

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

by

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at

5th Edition of the Women Entrepreneurs and Executives in Tech
Summit & Awards, holding on Thursday, 25th September 2025 at
Radission Blu Hotel, Ikeja GRA, Lagos

**Theme: From Idea to Impact: Scaling Innovation and Building
Sustainable Tech Entrepreneurship in Nigeria**

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

It is a great honour to deliver this keynote address on behalf of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC). Let me begin by commending the organisers of WEET 2025 for creating this vital platform where we can deliberate on scaling innovation and building sustainable tech entrepreneurship in Nigeria.

Permit me a brief but important digression, one most fitting for today's occasion. At the ongoing 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, we have seen Nigerian women making the nation proud on the global stage: from **Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala**, the formidable Director-General of the World Trade Organization, to **Amina J. Mohammed**, the tireless Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, and most recently, the poetic powerhouse **Maryam Bukar Hassan, known as “Alhanislam,”** who has been appointed as the UN's first Global Advocate for Peace under its Peace and Security Pillar.

Please, let us give a resounding round of applause for these women who continue to project Nigeria's brilliance across the globe.

Indeed, women have always played—and continue to play—pivotal roles across diverse industries and sectors. In business and technology especially, their strides have been exceptional. Their contributions have strengthened teams, ensured that industries deliver social impact, and provided the diversity that enriches leadership and drives inclusive decision-making.

This year's theme, **“From Idea to Impact,”** beautifully captures the journey of many Nigerian women in entrepreneurship and technology. For them, it often began with a spark of imagination, a seed of possibility planted in their minds. Through resilience, devotion, and an indomitable spirit, they have nurtured these ideas into real-world innovations that are shaping industries and transforming lives.

In the world of technology, we are privileged to witness women who have refused to be confined by limitations, and instead transformed challenges into opportunities for impact. Think of **Funke Opeke**, whose vision birthed MainOne and brought an undersea cable infrastructure that redefined connectivity across West Africa. Or **Odunayo Eweniyi**, who through PiggyVest, is reshaping how millions of Nigerians save and invest, giving ordinary people the confidence to take charge of their financial futures. **Temie Giwa-Tubosun** stands as another beacon, leveraging technology through LifeBank to deliver life-saving medical

supplies, proving that innovation is most powerful when it saves lives. Then there is **Amina Sambo-Magaji**, an AI trailblazer whose work has not only guided startups and informed policy but also institutionalised advanced training in artificial intelligence at NOUN-ACETEL, ensuring that Nigeria builds the talent needed for the future. And we cannot forget **Damilola Odufuwa**, whose work with the Feminist Coalition has shown how technology can be harnessed to drive social impact and amplify the voices of women. These women have not just become household names; they have confronted social and economic challenges with courage, resilience, and vision—using technology as a platform to create lasting value and transformative impact.

We must also recognise the convener of WEETS, Ugochi S. Emmanuel, whose career in media and passion for exploring the place of women in the digital age gave birth to this platform. Her vision is a reminder that creating spaces where women can be seen, heard, and empowered is itself an act of leadership.

These women are proof that when barriers fall, brilliance shines. Yet, as much as they have achieved—breaking through and setting examples in their various fields—there is still more to be done. Imagine thousands more women leading new frontiers in healthtech, agritech, fintech, and artificial intelligence. That is the future we must build: a future where women do not merely use technology but stand at the helm of its creation and innovation.

Today, Nigeria's digital economy is expanding at a remarkable pace, but its promise will remain incomplete if women are left behind. Women account for nearly half of our population, yet they remain underrepresented in technology, entrepreneurship, and STEM careers. If we are truly committed to unlocking inclusive growth, then women must be placed at the very heart of the digital revolution. Closing the gender gap in access, skills, and opportunity is not just a matter of fairness—it is an economic imperative.

The challenge is real. Across Sub-Saharan Africa, women are still about 15% less likely than men to use mobile internet (GSMA, 2024/25). In Nigeria, the National Gender Digital Inclusion Strategy (2025) highlights that 68% of women do not own smartphones, a reality that limits their access to essential services, opportunities, and participation in the digital economy.

