

ADDRESS BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF EDUCATION , DR. IGWE AJA-NWACHUKU DELIVERED AT THE ANNUAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) PROFESSIONALS ASSEMBLY, NICON LUXURY HOTEL, ABUJA, 9TH October 2007

The Senate President,

Honourable Senators,

Honourable members of the House of Representatives,

Captains of IT industries,

Representatives of Development Partner & Civil Society Organisations,

Members of the press,

IT professionals,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to welcome you to the Annual Information Technology Professionals Assembly and to address this gathering of eminent personalities, experts and practitioners in the field of Information Technology.

Your Excellency, the senate president, your presence among us and that of several members of the senate and of the national assembly is evidence that the leadership of Nigeria recognizes the potential of IT in achieving sustainable national development and deployment of IT in the country

On our part, we are employing the necessary machinery to see to the production of graduates that are relevant and competitive within the context of skills and knowledge-driven market economy in a globalised world. Some of our initiatives and strategies in this endeavor include:

- (i) Introduction of Computer Education as a compulsory subject at all levels of education.
- (ii) Provision of requisite IT infrastructure into schools/institutions especially at the tertiary level
- (iii) Training and encouragement of teachers and other staff within the sector on IT through collaborative efforts with the private sector and non-governmental organizations towards attaining a computer-literate workforce.
- (iv) Application of IT at various critical areas of educational management and administration. For instance, the recent releases of JAMB and NECO result, at record times through the application of IT to examinations management.
- (v) The application of IT to Distance Education and Open Learning which is helping to universalize access to university and teacher education.
- (vi) The introduction of Computer Acquisition Scheme which targets the provision of computer to government staff at all levels of education at preferential rates under a subsidized consumer financial arrangement.
- (vii) The establishment and strengthening of the Computer Professional Registration Council of Nigeria (CPN) for regulation, control and supervision of the IT profession and practice in Nigeria.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we will leave no stone unturned towards ensuring that Nigeria achieves sustainable development. Within this

context, IT represents new opportunities and provides adequate responses to information challenges facing the country today.

The theme of this assembly, "An IT Enable Nigeria" is therefore very apt as it addresses the concerns of the leadership of this country towards the attainment of His Excellency Mr. President's Vision of making Nigeria one of the 20 top economies of the world by the year 2020 in line with the 7-point Agenda

However, using IT in the best way will require an extensive SWOT analysis of the country's development in order to resolve the nation's challenges as well as objectively ordering of the priorities, policies, and strategies. In this regards, effective collaborations need to be developed not only within IT professionals but also among all stakeholders, including government, civil society, researchers and the business private sector. Measurable goals and objectives for the IT sector and IT applications in the national economy should be identified to create the necessary institutional structure to develop and steer the National Vision and Agenda.

The use of IT should not be understood as a race to keep up with the western world and overcome the digital divide. Rather, it should be targeted at sustainable national development given the peculiarity of economy. However, we wish to restate that the FME is currently pursuing Top-down approach in Computer application in our sector.

It is important to formulate a framework on how to check cyber crimes especially as hackers have started have started to break into data bases of some of our Computer Centres. This implies that Computer Professionals Registration Council of Nigeria (CPN) must not

only regulate the practice of its professionals but set a high standard code of conduct or practice for its members and other practitioners

We hope that the discussions of this assembly will lead to proposals and recommendations that will enable us to initiate programmes that will benefit the country as a whole and to develop sustainable national IT policies on high integrity for all sectors of the economy

On this note, I would like to thank His Excellency the Senate President and other Honourable Members of the National Assembly for your attendance.

Let me also appreciate the members of the Council and staff of the Computer professional Registration Council of Nigeria (CPN) for the great efforts made at organizing this Assembly and for the laudable programmes geared towards bringing sanity to the IT profession. My ministry will continue to strengthen and support CPN.

Finally, I wish you very successful deliberations and memorable stay in Abuja.

Thank you for your attention

MAY GOD BLESS YOU ALL