A COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE NIGERIA E-GOVERNMENT SUMMIT 2020, ORGANISED BY DIGISERVE ON TUESDAY NOVEMBER 17, 2020 AT THE SHERATON HOTEL AND TOWERS, IKEJA, LAGOS

INTRODUCTION

The annual Nigeria eGovernment Summit is focused on policies, strategies, solutions and technologies that would be required to achieve accelerated eGovernment deployment at the federal, state and local governments' levels, and to make government's online presence felt by all Nigerians. This year's summit, which had the theme: COVID-19: Impetus for Accelerated eGovernment Adoption, focused on how governments at all levels could leverage technology to drive governance and address the challenges posed by COVID-19 pandemic that devastated global economies.
The Nigeria eGovernment Summit 2020, attracted government officials from the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), Lagos Water Corporation, Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Galaxy Backbone, Nigeria Communications Satellite Limited (NIGCOMSAT), Lagos State Government, Akwa-Ibom State Governor and several private sector organisations like VDT Communications, GMT Energy Resources, Upperlink, eStream, Medallion, Globacom, 9mobile, Nigeria Internet Registration Association (NiRA), Association of Telecoms Companies of Nigeria (ATCON), Association of Licensed Telecoms Operators of Nigeria (ALTON), Pan African Towers Limited, Whogohost, Rack Centre, Anchor Telecoms, MainOne Cedarview, and Broadbased Communications.
The summit was declared open by the Deputy Governor of Lagos State, Dr. Obafemi Hamzat, who represented the Governor of Lagos State, Babajide Sanwo-Olu.
In his welcome address, the Executive Chairman, DigiServe, Mr. Lanre Ajayi, explained that the government could be more effective when it leverages technology to drive governance. He assured Nigerians that the government could address the myriad of challenges facing the country, if it leverages emerging technology that is at its beck and call. He advised the government to adopt the use of technology that would eliminate physical contact between government officials and the citizens in every government transaction, while insisting that physical contact during transactions can breed corruption in government circles.
A special addition to this year's summit, was the invitation of experts from countries where eGovernment has been adjudged to be successful. The countries, which include Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa, Egypt, including Nigeria, give country specific case studies of eGovernment deployment in their various regions.

Observations from keynote speeches and goodwill messages

The following points were raised during keynote speeches and goodwill messages:

1. Technology adoption and implementation can enhance governance and can address the myriad of challenges facing Nigeria as a country.

2. Effective application and use of technology will eliminate physical contact between government officials and the citizens in every government transaction, thereby reducing corruptive tendencies among government officials.

3, Government has a role to play in leveraging technology to enhance transparency and accountability in governance.

4. Early adoption of technology can help government agencies to leapfrog and stay above the adverse effect of COVID-19, while the pandemic lasts.

5. The public sector still lags behind in the adoption and deployment of technologies.

6. Government can improve its revenue generation through technology adoption and implementation.

7. eGovernment will help government agencies and organizations to carry out their businesses in the most profitable way with less cost.

8. Nigeria is still ranked among countries with low eGovernment strategies and implementation.

9. With technology, the government can improve the educational system and healthcare delivery system of the country.

10. The spread of COVID-19 brought to the fore the significance of technology in managing crisis situations.

11. Nigeria must promote an enabling environment that promotes small businesses like the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

12. NCC in the last five years, in collaboration with industry stakeholders, has increased broadband services from 6 per cent in 2015 to 45.43 per cent as at September 2020; increased the number of mobile subscribers to reach over 205 million as at September 2020, with an increase in teledensity to 106.62 per cent, using a population base of 200 million. It has also increased the contribution of telecoms to GDP, reaching 14.3 per cent, which translates to N2.3 trillion Naira for that quarter. It has increased in the number of internet users with over 150 million active users, out of which, 80 million access the the internet, using high speed broadband. NCC has also increased the adoption of technologies.

13. Lagos State government partnered technology companies, especially tech startups to develop technology solutions for the state. The government was able to leverage technology to manage the spread of COVID-19 in Lagos by creating a database for monitoring the number of rising cases within the state.

Observations from the various panel sessions

The following key points were raised during discussions at the various panel sessions:

1. FIRS, in 2012, introduced the e-Tax Pay, after it had earlier introduced the Tax Identification Number (TIN), which gives companies and businesses, unique identification, as soon as they register their businesses. e-Tax makes businesses pay their taxes online, make payment easier, and also blocks loopholes in financial losses for government.

