

Goodwill Message & Keynote Remarks at the Technical Conference on “Effective Right of Way (RoW) Administration and Issuance of Planning Permits for Masts and Towers in Nigeria.



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Protocol

Good morning, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the Management and Staff of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), I am delighted to deliver this goodwill message at this timely Technical Conference on Effective RoW Administration and Issuance of Planning Permits for Masts and Towers. I commend the organizers and our partners for convening a forum that sits squarely at the intersection of policy, infrastructure, investment, and public welfare.

This conference is about speed and certainty—speed in the deployment of broadband infrastructure, and certainty in the rules and processes that govern Right of Way (RoW) and planning permits. The Commission fully supports this agenda, and views it as a natural continuation of our collaborative work with the Initiative for Digital Inclusion (IDI) supported by the UK Government, which builds on the foundation established during Phase One and Phase Two studies, reflecting a shared commitment to fostering a robust telecommunications ecosystem that will drive digital inclusion, economic growth, and national development across Nigeria.

The report of these studies has identified issues such as multiple taxation, varying RoW fees across states, additional associated charges incidental to fibre and other telecoms infrastructure deployment, and the need for enhanced private sector engagement as areas requiring urgent attention. The recommendations outlined, ranging from advocacy and data generation for decision-making to the adoption of modern technologies—provide a roadmap to streamline processes, reduce costs, and ensure equitable access to broadband services.

It is in line with these recommendations that the Commission, working in collaboration with the Nigerian Governors Forum (NGF) and the World Bank, last month, hosted a Business Roundtable on Improving Investments in Broadband Connectivity and Safeguarding Critical National Information Infrastructure (CNII). The engagement led to a practical set of Action Plans, from reducing or zeroizing RoW charges and clarifying administrative fees, to integrating fiber-protection clauses in state road contracts, establishing state-level CNII protection structures, and strengthening multi-stakeholder security collaboration. Today's technical conference will help translate these high-level agreements into workable, state-by-state implementation that will unlock investment, improve Quality of Service (QoS), and drive inclusive growth.

Furthermore, we are raising the bar on transparency and data-driven regulation. The Commission has published the Independent Industry Performance Reports in partnership with Ookla and launched Nigeria's first National Mobile Coverage Maps to make coverage and performance more visible to consumers, operators, and

policymakers alike. These tools are changing the conversation, from conjecture to evidence, from perceptions to facts, so that interventions are targeted and outcomes are measurable.

We are also strengthening resilience. In June 2024, President Bola Tinubu signed the Critical National Information Infrastructure (CNII) Presidential Order which establishes a comprehensive framework for protecting telecom infrastructure and information systems. The Commission is aligning regulatory levers with this national framework in partnership with the Office of the National Security Adviser (ONSA) and subnational actors.

As we all know, broadband is the rail track of today's economy. When RoW is streamlined, and planning permits are efficient, fiber and towers are deployed faster; operators invest confidently; consumers experience better speeds, lower latency, and fewer outages; and new digital services in health, education, payments, agriculture, flourish. Conversely, uncertainty around fees, duplicative levies, and prolonged approvals delay rollouts, increase costs, and widen the digital divide.

Ladies and Gentlemen, RoW and planning permits may look like bureaucratic levers, but they are in fact development instruments. Every day a permit is delayed, a community waits longer for reliable connectivity; every kilometre of fiber that is redug for lack of ducts wastes scarce public resources; every vandalized base station is a hospital without telemedicine, a school without e-learning, or a market without digital payments.

Our ask to all stakeholders is simple:

1. To States: Standardize and simplify the rules;
2. To the Industry: Invest and harden the networks;
3. To Communities and Security Agencies: Protect telecommunications assets as a national priority.

On our part the Commission will continue to provide fair and transparent regulatory services to the industry.

If we do these consistently, Nigeria will not only close the urban–rural digital divide; we will also build a network that is faster, fairer, and more resilient, the kind of network on which a modern economy confidently rides on.

The NCC remains committed to enabling these recommendations, fostering partnerships, and ensuring that telecommunications infrastructure, having been recognized as a critical national asset, is given the attention it deserves. Together, these efforts aim to build a digitally inclusive Nigeria where connectivity empowers every citizen and strengthens the national economy.

As we proceed to the technical presentation and panel interventions, I urge us to keep today's outputs action oriented. Let this conference mark the week we moved from policy to practice, with timelines, responsibilities, and a public scorecard.

Thank you for your attention, and I wish us successful deliberations.

God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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