



MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS

PRESS CONFERENCE

DELIVERED BY

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HON. MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS

ON THE OCCASION OF

WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SOCIETY DAY (WTISD 2018)

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Protocol...

I count it a rare privilege to be afforded the opportunity to address this very important gathering. I wish to take the liberty of welcoming you all to this year's World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) celebration.

World Telecommunication Day has been celebrated annually on 17 May since 1969, marking the date of the founding of International Telecommunication Union ITU and the signing of the first international Telegraph Convention in 1865. It was formally instituted by the Plenipotentiary Conference in Malaga-Torremolinos in 1973. In recognition of ITU as the lead United Nations Agencies for ICTs, the World Summit on information Society (WSIS) in Tunis, November 2005, called on the United Nations Assembly to proclaim 17 May as World Information Society Day.

On 27th March 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 60/252, proclaiming 17 May as World Information Society Day to focus global attention annually on bringing the enormous benefits of the digital revolution in ICTs to the world's inhabitants. The ITU Plenipotentiary Conference in November 2006 welcomed the General Assembly's decision and amended Resolution 68 to invite the Council to adopt a specific theme for each World Telecommunication and Information Society Day

Today, Thursday May 17, the global community is celebrating the 2018 World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD). It is also marking the anniversary of the signing of the first International Telegraph Convention and the creation of the International Telecommunication Union

The purpose of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD) is to help raise awareness of the possibilities that the use of the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICT) can bring to societies and economies, as well as of ways to bridge the digital divide.

The theme for this year's celebration is, "**Enabling the positive use of Artificial Intelligence for All**" and will focus on the potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to accelerate the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In recent years there has been significant progress in AI technology, made possible by tremendous advances in contributing fields, such as Big Data, machine learning, computing power, storage capacity and cloud computing, among others. AI-based technologies are already emerging as a key component of proactive tools and applications being used to help people lead better lives by improving healthcare, education, finance, agriculture, transportation, and a wide range of other services.

The 2018 theme will allow ITU Membership and other key stakeholders to focus on the opportunities on how AI can help accelerate the achievement of the SDGs by 2030.

Market analysts predict that intelligent machines, programmed to think and reason like the human mind, will revolutionize health care in the very near future. In fact,

proponents of the transformative power of artificial intelligence usually give two examples: self-driving cars and the delivery of health care.

Artificial Intelligence, or AI, is taking center stage with a lot of impact on people's lives. AI's potential power is being exploited and developed at an unprecedented speed. AI brings us many opportunities and challenges. AI will greatly change our economy and society.

Artificial intelligence is a new frontier for the ICT and health sectors. As so often happens, the speed of technological advances has outpaced our ability to reflect these advances in sound public policies and address a number of ethical dilemmas. I have also observed the ubiquitous presence of smartphone even in the most resource-constrained settings. Schools may not have toilets or latrines. Children may not have shoes. But smart phones are ready to hand.

Artificial intelligence can give data a structure, and by detecting patterns, guide some informed policy decisions. By reducing the likelihood of human errors, they can contribute to more precise diagnoses and predictions of patient prognoses, and to enhanced patient safety just to mention a few.

Other applications currently under development include personal use of smart phones to communicate symptoms and obtain a diagnosis from the cloud. Enthusiastic developers see this as a way to cut down health care costs by keeping the worried well from flooding clinics and emergency rooms.

Consequently, the theme for WTISD -18 is in line with the ITU's work highlighting the technological developments that have facilitated the emergence of cutting edge technologies like AI, developing standards related to Data and identifying sources and uses of Data, including use of AI technologies for developing and monitoring improvements in information societies.

Activities undertaken by the ITU Membership will contribute towards building political momentum to embrace AI and leverage insights to identify new opportunities to creatively address sustainable development challenges.

The Secretary General of the ITU, **Mr. Houlin Zhao** called for a deliberate Action by member nations to ignite a global dedication to leveraging the insights provided by AI for new opportunities to address development challenges.

Artificial intelligence is no longer confined to labs, but can be seen in many instances in our lives. For example, an artificial intelligence system predicted that Mr. Donald Trump would win the elections in USA. Another great example of artificial intelligence in everyday life is a self-driving car that will see the roads and bring us to destinations without having to operate it. Further example is individual monitoring happening in his house on his smartphone on a real time bases.

This year's World Telecommunication and Information Society Day Celebration (WTISD-18) also marks the 153rd anniversary of ITU, therefore providing the opportunity to

reflect, exchange ideas and debate on the theme: **Enabling the positive use of Artificial Intelligence for All**", adopted by the ITU 2017 administrative Council towards formulating national positions on the issue and thereafter report back to ITU.

