

Address by the Special Guest of Honour Amb. Baba Gana Kingibe, Secretary to the Government of the Federation, on the occasion of the 1st Public Sector ICT Infrastructure Forum co-hosted by the Office of the Secretary to the Government of the Federation and Galaxy Backbone Plc.

Protocols

It is my pleasure to address this important occasion of the 1st Public Sector ICT Infrastructure Forum.

The fact that Information and Communications Technology has become a major driver of Public Sector performance and national development is no longer in contention. It is thus incumbent on the leadership of every nation to deliberately pursue technology adoption strategies that will enable the achievement of the twin objectives just mentioned.

One of the early observations made in the life of this administration was the huge expenditure made in Information and Communications Technology projects across the Public Sector. Another observation was the significant amount of overlap in functions among the various Government organizations involved in the ICT sector.

It against the background of these observations that this administration decided that there was an urgent need for a more strategic and coordinated approach to the acquisition and deployment of ICTs in the Public Sector.

This has led to the issuance of a circular from my office containing guidelines for the procurement of connectivity and other ICT infrastructure services by Government organization from Galaxy Backbone, a public enterprise of the Federal Government.

This model of centralized procurement of ICT services will not be without its teething and operational challenges, but this Government is convinced that the benefits far outweigh these challenges and is thus resolute in implementing this model based on the guidelines contained in my earlier circular. This circular spells out the mandate of Galaxy Backbone and has been

communicated across the Public Service and all concerned are required to comply strictly.

While Galaxy has the mandate to provide connectivity and other infrastructure services to the Public Sector, the company has the responsibility to ensure cost effectiveness, quality and reliability in the provision of these services and it is in this regard that I will shortly be constituting a Services Oversight Committee that will serve as the Operational Interface between the Government and the company.

Government has made unprecedented investments through Galaxy Backbone in providing a pervasive nationwide ICT infrastructure platform that can serve all Government MDAs. It thus becomes imperative that all cross-cutting systems and solutions in the Public Sector must be deployed on this platform. I expected the MDAs concerned to work with the Services Oversight Committee and Galaxy in realizing this critical foundation for e-Government.

Analysis of the 2007 Federal Budget indicates that a total of about N12billion was appropriated for ICT projects and services and a further N4billion was provided outside the budget from donors and other sources.

It cannot be said that these expenditures realised commensurate gains in governance and national development and it is this reason that a key expectation this administration is that the operations of Galaxy Backbone will lead to more cost effective ICT service delivery.

A further analysis of ICT expenditure in the last few years reveals several instances of expensive duplication of procurements. This can be traced to ignorance of existing infrastructure caused by lack of cohesion in planning and approval of projects.

This administration is characterized by thoroughness and frugality and consequently requires that all planned expenditure on ICT must first of all take cognizance of existing infrastructure and systems and convince Government of the absolute necessity to make the desired procurements. Inter-ministerial or inter-agency rivalry that results in duplication of expenditure is wasteful and will not be tolerated. I hereby urge the Budget Office of the Federation and Bureau of Public Procurement to always require that MDAs provide detailed

information relating to proposed expenditures, capital projects or recurrent, and collaborate with organizations such as Galaxy to ensure that these in any way do not duplicate existing or reusable assets.

As the Government deepens its usage of ICT, security becomes a major consideration and so it becomes important that critical information cannot be stored or transmitted through unsecured and unprotected 3rd party providers. This is another major reason why the Government insists that all Public Institutions must procure their network and internet access through the service platform operated by Galaxy.

Though the company is still in the early stages of its existence I expect that it will make the provision of secure services a priority and collaborate with the security community in this regard.

Government is also reviewing the report of the Task Force on the Restructuring of Government Institutions/Organisations in the Telecommunications and ICT Sector in Nigeria. This could also result in further significant changes that are aimed at streamlining and strengthening this sector to ensure greater contribution to national development.

The infrastructure and services provided by Galaxy Backbone are expected support the realization of the Seven-Point Agenda of this administration. Particular emphasis will be placed of the need to support Human Capital Development, Sustainable Growth, Law and Order and Infrastructure Development.

Nigeria still has to tackle some of the issues that developing countries all over the world have to deal with – ensure distribution of scarce resources to address developmental challenges and also equitable access to economic opportunities and qualitative education.

The infrastructure and services provided by Galaxy Backbone is expected to support the realization of the Seven-Point Agenda of this administration. Particular emphasis will be placed on the need to support Human Capital Development, Sustainable Growth, Law and Order and Infrastructure Development.

In particular the human element must not be forgotten in the provision of ICT infrastructure as this is critical to the attainment of the objectives of Government. Thus, substantial capacity building in ICTs must be offered by Galaxy and other relevant parastatals to equip Public Servants at all levels with the skills needed in transforming administration and service delivery in the Public Sector.

This administration also seeks to promote partnerships among organizations within and outside the government involved in socio-economic development and believes that ICTs offer a veritable tool to support our developmental objectives particularly in education and rural development. Thus, I encourage state governments and other entities to seek ways of collaborating with Galaxy to benefit from the network infrastructure being deployed by the company.

Furthermore, the success of ICT in the Public Sector will have the ripple effect not only on the economy, but also improve business confidence in our country making us a more attractive destination for prospective investors.

It is my sincere hope that the combination of Government's investments and renewed focus on ICTs for service delivery, educational and community development will contribute to the realization of the 7-Point Agenda and Vision 20 2020.

I thank you all and God Bless Nigeria.