

## **COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE E-GOVERNMENT SUMMIT 2023, WHICH HELD ON THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, AT THE SHERATON HOTEL AND TOWERS, IKEJA, LAGOS**

The Nigeria eGovernment Summit 2023 was held on Thursday, September 28 at the Sheraton Hotel and Towers, Ikeja from 8am to 5pm. The eGovernment Summit, which had 52 speakers, was organised by DigiServe Newark Services, in partnership with the Association of Telecoms Companies of Nigeria (ATCON), the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), Internet Exchange Point Of Nigeria (IXPN) and the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS), with the theme: eGovernment: Pathway to a Prosperous Nation. The eGovernment Summit is an annual programme, designed to bring together, government and technology providers, including the citizens who are the beneficiaries of technology, in order to discuss the importance of leveraging emerging technologies to enhance government services that are delivered to the citizens.

The summit had goodwill messages from industry stakeholders, with five panel sessions and each panel session had lead paper presentation that shaped the conversations at each panel session. After the lead paper presentation, the panelists were allowed to discuss the sub-theme of the panel and the lead paper, and thereafter, audience contributions and comments, including questions were allowed in all the panel sessions.

### **Objectives of The eGovernment Summit**

The objectives of the eGovernment Summit are to:

1. Set agenda for the new Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Dr. Bosun Tijani
2. To enable government leverage technology in governance in order to make governance easily accessible and productive.
3. Offer recommendations on policies that drive government processes and make them beneficial to the citizens.
4. Design strategies for implementing eGovernment processes.
5. Build a mutual beneficial relationship between government and technology service providers that will impact on citizens and the Nigerian economy.
6. To encourage collaboration between government and technology service providers that will foster adoption of the right technologies for governance.
7. To create awareness about technology adoption in governance.

## **Observations**

Lead paper presenter at the first panel session, who is the Chief Operating Officer, WTES Projects Limited, Mr. Chidi Princewill Ajuzie, decried the situation where some government agencies will deliberately oppose to online transactions between government and the citizens and called for a serious commitment on the part of government agencies to allow all government online transactions to work effectively.

Some of the telecoms operators that were present at this year's summit, also decried the high cost of deploying broadband services in rural communities and called for policies that would enhance faster deployment of broadband services in rural, unserved and underserved communities in the country.

Participants also frowned at Nigeria's low rating in global eGovernance standard, and called for policies that will drive proper eGovernance processes in the country. Some of the panelists said e-Government was yet to create the actual value in local government administration, and they insisted that local government administration remained key in driving digital revolution at the grass root level.

## **Recommendations**

Some of the recommendations from the summit include:

1. Develop and set strategic digital government objectives that will drive eGovernment across the country
2. Reinforcement of institutional capacity to manage and monitor eGovernment project implementation across the country
3. Assess the existing assets to guide the procurement of digital technologies
4. Review of legal and regulatory frameworks to allow digital opportunities to be harnessed.
5. eGovernment Summit should come up with solutions that the Lagos State government can tap into to address some of the critical challenges in governance.
6. Industry stakeholders should collaborate with government in the deployment of digital services to the citizens.
7. Nigeria needs reliable digital infrastructure that will enhance digital service deployment to citizens and drive digital transformation across the country.
8. Nigerian government should invest in new technologies that will promote digital service delivery among the citizens.

9. There is need for citizen education and awareness campaign to drive adoption of digital services.
10. Nigeria must find its own digital path and approach it with full commitment.
11. Nigeria needs to promote digital literacy and human development campaigns to drive eGovernment.
12. Nigeria should develop the National eGovernment Cloud of China, as a model for Nigeria's National e-Government Strategies.
13. Government regulatory agencies should be modeled towards government public service agencies that will serve the citizens, using digital technologies.
14. Private sector must provide support for smart city development.
15. Government must establish a solid foundation for the development of digital economy that will bridge digital divide.
16. The panelists called for serious commitment on the part of government agencies to allow all government online transactions to work effectively
17. Connectivity should be seen as a basic need of the citizens.
18. The need to use Big Data to set up eGovernment models for all government agencies.
19. Government should declare telecoms infrastructure as National Critical Infrastructure and also prosecute vandals of telecoms infrastructure.
20. The participants stressed the need for proper utilization of government facilities in driving eGovernment services across the country.
21. The participants also said Nigeria needs basic infrastructure like reliable energy system and ubiquitous internet connectivity to drive eGovernment services across the country.
22. The participants urged governments at all levels to leverage digital technology like Data Analytics, Artificial Intelligence, FinTech and the Social Media platforms like WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram to enhance eGovernment service delivery to the citizens.
23. The participants were of the view that e-Government has not created the actual value in local government administration, insisting that local government administration remained key in driving digital revolution at the grass root level.
24. Nigeria needs more innovation and aggressive broadband rollout to further drive financial inclusion across the country.
25. For any emerging technologies to scale and become impactful, technology solution developers must always consider those that will use the technology when designing the technology.

This year's eGovernment Summit, which started at 8am, came to a close at 5pm and participants were satisfied with the quality of presentations and issues discussed at the various panel sessions, but they complained that this year's activities were over-loaded and stretched too far into the day.

The communique was put together by **Emma Okonji**, ICT Editor, THISDAY Newspapers, in collaboration with DigiServe Network Services.