We are accustomed to seeing countless references to intelligent machines and robots in popular culture whether it is in movies, fiction books, or the like. But apart from computers and smartphone technology, nothing is more worthy of praise than our commitment to replicate human behaviors and thought pattern into machine that is the world of Artificial Intelligence.

It is the field that amalgamates several sciences and subject into one including biology, engineering, and psychology and was born out of the view that human behavior cannot only be accurately described, but also be recreated and imparted into lifeless beings such as machines and robots.

Although the field of AI is still evolving and is not without its fair share of challenges and problems, the subject today garners immense interest to experts from various fields both in terms of the possibilities for the advancement of human civilization, as well as its more sinister disruptive effects on society.

Government, through the Ministry of Communications is poised to support stakeholders in the Nigeria ICT ecosystem to create and strengthen a national AI ecosystem for sustainable development.

The ministry would also encourage cross-sector, cross-agency and cross-border collaboration, by developing unified standards for emerging AI sources and interoperability. Efforts would be to establish an AI driven decision making, service delivery and operational efficiency culture by developing national policies and strategies to promote AI, open data and Big data analytics as well as an unambiguous regulatory framework for enhancing data transparency and utility.

If 2017 was the year that social media disrupted democracies and humanoid robots learned to do backflips, 2018 will be the year that we begin scripting the rules of behavior for a new technology-embedded society with Artificial intelligence.

As governments increasingly rely on the internet for governance and delivery of social benefits, technology simultaneously holds the promise of transformation and potential for exclusion.

With many nations including Nigeria, banking on technology, robotics and artificial intelligence to reshape humanity, we need to encourage our youth and people to be digital literate and become multi-discipline in ICTs.

At the inflection of the 4th industrial revolution, there is an imminent need to integrate emerging technologies with the need of the nation and the world at large.

Government will engage in many crucial conversations around managing / exploring AI regimes. We will seek to bring industry leaders and academic experts to the forefront by identifying priorities and share lesson for sustainable growth.

We shall consider and explore pillars like

- Connectivity
- Digital inclusion
- Trade
- Security
- Innovation
- Policy

Consequently, we shall also consider policies around with business and civil society to provide universal digital access and benefits.

We will also examine challenges and prospects of AI to foster greater interoperability and security. Since government is leveraging the internet for delivery of social services, all lessons must be internalized to make this initiative more inclusive and plural.

For the realization of the true potential of the AI, many apprehensions around job loss and security of networks and ICT system need to be resolved. We will engage with internet communities and businesses to realize next steps in securing our nation critical networks infrastructure.

We will also examine the how the integration into the existing physical and digital world will now affect our lives, be it through the accessible services or the development of skills. As the foundations of the AI revolution are being laid, the question now what must we do to keep this momentum of transformation moving forward?

How will AI or robotics (innovation-led) economy of the future manage the crisis of job/employment loss especially for non-multi skill youth? As the internet becomes a primary vessel for innovation and commerce what regulatory changes are necessary for the transference of knowledge, goods and services? We will explore options for boosting growth and economic productivity among ICT hubs as well as chart a course ahead for the future.

I am certain that innovation is the integral to connecting more people that currently lack access to the internet. We must develop cost-effective technological solutions to solve real world problems. Government has taken several steps through domestic policies and legislation as well as multilateral cooperation and collaboration to fight cybercrime in the country.

We are all living witnesses to the phone revolution, how it has revealed that technology is a catalyst for financial and social inclusion. I believe, AI will enable a ubiquitously inclusive Nigeria society.

Reports have shown that the advent of the 4th industrial revolution presents both promise and peril in the workforce/labor market. On the hand, the nature of work will become more flexible, opening up employment opportunities for people who cannot work the traditional 9 to 5 Model due to personal constraints on the other hand, the rise of AI and automation are slated to decimate job profiles favored by high skilled individuals. We will explore ways to capture the opportunities and meet the challenges posed by the fourth industrial revolution in the labor market.

The Ministry is committed to increase broadband penetration to 30% and accelerate telephone penetration especially in rural areas, and connect rural communities to economic opportunities through improved infrastructure including ICT, which will evidently help the people contribute and benefit from outcomes of the ICT strategic roadmap. Governments at all levels will prioritize deployment of technology to strengthen institutions in the country.

Riding on the crest of the successes the country recorded in the South Korea-hosted International Telecommunications Union (ITU) Telecom World 2017, we are planning to even do more for the 2018 edition of ITU Telecom World holding in September this year.

The ministry has made strong political commitment to accelerating the promotion of gender equality, which the country considers as a factor for sustainable development in the lead up to a knowledge-based economy by 2020.

