

Keynote and welcome

Protocol

Introduction and thanks

First let me thank all those who have made this event possible, notably our friends and colleagues at the Federal Ministry of Communication Technology here in Nigeria and at NCC (not only Dr. Juwah, but also especially Lolia Emakpore, Nnena Ukoha, and Ibrahim Galadima) whose tireless work, and in-country support have made this event possible. Without them, quite simply, none of us would be here. The CTO is a membership organisation, and all members rely heavily on the support of other members *for each other*. This is Nigeria's gift to all of us here; we must be responsible in how we value and use this gift.

I would also like, right at the beginning of the conference, to thank all of my team at the CTO for pulling together an outstanding programme. It is invidious to pick out individuals in what has undoubtedly been a team effort, but I would especially like you all to thank Carly Wilkinson, who has developed the programme, and has stepped up to take the lead in making this event happen since the unfortunate resignation of Nigel Kay who led our events division and came with me here to Abuja in July.

It would also be very remiss of me not to thank our many sponsors and supporters for all of their contributions. These are truly appreciated – and one of my own personal tasks this week is to encourage them all actually to become members of the CTO – so they can benefit even further from engagement with all of our other members!

Keynote

Distinguished participants, my colleagues do not usually let me loose in our conferences to say substantive words about the themes we are addressing. My role is usually left to be that of trying to appear gracious and appreciative on behalf of the CTO, as I hope I have just done.

However, over the next few days we address critically important themes, and I specifically wanted to say a few words to challenge us all now, at the beginning of this event. Quite simply, we cannot deliver on the title of this Forum, “Innovation through Broadband” **unless we actually have broadband**. Many of the CTO’s members have less than 5% of their population connected to the Internet; my own country, the UK, still has 17% of its households not connected. For those of you from the corporate sector, this is indeed a great market opportunity! However, the case I want to put before you is that, more importantly than merely the economic agenda, is a moral agenda. These technologies are so important, so powerful, so life-changing, that we fail our brothers and sisters if we do not ensure that they too have access to broadband.

There are three simple things I would like you to take away from what I say this morning:

First, the expansion of ICTs over the last decade has made the world a more unequal place. Put simply, these technologies are hugely powerful. Those who have access to them, and know how to use them, can benefit immensely. But those who do not have access, who only have an old style mobile ‘phone, who cannot afford the costs of connectivity, are becoming increasingly disadvantaged. This is not only a moral agenda, but also a very practical social and political one,

because sooner or later, the disadvantaged will – and I have no doubt about this – seek to redress the balance by taking action into their own hands, as we see across so many parts of the world today.

We must, and again there has to be no doubt about this, ensure that **everyone has access to the Internet**. I am delighted to see that we have a session specifically on women and children at this Forum, and that (for a change) we do indeed have a distinguished woman on the platform here at the start. But this is not enough. As most of you know, I champion the use of ICTs by people with disabilities – at least 10% of the world's population; we have to do more for them, so that they too can benefit from the use of ICTs. **Access for all is therefore my first point.**

Second, we need to develop new models through which such access can be provided at an affordable price to those who do not currently have access. This is an immense challenge. Put simply, the market will deliver solutions for many of our peoples. We must therefore ensure that regulatory environments enable the market to deliver for the greatest number possible. Regulators and companies must work together in an environment of *trust* to ensure that this happens. However, the market will not deliver for everyone – for those living in the most peripheral rural areas, for the elderly, for those with severe disabilities. Here, I believe passionately that we need to craft innovative multi-stakeholder partnerships to ensure such delivery. These need to involve governments, the private sector, civil society, international organisations and bilateral donors in providing solutions that will serve the needs of everyone in our societies. This is not easy. Everyone talks 'partnerships' but few ICT4D partnerships have truly been successful. It

is here that the CTO can offer much in terms of partnership brokering, and working with all of our members to deliver such partnerships practically on the ground.

As many of you will know, broadband is one of the CTO's six priority areas, and it is highly appropriate that we are here in Nigeria shortly after they have published their national broadband plan. We are very pleased to be working with the ITU and the Commonwealth Secretariat in helping those Commonwealth countries that do not already have broadband strategies and policies in place, so to do. In this connection, I am very pleased to be able to announce that the German Government, through BMZ and GIZ, has last week agreed to provide financial support for some of this work, and that in the months ahead we will be co-operating initially with the government of Sierra Leone to help them develop strategies to roll out the Internet and broadband to the 98% of the country that does not currently have access.

This emphasis on partnerships is also why I am so delighted that the CTO has joined the Alliance for Affordable Internet, and that they have privileged us by launching this very important initiative here in Abuja.

My second point, is thus the need for carefully crafted multi-stakeholder partnerships to help deliver affordable broadband for *all* those for whom the market itself will not deliver solutions.

But third, providing broadband connectivity is only a beginning. If we do not work *with* the poorest and most marginalised in our societies, truly to understand their needs, and then develop solutions that will be of explicit benefit to them, as much as to the privileged rich and elites, then

the divisions within our societies will only increase yet further. This is why this Forum focuses on “Innovation *through* Broadband”. These innovations must not just be concerned with how to make yet greater profits from the telecommunications sector, or for governments to raise yet more revenue through levies and spectrum auctions – however important these are. No. This is only part of the story. We are simply failing in our duties as responsible citizens, and indeed decent human beings, if we do not enable everyone to benefit from broadband: the young orphaned girl, bringing up her younger brother in the slums; the widow, gleaning an existence in the forests far from the capital city; the child soldier who had his arms lopped off and is now begging on the streets...

My three messages are, I hope clear:

- **Enabling everyone to have access**
- **The importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships to serve the most marginalised, and**
- **Working with the poor and marginalised to enable them to develop solutions that are fundamentally in their interests**

Distinguished colleagues and friends. My final thanks are to you for being here. We have a packed programme of inspirational speakers – I often think our events are far too packed! Take time to talk with each other. Use Wednesday morning to hold bilateral meetings and engage in productive discussions. We are the privileged. We are the elite – whether we like it or not. We therefore have immense responsibilities. The CTO has brought us all together. But this is not enough. I want every one of you to make a commitment – here and now in this room – not just to listen, not just to speak, **but to act**. The time is almost too

late. The inequalities generated by ICTs have almost become too big for us to overcome. Now is the time to make a difference. Now is the time to turn rhetoric into reality.