These disparities are not accidental; they are the product of deep-seated structural barriers—ranging from affordability challenges and digital illiteracy to harmful stereotypes and the persistent underrepresentation of women in STEM fields. If these barriers are left unaddressed, Nigeria risks stifling its ability to fully harness the transformative power of its digital economy—an economy that is not only one of the fastest growing sectors globally but also a critical driver of GDP growth, innovation, and job creation.

The gender gap in digital access illustrates this challenge starkly. In Nigeria, 45 percent of women remain offline compared to their male counterparts (LSE, 2023). On a global scale, research suggests that closing the gender gap in digital inclusion could unlock as much as \$1 trillion in GDP by 2025 (GSMA, 2024). Beyond access, women-led businesses also grapple with structural constraints—limited access to capital, mentorship gaps, entrenched gender stereotypes, and underrepresentation in technology ecosystems.

These realities remind us that if women are excluded from full participation in the digital revolution, not only do they lose opportunities, but the nation loses the immense economic and social value they could generate. When empowered, women bring resilience, diversity of thought, and innovation that transform industries.

At the Nigerian Communications Commission, we recognise that inclusive digital growth requires deliberate action. NCC has implemented programmes and partnerships that are creating measurable impact, and remains committed to this mission through specific programmes and initiatives that ensures women inclusivity like:

1. Digital Skills & Literacy for Women

- In the last two months, the Commission trained a total of 229 women in Digital Skills like digital marketing & content creation, Cyber Security & Online Safety, Data Annotation, and Digital Financial Services & management in two states of the federation. The Commission also supported the women with digital devices.

The mentoring and monitoring process is ongoing and will last six months post-training. Post-training tracking shows that many have established online businesses and are actively creating content online.

2. Digital Bridge Institute (DBI)

Through the Digital Bridge Institute (DBI), NCC runs ICT training programmes tailored for women and girls.

With the rapid development and transformative potential of artificial intelligence, we must be deliberate in ensuring that women are not left behind. AI is already reshaping the way we work, live, and interact—driving breakthroughs in healthcare, finance, agriculture, education, and governance. But for its promise to translate into inclusive progress, women must be active participants and leaders in this revolution, not passive observers. If women are excluded, the benefits of AI risk becoming uneven, deepening existing inequalities rather

than bridging them. In 2025, the DBI will expand its **Girls in AI & Robotics programme**, ensuring women are equipped for emerging technologies.

3. Girls in ICT Initiatives

The Commission actively supports International Girls in ICT Day, inspiring young girls to pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and creating mentorship opportunities for their growth.

Our **Girls Can-Code** competition is designed to build digital literacy and strengthen technology skills among young women and girls. Beyond being a platform for learning, it empowers participants to see themselves as creators, innovators, and leaders in the digital space. By nurturing these skills, the initiative not only equips young women to thrive in Nigeria's digital economy but also plays a critical role in closing the gender gap in technology and bridging digital inequality.

Through strategic partnerships, the Commission is also building pathways for women and girls in the digital economy. With SMEDAN, we have trained over 1,000 entrepreneurs—60% of them women. And through collaborations with UNICEF, Microsoft, and CITAD, we are equipping adolescent girls with the digital skills they need to lead and innovate in the future.

As I conclude, I must say to the women who are here today, and in fact across Nigeria, your creativity and resilience are the seeds of our digital future. Do not allow barriers to limit your potential. The ecosystem needs your creativity, leadership, innovation, and impact to thrive.

To Industry stakeholders:

- Invest in women-led startups.
- Provide mentorship and venture funding tailored for female entrepreneurs.
- Design policies that enable women's inclusion in STEM and entrepreneurship.

Government and regulators should continue to:

- Expand broadband infrastructure into rural and underserved areas.
- Align digital skills initiatives with entrepreneurship funding.
- Champion women's participation in policymaking for digital transformation.

The Commission remains a steadfast partner on this journey to building Nigeria's digital economy—fostering an enabling environment through world-class infrastructure, clear regulations, and strategic partnerships. Together, we can move from idea to impact, from

inclusion to innovation, and from potential to shared national prosperity—with women at the forefront of this transformation.

Thank you.

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