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DR. AMINU
MAIDA

The enabler behind NCC's
Renewed Hope Agenda



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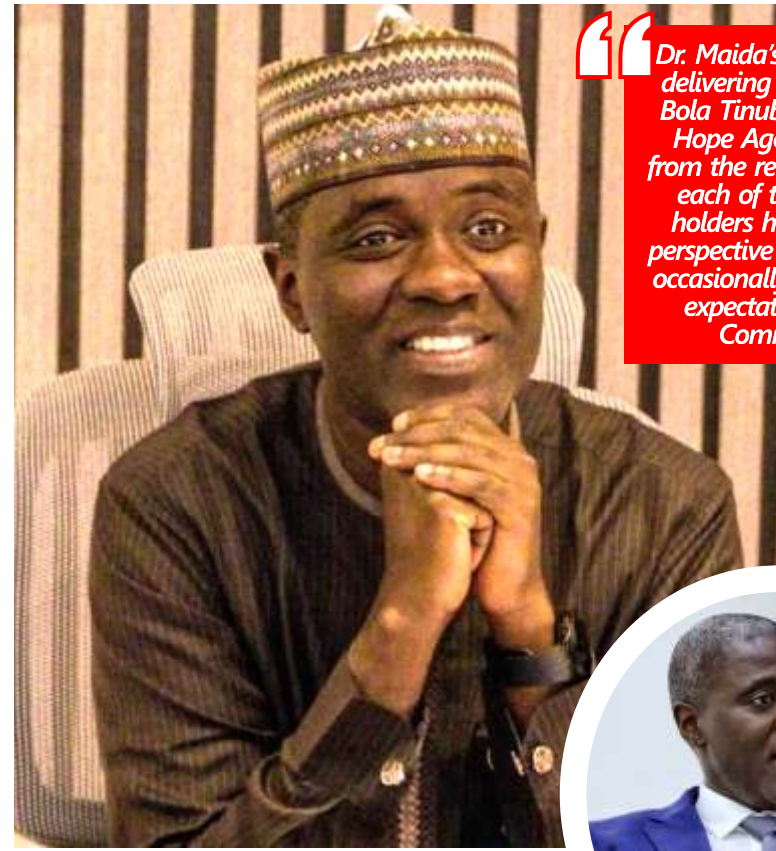
BY DAVID MOORE

In Nigeria, a young tech-savvy and upwardly mobile population is teeming, and exploring derivable benefits of digital technologies. They are propelled by rapidly expanding internet access and steady broadband penetration, currently about 43 per cent. Our digital economy is poised for significant growth, positively impacting various sectors and benefiting the nation through enhanced connectivity and digital skills.

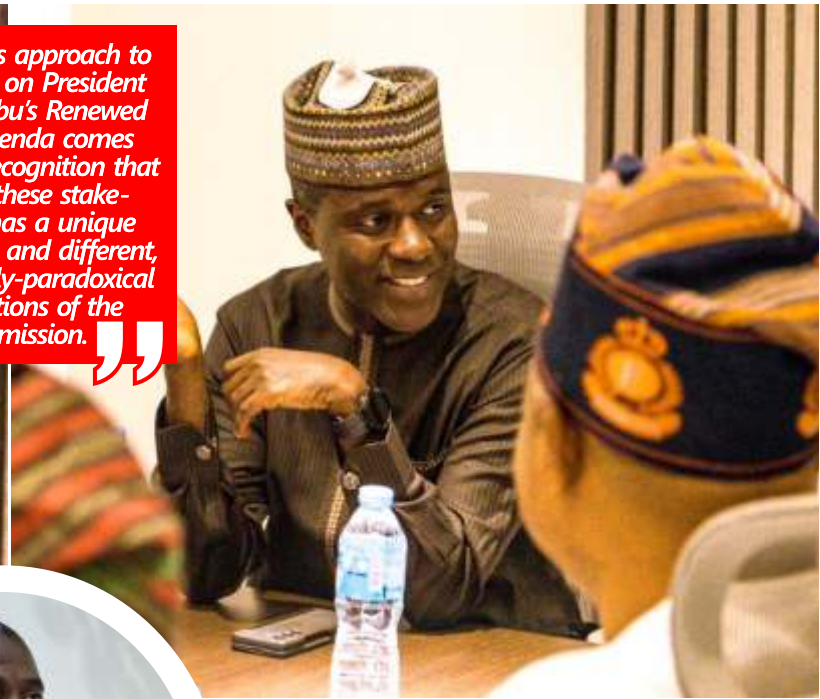
Digital transformation is happening globally at a record pace. During the Covid-19 pandemic, for example, remote work and virtual collaboration tools took centre stage; platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet became—and still are—essential for meetings, conferences and team collaboration. E-commerce and online retail have transformed how consumers seamlessly order and receive goods and services.

Even traditionally brick-and-mortar businesses are changing the ways they engage with their customers through introduction of digital solutions to improve the customer experience. It is a no-brainer that Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) are revolutionising our lives for the better, whether in education, healthcare delivery, living, public services, energy management, and much more.

Suffice to say, that underpinning this global digital transformation is the indispensable role of telecommunications infrastructure.



“Dr. Maida’s approach to delivering on President Bola Tinubu’s Renewed Hope Agenda comes from the recognition that each of these stakeholders has a unique perspective and different, occasionally-paradoxical expectations of the Commission.”



Universal, affordable, reliable and fast telecom services are becoming social rights, as mobile networks and data-centres form the backbone for digital transformation by enabling the storage and processing of large amounts of data as well as the integration of digital technologies into numerous use cases.

