

## **COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE E-GOVERNMENT SUMMIT 2021, WHICH WAS HELD ON WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 29, AT THE SHERATON HOTEL TOWERS, IKEJA, LAGOS**

The Nigeria eGovernment Summit 2021, with the theme: eGovernment Adoption in Nigeria: Opportunity and Challenges, attracted industry stakeholders and government agencies. Issues around the use of technology to drive governance and making government services accessible to the citizens were discussed at the summit and solutions were proffered.

The eGovernment Summit was organised by DigiServe Newark Services, in partnership with the Association of Licensed Telecoms Operators of Nigeria (ALTON), the Association of Telecoms Companies of Nigeria (ATCON), the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) and the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS).

After the welcome address by the convener, who is the Executive Chairman of DigiServe Newark Services, industry stakeholders gave their goodwill messages, followed by keynote speeches.

At this year's summit, four different panel sessions were created and each session had its panel chair and members, drawn from across industry stakeholders and government agencies. Each panel presented lead papers that were centred around the theme of the summit and each panel discussed the lead papers that were presented and solutions preferred. The audience was allowed to ask questions and make contributions, all through the four-panel sessions. The panellists were able to give satisfactory responses to each question and concerns raised by the audience, during the panel sessions.

### **Observations**

Participants at the 2021 eGovernment Summit, raised some observations and concerns about eGovernment adoption in Nigeria.

Some of the observations and concerns raised include The challenges militating against the adoption of technology for easy delivery of government services to the people. Representatives from the Federal Inland Service (FIRS), for instance, identified the lack of speedy revision and implementation of legislation to support the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) of government in achieving its target; The inability to deal with multiple vendors and systems; High cost of procuring and maintaining technology investment; Low adoption of technology, and less effective follow-up and enforcement measures among others.

Representatives from the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), identified some barriers to investment, such as multiple taxation and regulation, arbitrary pricing of bottleneck resources like Right-of-Way (RoW), time-consuming and unfriendly approval processes, among others. These factors, they said, discourage investments in digital infrastructure and reduce the speed at which telecoms operators provide people with access to seamless digital service infrastructure for eGovernance and other services. The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), also identified the lack of access to Right of Ways (RoWs), as a result of the high cost of RoWs imposed by some state governments. They decried a situation where some states still charge exorbitantly for RoWs, while others like Jigawa and Kano states

are giving free access of RoWs to InfraCos, and some other states have maintained the agreed rate of N145 per linear metre charge.

During the panel sessions, participants also identified insufficient businesses in Nigeria that should have attracted revenue to the government, through taxes. Participants also identified insufficient IP addresses to businesses, thereby depriving FIRS of tracking businesses that are taxable to generate more money for the government.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were arrived at from the keynote speeches and panel sessions:

1. Government should adopt emerging technologies that will help it to deliver its services seamlessly to the Nigerian citizens.
2. Government should adopt local content development and build local capacity while building security around government activities to protect online activities.
3. Participants stressed the need for the private sector to collaborate with the government to create awareness for IT development in Nigeria.
4. Nigeria must develop businesses that are taxable to grow revenue generation.
5. Participants recommended the issuance of IP addresses to businesses to enable FIRS to track such businesses and tax them to generate more income for the government.
6. FIRS advised Nigerians to take advantage of tax palliatives offered by FIRS, through its TaxProMax solution, to boost their businesses.
7. There should be training and re-training of government workers at the local, state and federal levels to make them think differently and be more productive in managing government businesses.
8. Government should develop sufficient data of citizens to identify those who are capable and eligible to pay their taxes.
9. Government should use Artificial Intelligence technology to develop enough data of people, especially those involved in e-Commerce and online businesses, to tax them and generate more money for the government.
10. Federal government needs synergy to develop a proper tax system that will generate money for the government.
11. Nigeria needs robust connectivity to drive automation and digitisation of government services that will increase efficiency and reduce corruption in government circles.
12. Government must provide enabling environment for eGovernance to thrive, through the provision of physical infrastructure that will support the nationwide connectivity process.
13. Government should ensure that all 774 LGAs in Nigeria, are digitally connected, to enhance e-government activities in rural communities.

This year's eGovernment Summit, which started at 9 am, came to a close at about 5 pm and participants were satisfied with the quality of presentations and issues discussed at the various panel sessions.

It is expected that the organisers of the summit will ensure that the resolutions reached during the summit would be presented to the government at all levels, for proper implementation of eGovernment services in Nigeria.