

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE EXECUTIVE VICE CHAIRMAN/CEO OF THE NIGERIAN COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION (NCC), DURING A COURTESY VISIT TO THE ADAMAWA STATE GOVERNOR, RT. HON AHMADU UMARU FINTIRI AT THE ADAMAWA STATE GOVERNMENT HOUSE, YOLA, ON 11TH NOVEMBER, 2024

Opening

Protocols:

Your Excellency, Governor Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri,
Excellency, the Deputy Governor,
Secretary to the State Government,
Chief of Staff
Head of Service
Commissioners present,
Special Advisers and Aides to the Governor,
Traditional Rulers,
Industry Leaders,
distinguished stakeholders,
esteemed guests, ladies, and gentlemen.

I am honoured to be here today in Adamawa, “The Land of Beauty”; a state that has taken a bold and visionary step towards creating a truly digital future for its people. Under Governor Fintiri’s leadership, Adamawa State is embracing a forward-looking vision that places digital connectivity at the heart of progress. The Adamawa 2.0 initiative is a shining example of this commitment—a programme aimed at making governance more efficient, transparent, and responsive to people’s needs.

The Adamawa 2.0 programme is about leveraging digital technologies to create a unified platform that integrates revenue collection, public services, and essential government functions. This will enhance service delivery in critical sectors such as education, healthcare, and governance, ensuring that these services become more accessible and effective for all residents.

Appreciation on RoW Waiver

I want to start by applauding the recent decision by His Excellency, Rt. Hon Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri for his bold decision to waive Right of Way (RoW) charges to zero. This transformative step has the guaranteed potential of accelerating broadband infrastructure deployment across the state, bridging the digital divide and connecting more communities than ever before. Your Excellency, by focusing on the long-term benefits of connectivity over immediate revenue, Adamawa has shown exceptional foresight. This decision demonstrates an understanding that the digital infrastructure we lay down today will drive economic prosperity for generations to come.

Permit me, Your Excellency to urge your kind office to advocate for similar measures among your peers. By collectively eliminating these barriers across Nigeria, we can create a digital ecosystem that benefits all states and advances our country as a leader in connectivity-driven development.

Seeking Support on Implementing CNII

At this point, I would like to highlight the recent Presidential Order signed by His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, which designates telecom infrastructure as Critical National Information Infrastructure (CNII). This critical policy aims to protect telecom assets, from base stations to data centres, to fibre optic cables, ensuring that they remain secure for the benefit of all Nigerians. The Office of the National Security Adviser has already been tasked with its operationalisation and has commenced stakeholder engagements towards seamless implementation of the Order. The success of this operationalisation is hugely dependent on the collaboration of all key stakeholders, especially support from state governments. I want to use this opportunity to urge the Adamawa State Government, and other sub-national leaders to work closely with the Federal Government to achieve a successful implementation of this Presidential Order, helping to protect our shared investments and secure the foundations of our digital future.

Commendation on Carrier-Neutral Open Access Broadband

In line with our commitment to robust and resilient infrastructure across Nigeria, I am excited to highlight today's launch of the state-wide Carrier-Neutral Broadband Connectivity. This initiative represents yet another milestone that further enhances the security and accessibility of digital infrastructure in Adamawa State. The open-access model, supported by a reputable partner in Backbone Connectivity Network (BCN), will facilitate affordable and seamless connectivity across the state.

Currently, Adamawa state has between 1,500 - 1,600 km of fibre deployed across six operators, ranking it 23rd nationwide. With this new infrastructure and strategic vision championed by His Excellency, which includes e-resource centres, e-governance initiatives, and end-user device programmes—we are confident that Adamawa will soon be positioned as one of the top-ranking states in fibre deployment and digital transformation. This comprehensive digital agenda promises to unlock vast opportunities for economic growth, entrepreneurship, and job creation.

The NCC is fully committed to supporting and guiding Adamawa on this transformative journey, providing the necessary expertise and resources to ensure the success of the BCN project, ensuring it upholds the highest standards, fostering sustainable and impactful infrastructure that benefits all residents of Adamawa and contributes to Nigeria's broader digital transformation journey.

NCC's Previous and Ongoing Interventions in Adamawa

The NCC has actively supported digital transformation in Adamawa through impactful initiatives over the years. In 2023 - 2024, we launched around 25 programmes, including:

- **3MTT-focused Advanced Digital Appreciation Programme for Tertiary Institutions (ADAPTI):** Implemented across seven educational institutions.
- **NCC-led ADAPTI Programs:** Conducted in eight additional institutions.
- **Advanced Digital Empowerment Programme for Tertiary Institutions (ADEPTI):** Rolled out in three locations.
- **Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF) Initiatives:** conducted in 11 locations
- Connectivity programmes and bandwidth aggregation of schools
- **Digital Literacy Training for Teachers (DLT):** Focused on digital skills development and expanding connectivity in underserved areas.

