

**Official Launching of the
DIGITAL BRIDGE INSTITUTE**

By Ahmed Joda
Chairman of the Board

Your Excellency, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo GCFR
President Commander-in-Chief, Federal Republic of Nigeria,
Your Excellency, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar GCON, Vice President
Your Excellency, the President of the Senate
Your Excellency the Speaker of the House of Representatives
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Senators,
Honourable Members of the House of Representatives,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

I have the honour and pleasure to welcome you to this official launching of the Digital Bridge Institute (DBI), an institute that will provide world class training in the field of Telecommunication and Information Technology.

This institute is being established by the Nigerian Communications Commission. The NCC itself was created by law in 1992. An NCC Board was set up in 1993 but was dissolved in 1994. However, until April 2000, the functions of the Commission were being carried out directly by the Ministry of Communications. The current Board assumed its full functions in the year 2000 and, for a while, after that the NCC operated from two small dwelling houses in the Garki area of Abuja.

There were no regulations in place and the Commission was not properly or adequately staffed and equipped to perform its functions. The Board had to determine what staff and equipment to do its duty. It also, had to create essential departments such as Standards, Consumer Bureau, as well as Corporate Planning and Research.

The Commission has developed close and beneficial working relations with institutions such as the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to strengthen its capacity which, include staff development. In addition, NCC has conducted numerous workshops and seminars for many essential partner groups including members of the judiciary, and the National Assembly, whose understanding of Communication issues are vital to the success of this new industry.

Following the full reorganization of the Commission and the licensing of many new private operators, it soon became painfully obvious that there were severe shortages of the essential skilled personnel to support this emerging and ballooning industry. The new operators were having to send many of their staff overseas for training. Not only was this expensive, it also has significant budgetary impact on their investment and foreign exchange implications for the national economy.

As we began to develop working relationships with sister African countries, especially within the Economic Community of West African States, we also realised that they face similar problems. For these reasons the Commission decided to establish a world class telecommunication institute which will serve not only Nigeria but sister ECOWAS countries and beyond. In the meantime we are continuing to work with the Ministry of Communications to

improve and expand the existing telecommunication training institutions at Oshodi and Kano.

When we proposed the idea of the establishing this institute, Mr President was very enthusiastic in his support of the project provided we did not request for funds from government. The NCC, has, therefore funded the development of this institution from its own resources. It is the ardent hope of the Commission that the institute will, in the shortest possible time, be able to stand on its own and sustain itself financially.

I would like to publicly acknowledge the independence and, indeed non-interference that we have enjoyed from this Government, including from every one of the three Ministers who have held office in the last four years. That independence has allowed us to plan and implement our ideas with relative ease and swiftness. For example the project proposal for the establishment of this Institute was approved in January 2003 and now barely 15 months later it is a reality.

As I have mentioned, although the Commission has provided the initial funding for DBI, the institute will be a self-sustaining entity for the development of human resource capacity for the telecoms and related ICT industries. DBI will provide training for Nigerian and African policy makers and regulators as well as help develop the capabilities of senior corporate managers in the management of telecommunication networks and services.

We will have a governing board and an advisory council which will be made of representatives of the various stakeholders including various private sector

groups. The purpose of the advisory council is to make sure that the Institute continues to respond to the needs of all players in the industry.

DBI will initially offer certificate and diploma programmes. Later it will offer Degree certification, in collaboration with Universities both at home and abroad.

The facilities of the Institute have been designed to hold approximately 500 students at full capacity. It has lecture halls, standard and executive computer and IT training rooms, breakout and seminar rooms, a library, an internet resource center, a telecommunication/computer networking laboratory and administrative offices. DBI has state of the art multimedia training facilities which will allow for the following:

- ? On campus traditional instructor-led training
- ? Individualized self-paced computer based training
- ? Distance learning, utilizing video broadcast, video conferencing and internet services.

Finally, I would like to invite the private sector, government parastatals, NGOs and universities to patronize this Institute. Together we can build a Nigeria with enough high quality human resources to cope with its fast growing telecommunications and information technology industry.

Your Excellency, Mr President, Your Excellency the Vice President, Hon. Ministers, Distinguished Senators, Honourable Members of the House of Representatives, Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen, it now only remains for me to thank on behalf of the Institute our President not only for

his enthusiastic support of this project, but for being here personally to declare the Institute open.

And may I thank all of you who have come to support us this morning.

Thank you.