

THE OFFICIAL COMMISSIONING CEREMONY

OF

DIGITAL BRIDGE INSTITUTE

SPEECH BY HONOURABLE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS

Salutation/Protocol

I wish to specially thank Mr. President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR, for finding time out of his very busy schedules to honor the invitation to come here today for the official commissioning of this citadel of learning.

I also wish to thank my colleagues in the cabinet, the Honorable Ministers here present, members of the National Assembly, and other eminent personalities – including the members of the diplomatic corps and captains of the Telecommunications industry.

Mr. President Sir, since the inception of the Obasanjo administration, the Federal Government has not deviated from its avowed policy of creating

the necessary enabling environment to foster the growth of the nation's telecommunication networks both in terms of access and penetration.

The gains of the telecommunications industry both to the economic development of Nigeria as well as socio-political integration of our people cannot be over emphasized. Our citizens can now better keep in touch due to the exponential growth in subscriber lines and the wide spread of the networks across the country.

The policy of opening up the market to competition and attracting serious investors has led to the increase in the number of subscribers in the country, by over four million lines, within a period of less than 3 years. Correspondingly, the growth of private sector investment has seen well over \$4billion pumped into the telecommunication sector within the same period.

This fast growth has no doubt brought pressure on the quantum of manpower resources available to the industry.

With large number expatriate staff being employed at rather exorbitant salaries, and several companies spending huge amount of foreign

exchange to train their staff outside the shores of this country, the situation needed to be urgently addressed. The Digital Bridge Institute is one major step towards addressing the need for local training and development of the required manpower resources for the industry.

The Digital Bridge Institute was conceived and implemented to address the immediate and future ICT training needs of both public and private sector stakeholders. Top on the list of DBI mandates is capacity building in telecommunication and ICT-related policy and regulatory matters. This mandate must necessarily be all encompassing because modern telecommunication environment is multi-disciplinary in nature since ICT is a field that involves engineers as well as economists, lawyers, judges, entrepreneurs, bankers, politicians, finance and accounts technocrats, organized consumer advocacy groups etc.

Apart from the DBI, the ministry is also working towards the upgrading of the facilities at the Telecom training schools at Oshodi and Kano. Once these upgrades are completed, the industry should have adequate facilities for manpower training, not just for Nigeria, but for West Africa. With the facilities that have been provided at DBI, I have no doubt that

the Institute will receive the full patronage of the industry locally and internationally.

Now that the project phase of DBI is completed, it is expected that the nation will make optimum use of the facility - for it is in our collective interest and obligation to support and sustain the Initiative by patronizing this Institute. In particular, the management of DBI has urged me to extend a special offer to the Executive Governors of the thirty-six States that make-up the Federation. To the Executive Governors, DBI would like each state government to send their qualified citizens for eighteen-month training and education; and thereafter, DBI will return them to you either employed or eminently employable. I have been assured that DBI has a training-to-placement programme, which permits the institute to find gainful employment for diligent participants in the training programme.

In conclusion, I would like to urge the distinguished personalities from the industry and government circles to support our collective effort in workforce capacity building for the telecommunications and IT fields.

The full utilization of this ultra-modern citadel of learning will enable the nation contribute to bridging the gap between the information-rich and information-poor nations of the world – hence the DIGITAL BRIDGE INSTITUTE, Utako District – Abuja.

Thank you.