



MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS

**WELCOME ADDRESS
BY**

(Chairman, INTER-MINISTERIAL LOCAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE)

**THE PERMANENT SECRETARY
ARC. SONNY S.T. ECHONO, fnia**

AT THE

SMART CITIES SUMMIT NIGERIA

HELD AT

**TRANSCORP HILTON
ABUJA**

8TH – 9TH AUGUST, 2017

Protocol

On behalf of the HMC, Management and Staff, Agencies of the Ministry, and the Local Organizing Committee, I take great pleasure in welcoming you all to the maiden SMART CITIES SUMMIT NIGERIA holding here at the Transcorp Hilton, Abuja.

The essence of this year's Summit is to enable stakeholders in the ICT sector to meet, brainstorm, proffer practical steps and solutions that will assist the relevant Ministries and Agencies of government in formulating a unified and national, robust Roadmap towards an effective smart cities initiative for Nigeria.

Just about 3 months ago, the Honourable Minister, Barrister Adebayo Shittu in his conference room inaugurated an Inter-Ministerial, Multi-Stakeholders Local Organizing Committee charged with the following responsibility:

- (a) To work towards the successful hosting of an International Smart Cities Summit Nigeria scheduled for 8th-9th of August, 2017 at the Transcorp Hilton, Abuja.
- (b) To assist the Federal Government in providing diverse and global input in developing a comprehensive framework to help public and private stakeholders to make informed decisions about Smart City investment strategies
- (c) To develop skills for evaluation and prioritization of this kind of projects, including solving difficulties regarding deployment and transferability, and quite a few more!

We have been able to achieve on some of these tasks, but quite frankly distinguished ladies and gentlemen, majority of them will be accomplished by the participation and recommendations of our various speakers, panelist, and contributions from our invited guests.

This summit will therefore provide an avenue to strengthen the existing relationship of the Ministry and its Agencies on one hand and the Industry

stakeholders on the other, for more efficient and effective service delivery as regard smart cities initiative.

It is also expected that this forum will promote better understanding of the enormous potentials in the smart city initiative towards job creation, crime prevention and control, alternative energy, intelligent transportation, automated homes and cities, e-government and e-health, fight against corruption, diversification of the economy, which is in the front burner of the present administration led by His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCON.

Statistics provide that about 48 percent of Nigerians are living in urban areas with the potential of a geometric increase as urbanization continues to happen in the city. With the number of people living in urban areas around the world predicted to rise to 6.4 billion by 2050; Nigerian cities like Lagos, Abuja, Kaduna, Enugu and Port Harcourt to mention but a few, need to get smart.

Governments have a central role to play in making towns and cities run effectively but with constrained budgets and a growing population, issues such as traffic, pollution, and public safety are becoming more difficult to manage.

Smart Cities initiative can re-route traffic around congestion in real time, automatically schedule repairs for failed infrastructure like faulty street lights or bridges, and intelligently manage energy use and pollution right across the environment. So, we are poised to adapt technology to improve sustainability, ease congestion, help citizens and attract new businesses to towns and cities by leveraging on ICTs. With technology, towns and cities in Nigeria can become Smart Cities, creating cleaner, safer and more effective environments for citizens.

For investors and business corporate entities here, this Summit will not only offer huge business opportunities for you to meet, interact and close deals with various local and international experts and investors, but it would also afford delegates the prospect to leverage and gain knowledge from invited guests and speakers at the summit.

It is on record that the Communications sector plays a strategic and pivotal role in the growth of many other sectors through its value-added services and as an overall enabler of socio economic development. The growth of the sector

however, has not translated into a corresponding impact on the economic growth and empowerment of the citizenry. It is my hope that this summit will focus on the sector's potentials for helping to address many of the problems that are currently bedeviling the country including issues associated with Smart cities etc.

In consonance with our desire to pursue all initiative in the ICT transformation including smart cities, we have planned the summit with a view to getting the buy-in of stakeholders in the Nigeria projects. To transform Nigeria using ICT, we need the buy-in of all the Excellencies of various States Governors, that's why we would demand the patriotic participation of all stakeholders.

The Summit will seek to re-position Nigeria's Communication Sector as one of the Key drivers of the nation's economy, in addition to achieving the following broad objectives;

- a. Defining a strategic road map for Government on Smart Cities
- b. Providing a common platform for sector stakeholders to share a common vision for Smart cities development in Nigeria, and
- c. Creating a forum for the Hon. Minister of Communication to Unveil his vision for the smart cities.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen, this crucial interaction represents a new vista in our collective drive to evolve a workable synergy and position our country in line with President Mohammadu Buhari's administration change agenda. It therefore calls for the re-examination of the status quo ante, so as to formulate new strategies for doing things differently towards realizing the vision of a new Nigeria.

Nigeria's growing commitment to leverage ICTs for transformation and growth will soon be matched by wins and gains for citizens. With the world fast embracing the fourth industrial revolution, Nigeria's challenge is to catch up in providing universal broadband across the nation. To succeed in making Nigerian homes, offices, schools and cities smart, we have to harness opportunities in exponential technologies. These technologies include artificial intelligence, robotics, drones, big data, block chain to mention but a few.

While the Ministry is taking the lead in the task of repositioning our economy by leveraging on ICTs, we cannot achieve this completely by ourselves. We will need the support and cooperation of the organized private sectors, civil society groups as well as all well-meaning Nigerians to unlock potentials of the ICT sector.

Nigeria needs smart cities that will link infrastructure and innovation to make cities more efficient, safe and conducive for all citizens. For us to be able to achieve this, we need the support and corporation of every Citizen, Ministry, Agency, State Government, and the Organized Private Sector to come on board with the Ministry and help us make Nigeria Smarter!

At this juncture, permit me to say a big THANK YOU to all the members of the Local Organizing Committee of the Smart Cities Summit Nigeria who have worked tirelessly hard in the past 3 months, our consultants Afritex Initiative, our partners and sponsors, and particularly to our Title Sponsors HUAWEI all of who has supported the Ministry in making this event a success.

Once again, on behalf of the Hon. Minister, I most sincerely welcome you here present, including all of you watching in from all over the world to this two-day Summit and implore you to maximize your participation by contributing fully to all the discussions with a view to moving the Smart Cities Initiatives of Nigeria to the next level.

Your Excellencies, our invited international guests, ladies and gentlemen, I wish us all a robust deliberation. Please enjoy the hospitality that is abound in our Federal Capital City, Abuja.

Thank you for coming and God bless you.