Text of a Press Conference in Celebration of the World International Telecommunication and Information Society Day by the Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD) Held on the 17th May, 2019 at CITAD Conference Hall

The World International Telecommunication and Information Society Day was initially called The World Telecommunication Day' to commemorate the founding of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) which was started in 1865.

The main objective of the day is to raise global awareness of societal changes brought about by the internet and new technologies. It also aims to help reduce the digital divide.

In November 2005, the World Summit on the Information Society asked the United Nations General Assembly to declare 17h May, as world information society day for showing importance to the information and communication technology and the issues related to the information society raised by World Summit on information Society. The General Assembly adopted a resolution (A/RES/60/252) in March 2006 stipulating that World Information Society Day shall be celebrated every year on 17 May. The first World Information Society Day took place on Wednesday, 17 May 2006.

While we join the entire world and the information society in particular to celebrate the day, we at CITAD wish to draw the attention of all stakeholders in the country to use the day to reflect on the huge challenges of digital divide and ICT marginalization in our country.

While the world is moving to bridge the standardization gap with programmes aim to facilitate the efficient participation of developing countries in Information Technology Union's standards-making process, to disseminate information about existing standards, we in Nigeria are far left behind in terms of accessibility, availability and penetration levels of the internet and its usage. This is even worse when it comes to access and use of the internet by women and girls who face many obstacles related to culture, level education and gender norms etc.

Therefore, if the country will continue to move in this direction, without developing quick and effective, pragmatic approach towards solving the problems around access to information and the internet through creation of a robust mechanism of bridging the digital divide, the country will remain under developed and thus, our economic and other social problems will further increase.

Our Call

In this context we will like call on government at all levels to ensure that:

1. There is internet policy on ground that is aimed at solving the digital problems the country in facing today

2. An enabling environment is provided for actors willing to contribute in the sector to help mitigate the problems.

3. Ensure that citizens have fair access to data free of monopoly of the internet service providers

4. All government agencies must not only be ICT friendly but stick to use of ICTs in their day to day operations and that should be made compulsory on all staff to have the basic knowledge and skill of ICT.

5. Prepare to address the issue of gender base violence online which is a major factor that promotes digital marginalization of women.

IT Private Sector

ICT companies working in the country should:

1. Include targeting corporate social responsibility projects towards educating and training the citizens in the area of ICT

2. Support CSOs that are working in the areas of ICTs to promote campaigns and awareness creation among the citizens in need to migrate from the analogue behaviour to digital.

3. Reduce high cost of data and facilities especially in the rural area

CSOs

The civil society organizations in the country should:

1. Intensify campaign on the need for the citizens to adopt and push t access and use internet in their endeavours

2. Include in ICTs driven activities in their works

Conclusion

Access to information is a right and while digital technologies offers prospects to make this a reality, there are still obstacles being erected by governments and business organizations to limit. The governments and other stakeholders should work together to leverage these opportunities in our move to push the country forward through making our youth attained their potentials using the instrument of digital technologies

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