It is not lost on me that while ICTs can bind helped build and open equitable societies, governments' world over are increasingly becoming insecure about the destabilizing potential of the internet. This is apparent from the many instances where internet services and access has been the first casualty of political unrest. We will also reflect on the balancing rights and freedoms with legitimate security interests and discuss the lack of hierarchy among offline and online rights.

ICT and AI have already deeply affected the ways we labor and relate in profound ways. With technical innovators calling for human beings to evolve so as to match the increasing capacities of AI, it has become pertinent that we as humans contemplate what we want to evolve into and what we want the future of our work, and our world to look like.

This will require us to re-think the how and why of technological innovations and design human development methodologies that enables us to evolve in alignment with our aspiration for each other, our planet and ourselves. I charge you all to create process

of generating, developing and communicating new ideas and solutions with respect to the pillars. Have and focus on having an in-depth conversation on AI to increase the interaction between the subject experts and industry.

We will encourage and provide stakeholders with differing perspectives, facts and opinion on AI. We will encourage and support young entrepreneurs in this field. We will aspire to highlight their work. Government will collaborate with private sector to resolve issues around AI. Government will ensure that infrastructure and sources of funding are developed for young tech savvy people. We will evolve policies to facilitate investment and innovation in AI.

The Ministry of Communications is committed to forward-looking policies to enable citizens, businesses, societies to prosper, improving lives and livelihoods, while mitigating the possible adverse effects that can accompany economic change. This we are sure will encourage investment and promote development of digital economies, while building an inclusive digital future for its citizens.

As the world's leading technology companies are competing with each other to show the world their prowess through pioneering AI; as efforts are being made to deify AI to semi-god status, robots can some day gain enough intelligence to challenge the might of man. Though it might be in the future, we might lose our sleep on it this very night.

We can be confident about Nigeria's future though there are dark clouds around us. Because of our prudence in the good years, we have enough resources to see us through the lean years. We will continue to leverage ICTs in all the sectors. We can create a brighter future and a better home with more exciting opportunities for all.

In doing so, we must be prepared for the challenges which will test the Nigeria Spirit. The future will not always be smooth sailing. The Nigeria Spirit that has energised us for the past years will help us to overcome adversities to reach new heights in the sector.

We are collaborating with the National Assembly to enact a holistic law to criminalize breach of the Executive Orders 003 and 005 on Local Content in Information Technology. The Executive Orders are designed to give local software industry and practitioners chance to improve their skills and products with minimal stifling competition from foreign firms.

So let us celebrate this year's World Telecommunications and Information Society Day with confidence and joy. **As stakeholder**, let each of us renew our pledge to do our utmost to tap the power of the ICTs and technology to build a more creative, connected, and gracious Nigeria.

As the world commemorates the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, I call on all stakeholders, government at all levels in collaboration with other concerned bodies to put up a stiff measure that would address the various ongoing questionable acts taking place on the internet and in the sector including propaganda, fraud, and all forms of immorality.

You will recall that, since I assumed office as a Federal Minister of Communications, the Ministry has been organizing a Ministerial Retreat as part of strategy to build synergy between ICT stakeholders and to promote effective performance in the sector, in this context therefore, I invite you to participate actively at the Retreat scheduled to hold again this year from 25th – 26th May, 2018 at the University of Ibadan, Oyo State.

I want to say that everybody has a role to play in making this society a better place to live, technologically. Hence, the need to be artificial intelligence focused on what we bring to our society the much-desired development.

I want to charge parents to allow their children and wards to take coding classes and buy them educational toys that can contribute to the spirit of invention and creativity in them. Don't throw away those old or damaged appliances in your houses. Instead use them to enhance the creativity and ingenuity in the children.

Private sector should take the lead in the field of artificial intelligence, sponsoring of research activities in these areas should be likened to oil exploration. The field of artificial intelligence presents a crucial building block for furthering the human cause from its use in self-driving cars and medical diagnosis to strategic planning and game theory and optical character recognition. However, given the unprecedented technological unemployment it can bring to existing jobs and structures, organizations need to invest in agile infrastructure that can adapt to the growing use of the technology to balance the disequilibrium due to disruptions in the economy.

Government will include artificial intelligence and coding in our educational agenda. Government will not only extend the focus on science technology engineering and mathematics (STEM) for Artificial intelligence science technology engineering and mathematics (AISTEM). With this, our youth would be put to the right path as ICT and AI would have deeply affected the ways we labour and relate with one another in the fourth industrial revolution era. The cars, satellites, computers, planes and phones of today were built by children of yesterday those of tomorrow would be built by children of today.

I wish you all a Happy **WORLD TELECOMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION SOCIETY DAY CELEBRATION.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Gentlemen of the press, I thank you all for your attention