology needs to be given attention and timely research in that area be conducted by the academia that will result in minimal impact on the environment. Information and telecommunication Technology can bring about social benefit as well as economic development. I would like to highlight, that research contribution towards Industry and sustainable technological development should not occur exclusively by means of efforts developed in laboratory or publication of papers. We need to collaborate, with an emphasis on determination, on development of prototypes that meet the standards required by the industry.

Academia is challenged to study the impact of various practices and issues peculiar to the Nigerian operating environment on the operational efficiency and service delivery capability and performance by telecommunications industry players for example to subscribers. It will surely be an interesting read to see the new insights this may provide.

To conclude, I would like to thank stakeholders for being here with us today. This kind of collaboration helps all of us to appreciate the importance of research, while researchers can gain first-hand appreciation of commercial applications that can drive their research projects. I am positive that the discussions which will take place here should facilitate acquisition of knowledge on how to improve our collaborative effort and actions aimed at accelerating innovation, industrial growth and sustainable development in Nigeria.

Thank you.

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