2. Galaxy Backbone is playing a critical role in hosting the websites of various government agencies, and developing local content for government agencies. It has automated its facilities and it is fully ready to drive the Nigerian digital transformation dream.

3. The South African government is leveraging technology to serve the people of South Africa, by first putting some standardization and automation processes in place.

4. Poor infrastructure across African countries is affecting the fast rollout of digital services on the continent.

5. Government agencies and institutions in Africa are fast driving Africa's eGovernment strategies.

6. The reduction in Right of Way (RoW) charges by some state governments in Nigeria will further drive telecoms growth and promote eGovernance in the country.

7. Telecom operators and stakeholders in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector, did well in providing the infrastructure, with which Lagos and other state governments, including the federal government, used in tackling the COVID-19 pandemic spread.

8. The 3,000km metro fibre connectivity, which is the first phase of the Lagos telecoms infrastructure project rollout, has removed overhead cost for telecoms service providers, thus enhancing faster deployment of broadband services in the state.

9. 5G network rollout will be beneficial in supporting eGovernment services and faster rollout of broadband services to rural, underserved and unserved communities.

10. The introduction of e-Tax by the Federal Inland Revenue Services (FIRS) is helping government to generate more money from tax collections with reduced overhead cost.

11. Local carriers that were licensed to provide data services, voice services and other ancillary services, are doing great in supporting eGovernment services across the country.

12. The need to patronise .ng domain name was raised and Nigerians were encouraged to see the need to register their businesses with .ng domain name, which is Nigeria's Identity in the cyberspace, rather than registering foreign domain names like .co.uk, .com and .co.za.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made at the end of the Nigeria eGovernment Summit 2020:

1. Government should empower SMEs through the creation of stimulus and incentives that will encourage SMEs to do more in driving the country's digital transformation agenda. If SMEs are empowered, they will grow their businesses, employ Nigerians and will be able to pay their taxes as at when due.

2. Government should adopt the use of technology that will eliminate physical contact between government officials and the citizens in every government transaction, as physical contact during transactions can breed corruption in government circles.

3. Early adoption and implementation of technology will improve efficiency in government businesses, accountability, and improve revenue collected across government agencies.

4. Participants called for proper implementation of eGovernment strategies that will deliver better public data services to citizens, as well as efficient delivery of public services. They expressed the view that eGovernment would help government agencies and organizations to carry out their businesses in the most profitable way at reduced cost.

5. African governments should expand their infrastructure base to further drive eGovernance in their respective countries, while also dwelling much on training and re-training of government officials who are at the forefront of eGovernance in different African countries.

6. Governments must begin to look at the long term gains in telecoms and continue to maintain reduced pricing in Right of Way charges that will promote faster telecoms development.

7. ICT deployment has enhanced eGovernment strategies by contributing so much to GDP, but adequate measures must be put in place to safeguard the Nigerian cyberspace, in order to checkmate the possible rise in cyber insecurity that could lead to huge financial losses.

8. Government should invest more in ICT to drive various eGovernment initiatives.

9. Nigeria is in a new norm where technology is driving government and organisational processes. There is therefore a need for all Nigerians to leverage technology, and the government must also leverage technology to provide eGovernment services.

10. Government must see telecoms infrastructure as critical national infrastructure, and therefore do everything possible to protect telecoms infrastructure across the country.

11. The reduction of Right of Way (RoW) charges by some state governments, is commendable. Other state governments must do the same without further delay to enable speedy rollout of telecoms infrastructure across the country.

12. Nigeria needs more codes for payment verifications, just like the *829 code for payment verifications that was introduced by FIRS.

13. More states of the federation need to install ccTV cameras on roads like what the Lagos State government is doing, in order to properly manage road traffic violations.

14. Participants recommended that various government agencies should roll out more infrastructure that will enable them digitise the Nigerian economy.

15. Government agencies must deploy technology solutions that can synchronize government processes in order to avoid duplication of government projects.

16. Nigerians must discard fears about the perceived health risk in 5G network rollout, and begin to see the huge benefits of the planned 5G network rollout.

17. Given the importance of the annual Nigeria eGovernment Summit, the participants recommended that the summit be held twice yearly instead of the usual annual summit.

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