



BEING A SPEECH PRESENTED BY THE EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIRMAN OF NIGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION (NCC), PROF. UMAR G. DANBATTI, TUESDAY, MAY 17, 2016 DURING THE COURTESY VISIT TO THE GOVERNOR OF KADUNA STATE, MALAM NASIR EL-RUFAI

The Executive Governor of Kaduna State,

His Excellency, Malam Nasir El-Rufai

The Deputy Governor,

Commissioners,

Other top officials here present,

Gentlemen of the press

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My team and I have looked forward to this visit for quite some time. And despite several postponements as a result of your very busy and crowded schedule, we are glad to be here at last today.

Like the saying goes, 'Charity begins at home'. This is so, primarily because of the place and history of the city and by extension the State. Let me thank you, your Excellency for this opportunity to visit Kaduna and to express our warm regards for your person and the institution that you represent.

Why we are here.

Your Excellency, we are here for a number of reasons, one of which is that Kaduna is home to many of us. But primarily, we are here to share with you our vision and mission for a better Information and Communications Technology (ICT) environment and to share with you our modest contribution to this growth.

There is no need to tell you how much impact ICT has made on the economy since 2001, when the revolution began. But suffice it to say that the Commission has lived up to its mandate of connecting the country and serving the underserved and unserved areas of our great nation. We are more than prepared to take the revolution further by the initiatives we have put in place in our 8-point agenda that will guide us in the next five years.

Although so much has been said about the 8-point agenda elsewhere, let me say again for the purpose of emphasis, that, the agenda has as its flagship the promotion of broadband internet connectivity so much that by the year 2018, broadband penetration will increase from its current 10 percent to 30 percent or more. The process for this has begun. Early in 2014, we licensed Bitflux Consortium for the 2.3GHz frequency. A few days ago, they began to offer commercial services.

Early in 2015, we licensed two Infrastructure Companies (Infracos) for Lagos and North Central. And there are five more of such licenses for North West, North East, South West, South East and South South waiting to be grabbed by bidders. We are also in the process of concluding the auction of 2.6GHz Spectrum where 14 slots are up for auction.

Once these are completed and operators roll out services, the slow speed internet connection experiences now will be a thing of the past.

Your Excellency, because of the limited time we have to share with you today, we may not be able to reel out to you all that we are doing.

Our Worries

Just before I assumed duties on August 4, 2015, I used to read about the series of problems plaguing the telecom sector in general and operators in particular.

There have been recurring cases of multiple taxation especially at State levels which operators have to bear.

There have also been cases of Right of Way (RoW) whereby operators have to deal with this at different levels – from local council to the state level.

Besides these, there have been incessant vandalism of telecom equipment and theft of optic fibre cables in various states of the federation.

Base stations have not been spared as many operators have had their base stations shut down by some state government agencies for one debt or the other.

These are real issues that require pragmatic solutions if quality of services are to improve beyond where it is today. Certain agencies in some states have also threatened to shut down operators' facilities in these states.

Sadly, your Excellency, despite the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the former Communications Minister with the Nigerian Governors' Forum (NGF) to address these challenges, the covenant is not respected

The Way Out

Your Excellency, we have come to enlist your support by prevailing on your brother Governors to have an understanding with the situation.

We do this because of our firm belief in you as a technocrat with a very good grasp of the importance of ICT in national development and how this will crystalise in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of our dear nation, Nigeria.

If you do this for us, your Excellency, **posterity will remember you** and Nigerians will celebrate you.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Prof. Umar G. Danbatta, FNSE

Executive Vice Chairman/Chief Executive Officer, NCC

Tuesday, May 17, 2016