

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

by

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at

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**Theme: Economic Resilience: Addressing Financial Inclusion,
Food Security, Urban Challenges, and the Green Economy in
Nigeria**

Distinguished Guests,
Esteemed Colleagues,
Innovators,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to be with you today at the Second Digital Kano Conference, a platform dedicated to advancing innovation, entrepreneurship, and the digital economy in Nigeria. I commend the **Kano Digital Innovation Network (KDIN)** for convening this gathering, which brings together thought leaders, policymakers, innovators, investors, and young entrepreneurs committed to shaping Nigeria's digital future.

The theme of this year's conference, "**Economic Resilience: Addressing Financial Inclusion, Food Security, Urban Challenges and the Green Economy in Nigeria**," is both timely and strategic. The theme also reminds us that innovation is not just about ideas but about transforming those ideas into impactful solutions that address fundamental societal challenges. From agriculture to healthcare, and from education to commerce, digital technologies hold the promise of unlocking new levels of efficiency, productivity, and inclusiveness. This aligns with the mandate of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) to foster a competitive telecommunications industry and ensure the provision of widespread, high-quality, and affordable connectivity, that underpins the digital economy, e-governance, digital services, and a broad range of smart solutions.

We recognize that Nigeria's economic future depends on our ability to harness digital innovation and entrepreneurship. Beyond our core role as the economic regulator of the communications sector, the Commission actively drives the digital economy by promoting digital literacy and skills development, supporting startups and small businesses, and expanding broadband infrastructure. Together, these pillars create opportunities for innovation-driven enterprises, transform local communities, and contribute meaningfully to national development.

In Northern Nigeria, and Kano in particular, the entrepreneurial spirit is evident. With the right digital tools, access, and knowledge, innovators from this region can scale their ideas beyond borders.

On FinTech and Digital Inclusion

At the Commission, we believe that digital inclusion is the bedrock of financial inclusion. Today, mobile connectivity powers Nigeria's FinTech revolution, giving millions access to banking, payments, insurance, savings, and micro-investment platforms. To deepen this

progress, we are expanding broadband infrastructure and establishing Digital Nigeria Centres and community-based ICT hubs to connect unserved and underserved communities.

Yet connectivity alone is not enough. That is why the Commission is also investing in people—equipping women and young Nigerians with the skills to thrive in the digital financial ecosystem. Through programmes such as Digital Skills Training for Women, the Tech Youth Empowerment initiative, our Nokia 4G/5G training, and the establishment of a Fabrication Laboratory, we are building the capacity of citizens to use technology productively.

In the last two months alone, the Commission has trained approximately 250 women in various digital skills, including digital marketing and content creation, cybersecurity and online safety, data annotation, and digital financial services and management, across two states, while also providing them with digital devices. Mentoring and monitoring are ongoing. Encouragingly, some of the beneficiaries have already established online presences and businesses and are actively creating content.

On Food Security

Food security is a cornerstone of economic resilience, and technology is increasingly central to achieving it. From precision farming tools to digital marketplaces that link farmers directly to buyers, connectivity is the enabler that makes these innovations possible. By expanding broadband access and creating platforms for innovation, the NCC is empowering startups to deliver solutions that provide climate-smart information, reduce post-harvest losses, and open up new agricultural value chains.

On Broadband and Smart Urban Systems

Resilient economies are built on smart, connected cities and communities—and at the heart of this transformation is broadband. Expanding broadband penetration therefore remains central to the Commission’s work. **As of July 2025, penetration stood at 48.01%, representing about 104 million subscriptions.**

To sustain this growth, operators and tower companies have intensified investments in network expansion. **In the last six months alone, more than 2,700 new sites have been deployed nationwide, boosting both capacity and coverage.** These investments are already strengthening network performance and ensuring more Nigerians can access reliable, high-speed connectivity.

Beyond connectivity, this ongoing expansion is laying the foundation for advanced internet services that will unlock new frontiers in artificial intelligence, smart cities, urban systems, and industrial automation. These innovations are vital to addressing pressing urban challenges such as congestion, waste management, and energy efficiency, while positioning Nigeria’s economy for long-term resilience.

On Startups and Innovation Support

The NCC is committed to creating platforms where innovators can showcase their creativity and access opportunities for growth. This commitment is being realised through research and development grants, hackathons, partnerships with innovation hubs, and the establishment of Digital Industrial Parks and ICT Parks across the country.

These parks serve as one-stop centres for innovation and digital entrepreneurship in the ICT sector. They provide startups with visibility, mentorship, and access to markets, while also connecting tech entrepreneurs with investors and collaborators. In doing so, they help scale solutions that enhance food security, boost agricultural productivity, and unlock new industries critical to national development.

In addition, the Commission is exploring strategic collaborations with tech hubs, to further deepen innovation ecosystems across Nigeria.

On the Green Economy

We recognize that technology must advance in harmony with sustainability. The Commission is promoting green ICT practices, supporting energy-efficient telecom infrastructure, and encouraging startups whose innovations focus on renewable energy, eco-friendly logistics, and recycling. In our 2025 Corporate Governance Guidelines, launched in August this year, we have made it compulsory for our licensees to submit a Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility Report to the Commission at the end of every financial year which is expected to detail their Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) goals and steps taken to achieve them.

In ensuring that the growth of our digital economy is aligned with climate resilience and the global shift toward a greener future, the Commission is also encouraging its licensees to adopt and deploy renewable and sustainable energy solutions in powering their infrastructure.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, our vision at the Nigerian Communications Commission is clear: to build a digital economy that empowers our people, strengthens our industries, and secures Nigeria's place in the global digital ecosystem. Economic resilience requires more than policy; it requires collaboration, innovation, and inclusive growth. This is why gatherings such as the Digital Kano Conference are so important: they bring together the ideas, the energy, and the partnerships that will shape the future of our nation.

Let us continue, together, to turn ideas into impact and build a Nigeria where innovation drives resilience and prosperity for all.

Thank you, and God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Dr. Aminu Maida
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