



A WELCOME ADDRESS BY THE EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIRMAN, DR EUGENE JUWAH AT THE SENT-FORTH DINNER FOR THE OLD NCC BOARD

Ladies and gentlemen, let me thank you for accepting to share this evening with us. This has been long in coming but today we are relieved and overjoyed that at last, we are able to host a befitting occasion for some of the great pioneers of the NCC and by extension the telecommunications industry.

I want to place on record that once somebody has done well in this country, we should be able to appreciate that. Prior to the advent of the previous Board of the Commission led by Alhaji Ahmed Joda and Engr. Ernest Ndukwe, the telecommunications industry was like the other sectors, very anemic, with a life calibrated for perennial failure. Although commercialization of the sector commenced in 1992, there was really no life in that sector, to the extent that by 2000, the country could only boast of about 450, 000 active lines powered by a paltry \$500m investment portfolio. Telecommunications development was compared painfully only with those countries in permanent crisis like Afghanistan and Mongolia.

The coming of democracy gave former President Olusegun Obasanjo the opportunity to pick men and women of sterner character to take a closer look at the opportunities in the telecommunications sector. That was the beginning of a remarkable journey. By the time the former Board was leaving in 2010, an industry celebrated globally has been firmly established. Telephone was no longer for the rich it has become the menu on every table whether in the city or in remote rural dwellings.

Presently investment stands at about \$25bn dollars and active lines are well over 113m, and still counting. This couldn't have been possible without the team which is seated here with us today.

Let me also inform that the growth in the sector was also reflective of the formidable manpower that was put in place. Before my arrival in July 2010, there was a little interregnum but the Commission was saved because of the depth of the human capital

and thus the industry was also protected. It is in recognition of this that we have invited the management team, from Principal Managers and above to join us in this programme.

We have also made sure that we did not scrap the legacy projects we met at the Commission, as those decisions, in our considerations were taken for the good of the industry and country.

Now I can happily report that the SIM Card Registration is nearly completed while the much awaited Number Mobile Portability project will be taking off shortly, say by the end of the month. There have been obstacles to successfully implementing these projects but we have fought very hard by doing a lot of fine-tuning to achieve results.

Ladies and gentlemen let me also point out that the telecommunication industry is a deep and delicate one with each stakeholder – consumer, industry, government and the international community maintaining very voracious appetite difficult to satisfy. Supported by the Communications Act, we have always tried to strike a balance to meet everyone's need fairly well.

You will agree with me that just as there were legacy projects, there were also some legacy problems. The power problem still remains, multiple taxations by various governments are still hydra-headed, vandalisation of infrastructure is rampant, there are multiple regulations from ancillary agencies and right of way for easy service deployment and expansion still constitutes a headache, although the Ministry has nearly curtailed this problem. Above all, operators will always remain operators and will want to maximize gains while obeying the least of laws.

In all this we remain undaunted and are ready to canvass fourth generation regulation to maintain a hold on the industry and ensure continuing growth and development both in the area of quality and service deployment. We want to encourage more investment in critical infrastructure to ensure there is adequate investment by operators on each subscriber.

Fourth generation regulation will place emphasis on quality before growth but will also stimulate growth through the release of new licenses and this will happen before the end of the year. It is our pledge to sustain the industry as the envy of all other sectors of the economy and by so doing surpass our contributions to the transformational agenda of Mr. President, Dr Goodluck Jonathan.

The gentlemen and women we are celebrating this evening are stars of the telecommunications industry locally and internationally. Were they in the movie industry they would be receiving the Oscars.

In closing let me pick a popular line from the holy book which says, ***“silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee”***. On behalf of the Commission, I say thank you. This we have in abundance. Thank you very much and God bless.

Dr Eugene Juwah, Abuja,

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