These efforts aim to bridge the digital divide, empower individuals with essential digital literacy, and support schools and communities with sustainable connectivity solutions.

Commitment to a Connected Future

In line with the objectives of the National Broadband Plan (NNBP) and Mr. President's Renewed Hope Agenda, which seeks to leverage broadband and digital technologies to enhance productivity and socioeconomic well-being across Nigeria, the NCC is steadfast in its commitment to supporting states in advancing broadband deployment and overcoming regulatory barriers. To this end, we are committed to supporting Adamawa state on its digital transformation journey and look forward to providing the necessary resources to drive sustainable connectivity and inclusion. Our ongoing support will include the following initiatives:

Adamawa Digital Academy: I am pleased to inform you, Your Excellency, that we are in the final stages of developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which will soon be shared with you for consideration, for the establishment of the Adamawa Digital Academy, leveraging our Digital Bridge Institute (DBI) facility. This will ensure optimal use of available resources to provide a world-class learning environment. We believe that this collaborative effort will significantly enhance digital skills development among the youth and workforce, equipping them with the necessary tools to succeed in the digital economy. I want to assure you of our full support and commitment to working with the state government to bring this academy to life efficiently and effectively.

Such collaboration, in fact, is not the first time Adamawa state has demonstrated its commitment to digital development. A shining example of this is the success of the Digital Appreciation Programme (DAP) initiative delivered in Malabu in 2016. Today, the initiative provides ICT facilities to the community and serves as a centre for NECO and JAMB examinations for students. What's even more commendable is that the community has taken full ownership of the centre, ensuring its continued functionality and sustainability. This success story highlights that when states with commitment and vision take ownership of

digital initiatives, they can indeed ensure the long-term sustainability and far-reaching impact of these projects.

USPF Interventions: Through our Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF), we will also provide some targeted interventions in Adamawa state, including the roll out 20-25 kilometres of fibre infrastructure, connecting key public institutions to support the state's e-governance initiative and establish a strong foundation for digital services.

Digital Skills Training: Furthermore, starting in 2025, Adamawa State will be integral to our digital skills training programmes. We will launch an 8-week vocational training course which will be ideal for youth, aspiring entrepreneurs, and individuals seeking to enhance their digital skills for employment opportunities. Additionally, we will offer an advanced 4G networks training programme tailored for degree holders to facilitate their professional growth within the digital economy.

National Broadband Alliance for Nigeria (NBAN): It may also interest you to note, Your Excellency, that in December 2024, the Hon. Minister of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy will launch NBAN, a multi-stakeholder initiative aimed at driving high-quality broadband access across Nigeria. This programme aims to ensure that broadband is effectively utilized and delivers significant socio-economic benefits to communities, while guaranteeing Return on Investments (RoI) to operators.

The first phase of NBAN will focus on seven pilot states that have already made progress in removing barriers to telecom infrastructure deployment, such as waiving Right of Way (RoW) charges. Building on Adamawa's current efforts in driving digital transformation and enhancing connectivity, we are confident that the state will play a pivotal role in the next phase of NBAN.

Project 774 LGA: In this context, we recognize the transformative potential of Project 774, an initiative by the Honourable Minister of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy, aimed at extending digital skills and connectivity to every local government area in Nigeria. This programme promises to significantly advance digital inclusion nationwide and will be particularly impactful in Adamawa. Adamawa State has been proposed for inclusion in the next phase of Project 774, and we at the NCC are fully committed to supporting this initiative to benefit communities across the state and further drive digital transformation efforts.

World Bank SABER Programme: Finally, we commend Adamawa State for aligning with the World Bank's SABER (State Action on Business Enabling Reforms) programme. With DLI2 focused on improving the regulatory framework for broadband infrastructure and reducing the cost of fibre optic deployment, SABER will help ensure efficient, cost-effective digital services across Nigeria. We stand ready to support the state in fully accessing the benefits of this transformative initiative and ensuring the successful rollout of broadband infrastructure in Adamawa State.

Closing

In closing, let me reiterate our shared vision for a connected and prosperous Nigeria, where digital infrastructure underpins growth and opportunity. Your Excellency, the NCC is here as a committed partner, ready to support Adamawa in every possible way. Together, we can create a digital Nigeria where every citizen, no matter their location, can benefit from the promise of connectivity, innovation, and progress.

Thank you.