

KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY ALHAJI YAYALE AHMED, SECRETARY TO GOVERNMENT OF THE FEDERATION VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE TO THE NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS' FORUM ON NICEP ORGANIZED BY GALAXY BACKBONE IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NATIONAL ECONOMIC COUNCIL & NIGERIA GOVERNORS' FORUM ON MAY 27 & 28, 2009

PROTOCOL

It is with great pleasure that I speak with you on this epoch making day right from the comfort of my office at the Federal Secretariat Complex. This feat has been made possible by the infinite capacity and capability of Information and Communication and Technology (ICT).

There is no doubt that technology is changing the world around us at a remarkable pace. There is hardly any sphere of life that has not been touched by the dramatic changes that have taken place in ICT over the past 10 to 15 years. Societies around the world have rapidly developed, leveraging ICT as an enabler. Globally, governments of both developed and developing economies have been able to positively affect the lives of their people through the effective use of ICTs. The major reason for this is that such governments understand the place of ICT as a tool for reforming their economies and an enabler of effective solutions for national development.

In this regard, the Federal Government in 2006 incorporated Galaxy Backbone Plc as a wholly independent company with the primary mandate of setting up and operating a unified ICT infrastructure platform. This platform is aimed at addressing the connectivity, transversal and other technology imperatives for Ministries, Departments, Agencies (MDAs) of the Government. The company was also charged with operating a nationwide backbone to help facilitate digital inclusion of underserved areas and rural communities towards the realization of the MDG goals.

Galaxy Backbone in fulfilling its mandate is currently implementing the National Information, Communication and Education Program (NICEP). NICEP is an ICT initiative of the Federal Government for the accelerated provision of connectivity for broadband internet, data, voice and video communications to rural areas and under-served communities including health and educational institutions at state levels.

Indeed, the 3rd Public Sector ICT Infrastructure Forum tagged National Stakeholders' Forum on NICEP hosted by Galaxy Backbone Plc in partnership with the National Economic Council and Nigeria Governors' Forum is epochal as this will be the first time in the history of our great country that the Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) would be delivering a keynote address to such an important national forum using a video conference facility. At this juncture, I must commend Galaxy Backbone for this wonderful initiative which is a reflection of

the quality of its leadership. I must also commend the partnership between the National Economic Council, Nigeria Governors' Forum and Galaxy Backbone that has resulted in this event and urge other public institutions to emulate such collaboration if this administration is to deliver on its promises.

This forum coming at this period especially with global economic crisis provides an opportunity to enlighten State Governments on the developmental opportunities represented by NICEP as the Federal and State Governments collectively seek alternative ways of leapfrogging the country in to the 21st century knowledge economy. In doing so, care must be taken to ensure that the benefits of ICT do not bypass our underserved communities. In this regard, the NICEP provides a critical foundation for the attainment of the MDGs and the key objectives of the 7-point Agenda and Vision 20: 2020 and would assist State Governments to facilitate the digital inclusion of underserved communities, improve human capacity development and deliver beneficial e-services to its citizens.

In conclusion, I call on State Governments and the Federal Capital Territory Authority to take full advantage of the investment made by the Federal Government in NICEP to enjoy the benefits of NICEP which include providing digital access to citizens in all locations; improve quality of education and healthcare; support growth of internally generated revenue; enhance government to citizen interaction; cost control and management as well as employment generation and poverty alleviation.

Thank you & God bless you all.