Communique Issued at the End of the e-Nigeria 2019 Conference, Exhibition and Awards Held from November 28 to 29, 2019 at the International Conference Centre, Abuja.

1.0 Background and Opening

The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), under the auspices of the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, and in collaboration with all the parastatals under the Ministry, organized the 2019 edition of the e-Nigeria Conference, Exhibition and Awards from November 28 to 29, 2019 at the International Conference Centre, Abuja.

The Conference was declared open by His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, who unveiled the **National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy** developed by the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy to accelerate Nigeria's digital transformation. The President also presented awards to two outstanding indigenous startups. Other dignitaries at the Conference included His Excellency the Governor of Nasarawa State, Engr. A. A. Sule, the Chairman, Senate Committee on Communications, Senator Oluremi Tinubu, who represented the President of the Senate, Chairman, House Committee on ICT and Cybercrime, Honorable Abubakar Lado, who represented the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

The Chief Host and Convener of the Conference was the Honorable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy, Dr. Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami), *FNCS, FBCS, FIIM,* who delivered a Special Address on **The Journey So Far** while the Director-General/Chief Executive of NITDA, Mr. Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, *CCIE* delivered the Welcome Address as the Conference host.   The Executive Vice Chairman, Nigerian Communications Commission, Prof. Umar Garba Danbatta gave the Program Highlights. The Keynote Address was delivered by Mrs. Funke Okpeke, Managing Director, MainOne Limited.

Among other dignitaries at the Conference were the Honorable Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Mallam Muhammed Bello, the Honorable Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, Hajiya Sadiya Umar Farouq, Minster of Police Affairs, Alh. Maigari Muhammad Dingyadi, Minister of State for Agriculture and Rural Development, Hon. Mustapha Baba Shehuri and the Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, Mr Musa Istifanus. Also, in attendance were the Nigeria Country Director of the World Bank, Shubham Chaudhuri and Country Director of Korea International Cooperation Agency, Mr. WooChan Chang, and several Heads of public and private corporations.

The Conference, which was in all attended by almost 4000 participants, had the theme **National Digital Economy** and featured four Plenary Sessions under the following subthemes.

1. Expert Review of Draft National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy
2. Building the Infrastructure for the Fourth Industrial Revolution
3. Creating an Innovation Ecosystem for Sustainable Digital Economy
4. Creating New Job Opportunities Through Developmental Regulations

In addition, masterclasses on Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence, and startup parallel sessions were held. Over 20 mostly indigenous entrepreneurs also participated in the exhibition segment of the two-day event.

2.0 **Key Observations**

In the course of the Conference, participants were delighted to note:

1. **The designation and repositioning of the Federal Ministry of Communications** as the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy in accordance with global trends;
2. **The efforts to transform NIPOST into a world class Postal Agency** with forward thinking subsidiaries that would boost revenues to support seamless postal and philatelic activities;
3. **The synergy among the parastatals and corporations under the Ministry** of **Communications and Digital Economy** as was evident in their collaborative hosting of the 2019 edition of the Conference;
4. **The report of the Regional Entrepreneurship Acceleration Program (REAP) launched in Nigeria by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology which had empowered about 5,000 youths** and women with digital skills, enabling them to become digital entrepreneurs;
5. **The launch of UnityBoard an embedded AI / IoT STEAM Education Kit** which is intended to build capacity in emerging technologies that will help to drive Local Content Development and Indigenization of Technologies.
6. **The fact that 65% of young children starting school today would be engaged in future jobs not currently in existence** and many of those jobs would be based on emerging technologies, which the Conference had been able to draw attention to.

Participants further noted and congratulated the Federal Government on:

1. **The vigorous implementation of biometric identification and public-facing digital platforms** in fighting corruption as demonstrated in the implementation of the Bank Verification Number (BVN), Treasury Single Account (TSA), and Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS);
2. **The very welcome news of the recent launch of the emergency '112' toll-free** number connecting several emergency services in the Federal Capital Territory and the completion of the registration of the 9.2million hitherto unregistered or improperly registered SIMs in the quest to imbue identity-driven security into the nation's telecoms component of digital communication;
3. **The approval of the e-Government Masterplan**, which would make governance more efficient and citizen facing, and the enabling of the ICT sector to become a key sector of the economy, contributing 13.85% to the GDP and with capability to contribute up to 20% in the next few years;
4. **The IT Clearance directive given to NITDA and which had ensured the saving of over 16.8 billion naira since the start of the program**.

3.0 Key Recommendations of the Conference

1. Against the background of the launch of the National Policy and Strategy on Digital Economy and the need to begin its implementation in earnest, the Conference called on the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy to facilitate the development of:

    a. **A National ICT Strategy**, including the adoption of a system of shared Infrastructure, support for indigenous digital entrepreneurs for the creation of new IT-enabled jobs and a framework for Government to serve as an enabler rather than a direct player in the ICT sector;

    b. **Frameworks for the sensitization and comprehensive capacity building** of all MDAs to ensure the seamless implementation of the e-Government Masterplan;

    c. **Implementation framework for the Digital Economy Policy and Strategy**, including the required infrastructures, such as those for broadband, acquisition of digital skillsets and a robust Measurement and Evaluation component.

2. The Conference also called on NITDA to

    a. **To sustain the tempo in the IT clearance program** and use the laudable program to ensure support for indigenous entrepreneurs and patronage for Nigerian products and services;

    b. **Develop guidelines for the handling and management of e-Waste** as it had been projected to increase with the development of the digital economy.

3. **The Conference finally called on State Governments to adopt the National Digital Economy Policy** and cascade the strategies for developing their own public facing digital platforms.

4.0 Conclusions

In closing, the conference expressed gratitude to the Federal Government, the Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy and its Agencies, the ICT industry as a whole for a successful hosting of the 2019 edition of the e-Nigeria Conference, Awards and Exhibitions. It also thanked the exhibitors, sponsors, partners and the media for their tremendous support in hosting the two-day event.

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Mr. Musa Istifanus   **Malam Ayuba Shuaibu (Ag Exe Secretary, USPF)**
(Permanent Secretary and Chairman
 of the Closing Session)