

**NCC'S VISION TO IMPACT NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC
RECOVERY**

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY

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Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to stand before you today at the World Stage Economic Summit 2024 with the theme – **“Nigeria: Setting a Stage for Business and Economic Recovery”** at a time and in a world where economies are continuously being tested by both anticipated and unforeseen challenges. It is of utmost importance for all to collaborate and share insights that enable sustainable growth and prosperity for our dear nation. My speech has been tailored to the topic: ***“NCC’s Vision for Nigeria’s Economic Recovery”***.

Nigeria’s Economic Context: A Call for Resilience and Innovation

Nigeria, like many other countries, has faced its share of economic challenges in recent years. However, the Nigerian spirit has always been one of resilience and innovation. The time has come to translate these qualities into tangible economic recovery and growth by creating a conducive environment for business, driven by strategic investments in critical sectors, particularly in technology and digital infrastructure. The telecommunications sector has been recognized as a key player in Nigeria’s economic recovery considering its GDP contribution to the nation’s economy. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Q2, 2024 report revealed that the ICT sector contributed 19.78% to Nigeria’s GDP, up from 17.89% in the previous quarter (Q1, 2024). This highlights the sector’s potential.

Digital Transformation as a Catalyst for Economic Growth

The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) recognizes the fact that digital transformation is no longer a choice but a necessity for economic revival. To this end, the Commission has been committed to building a robust digital economy that will drive inclusive growth, create jobs, and enhance the competitiveness of Nigerian businesses on a global scale. The National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy (2020-2030) of the Federal Government outlines a clear roadmap to achieving these goals, prioritizing broadband penetration, digital literacy, and the development of a vibrant digital ecosystem.

The Strategic Blueprint of the Honourable Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy also provides the needed thrust on this journey. The Blueprint is a detailed and progressive framework that encompasses five key pillars: Knowledge, Policy, Infrastructure, Innovation, Entrepreneurship & Capital (IEC) and Trade. Knowledge is the cornerstone upon which innovation thrives and is built upon the bedrock of sound policies. Infrastructure provides the essential backbone for a thriving digital economy, while innovation and entrepreneurship drive economic diversification. The trade pillar connotes our commitment to global collaboration and partnerships, recognising that innovation knows no borders.

Drawing from this this blueprint, the Commission has outlined its Strategic Focus Areas, recognizing that each of its stakeholders—the Consumers, the Licensees and Industry, and the Government—holds a unique perspective and has distinct expectations from the

Commission. The Commission's strategic vision is therefore guided by the objective of meeting the specific expectations of each stakeholder group.

In line with the Ministerial Strategic Vision Plan, the Commission is deepening the digital terrain by supporting digital economy initiatives of different organizations and institutions across the country. These interventions range from conferences, summits, regional tech gatherings, digital/tech-inclined trainings, and talent hunts to youth entrepreneurship and empowerment programmes. Deliberate efforts have been set to support and participate in timely knowledge sharing events on the digital economy, and workshops on emerging technologies while conducting series of studies on Incubation and Innovation Hubs, Digital Entrepreneurship, Technological Innovations, and Indigenous Content in the Telecommunications Sector amongst others.

Broadband: The Bedrock of Economic Recovery

The National Broadband Plan (NNBP) 2020-2025 is at the heart of the Commission's strategy. Broadband is the bedrock of economic recovery, enabling innovation, and fostering economic activities across all sectors. As the agency charged with implementing this plan, the NCC, alongside major stakeholders in the industry, is working to meet the ambitious targets of ensuring that broadband access is available to all Nigerians, with minimum speeds of 25 Mbps in urban areas and 10 Mbps in rural areas by 2025. The Commission is committed to expanding broadband infrastructure and creating an enabling environment for both local and foreign investments in the telecommunications sector. Several projects and collaborations have been carried out to drive broadband penetration in the country, like the Expansion of the Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) links, Establishment of the IXPN Data Centre in the North East Region, and Upgrade of Data Capacity of the IXPN Backbone, amongst others.

Also, the Universal Service Provision Fund (USPF), initiatives such as Rural Broadband Initiative and the Accelerated Mobile Phone Expansion Project have led to the extension of high-speed internet access to underserved and unserved rural areas.

Collaborations with the States on the effective Right of Way Charges and multiple levies bedevilling telecommunication companies have started yielding a glimmer of hope in the deployment of fibre across the nation. We have seen twelve States aligning with the N145 per linear meter RoW charges, and six of these States completely waiving the RoW. Other engagements includes, collaboration with Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF) to further engage States on digital infrastructure development, with Development Partners like the World Bank, United Kingdom Digital Access Programme (sponsors of the Initiative for Digital Inclusion).

Creating an Enabling Environment for Businesses

One of the objectives of the Commission is *“to establish a regulatory framework for the Nigerian communications industry and for this purpose to create an effective, impartial and independent regulatory authority”*. To set the stage for business and economic recovery, the Commission is actively

working to create a regulatory environment that promotes fairness, transparency, and competition.

The Commission understands the importance of inclusivity, and how telecommunications empower small businesses and informal markets, enabling them to grow, compete, and prosper within the global digital economy.

The NCC is continuously reviewing and updating policies to keep pace with technological advancements and the needs of the market. Robust measures are being put in place to encourage the adoption of emerging technologies such as 5G, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and blockchain to drive efficiency and innovation in various sectors, from agriculture to finance and from health to education.

It is important to mention that a few months ago, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu signed an Executive Order designating telecommunications infrastructure as Critical National Information Infrastructure (CNII). This long-awaited Executive Order criminalizes the intentional damage of telecommunications infrastructure thus protecting telecommunication investments and guaranteeing less down time on our networks. The NCC has already begun collaborating with the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) and other relevant stakeholders to implement the CNII Executive Order.

Public-Private Partnerships: A Pathway to Sustainable Growth

To achieve the objectives and mandate of the NCC, the need for robust collaboration between the public and private sectors cannot be overemphasized. Hence, the fostering of partnerships that leverage the strengths of both sectors to expand digital infrastructure, promote digital literacy, and drive digital innovation.

The Commission in the last one year embarked on some strategic partnerships. One of these gave birth to the Centre of Excellence in May 2024, a 4G/5G Test Lab set up in collaboration with NOKIA at the NCC Annex Office Mboru. The MoU with NOKIA includes 4G/5G Technical, and Vocational Trainings for young Nigerians. This initiative targets to enhance and build technical talent, as well as equip 300 to 400 young person with 4G/5G skills required for them to be employed in the telecommunications sector. An additional 200 young Nigerians will also benefit from the Vocational Training under this partnership. The expectation is to further collaborate with players in the industry and encourage absorption of these trainees into the industry, especially within their respective communities and catchment areas to propel development across the nation.

This leads to a call on private sector players to invest in Nigeria's burgeoning digital economy and take advantage of the numerous opportunities that it presents.

Ensuring Inclusive Growth

The Commission's efforts are also centered on ensuring that no one is left behind in the

digital revolution. The NCC is committed to bridging the digital divide between urban and rural areas, ensuring that every Nigerian has access to affordable and reliable internet services. Initiatives from USPF have been tailored towards the underserved and unserved communities of the country. These include Digital Literacy Programmes, Emerging Technology Centres, Tertiary Institution Centres, Computer Based Test Centres, Community ICT centres and satellite deployments. Other programmes include the Digital Learning Initiative, Digital Literacy for Teachers, Youth Entrepreneurship Programmes, Digital Skills for Youth Empowerment, Digital Awareness Programme, Digital Entrepreneurship Capacity Building, Techpreneurship Training etc. Through these targeted interventions and strategic partnerships, the Commission aims to enhance digital literacy, empower women and youth, and promote entrepreneurship across the country.

As the stage is set for business and economic recovery, this is inviting all stakeholders to join us in this journey. The NCC is determined to be a catalyst for positive change, a driver of innovation, and a partner in progress. Together, all stakeholders in the digital ecosystem can build a resilient economy, create opportunities for all Nigerians, and position Nigeria as a leader in the global digital economy.

We take this moment as an opportunity for all to embrace our digital transformation policies and programmes, that will set our nation on a path to sustainable economic growth and prosperity.

Thank you.

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