For President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the Renewed Hope Agenda draws us all to a more promising outlook. Inherent in his agenda is the pledge to embolden and support the youth and women by harnessing emerging sectors such as the digital economy.

In delivering this vision, the Honourable Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Dr. Bosun Tijani unveiled a blueprint appropriately titled - “Accelerating our Collective Prosperity through Technical Efficiency” with the goal of supporting Nigeria’s economic growth by enhancing productivity, facilitated by digital innovation.

Acknowledging the criticality of resilient telecommunications infrastructure to a robust digital economy, Dr. Tijani’s Strategic Agenda 2023 – 2027 sets targets to achieve a 50 per cent

improvement in Quality of Service (QoS) by the end of 2024; to boost Nigeria’s broadband penetration rate to 70 per cent by the end of 2025; to deliver data download speed of 25Mbps in urban areas and 10Mbps in rural areas by the end of 2025; to provide coverage for, at least, 80 per cent of the country’s population, especially the underserved and unserved populations by the end of 2026; to reduce the gap of unconnected Nigerians in rural areas from 61 per cent to less than 20 per cent by 2027; and to secure between 300 per cent to 500 per cent increase in broadband investment by the end of 2027. Drawing from the Strategic Agenda of the Ministry, Dr. Aminu Maida, the Executive Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Nigerian Communications Commission, (NCC) has emplaced three Strategic Focus Areas for the Commission: The Consumers, the Industry and Licensees; and the Government.

Dr. Maida’s approach to delivering on

President Bola Tinubu’s Renewed Hope Agenda comes from the recognition that each of these stakeholders has a unique perspective and different, occasionally-paradoxical expectations of the Commission. His goal is to forge a path that carefully balances each stakeholder’s needs while meeting their expectations.

Consider the Consumers—who are central to Dr. Maida’s focus—for example. His approach focuses on ensuring that they receive an enhanced Quality of Experience, beyond the narrow and very technically-evaluated Quality of Service. Quality of experience takes into account all touch points along the consumers journey in using telecom services from selection, through onboarding, usage, support and even off-boarding. This means that, consumers are empowered to make the right network selection, enjoy a seamless onboarding into the network of their choice, enjoy quality service at fair costs, receive responsive customer service and enjoy protected off-boarding where they chose to leave the network. To address consumer complaints on data depletion, the Commission has directed Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) to conduct

an independent audit of their billing systems and is concluding a consultation process to simplify tariff plans. These initiatives would provide enhanced transparency to the consumer.

The Commission, under Dr. Maida, rather than taking a national outlook on data collection for Quality-of-Service delivery, has adopted an approach where more granular data is collected from operators and analysed to determine quality of service at very small, local levels, to allow the deployment of optimised solutions or regulatory actions where needed.

On the side of the Industry and Licensees of the Commission, Dr. Maida’s focus is aimed at forging a resilient industry and enhancing the delivery of regulatory services. Since he came on board, the Commission has shown commitment to tackling industry debt issues more seriously. It has also embarked on critical advocacy initiatives to address long-term challenges in the sector, including advocacy for designating telecom infrastructure as Critical National Infrastructure, as well as successfully persuading over six states to waive Right of Way (RoW) fees, even as he initiates discussions with more states.

The Commission, under Dr. Maida’s leadership, is equally engaging with the Presidential Committee on Fiscal Policy and Tax Reforms towards addressing multiple taxation issues in the telecoms sector.

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Appreciating Dr. Aminu Maida's transformational leadership at NCC

"The task of the leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been." – Henry Kissinger.

BY WILLIAMS OCHONU

THE above quote is instructive on the realisation that leadership is needed to transform our great country. But the question is thus: are those saddled with leadership positions aware of the enormity of the task before them? I have advocated this much in several of my writings on the need for those in leadership positions in the country to come to the table. One of those who have indeed come to the table is Aminu Maida, the Executive Vice Chairman/ CEO of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC).

The NCC is a strategic government institution mandated "to ensure fair competition in all sectors of the Nigerian communications industry and encourage the participation of Nigerians in the ownership, control and management of communications companies and organizations."

With such a mandate, the NCC plays a pivotal role in the country's socio-economic development. It connects critical economic players, promotes their dialogue and informs their policies. Communication is the economy's engine for change and gateway to new resources and opportunities.

This is why I must commend the new leadership drive at the NCC led by Aminu Maida, a thorough professional whose leadership has opened a new vista in the country's communications sector. He hit the ground running with laudable plans and policies to re-position the NCC for optimal productivity.

The thematic focus of the new NCC revolves around transparency and accountability in creating a level playing ground for stakeholders in the communications industry. This much has been visible in the policy direction of the NCC in recent times. For example, the drive towards ensuring fair tax policies and eliminating every incident of multiple taxation and regulations impacting the Nigerian telecommunications industry is a laudable one.

The NCC has identified multiple taxation as a significant obstacle impeding the sustainable development of the telecom industry in the country, and the steps taken so far are commendable. This is on the heels of the fact that consumers always bear the brunt of multiple taxes because operators factor these taxes into the services they render.

This is a smart one, a n d indicative of w h a t Nigerians s h o u l d expect from the new leadership at the N C C . W h e n

telecommunication sector is well-regulated, consumers will be the ultimate beneficiaries and contribute to sustainable growth and development.

According to available data, Nigeria's telecommunications and information services sector, in the first quarter of 2023, delivered N2, 508 trillion in financial value contribution to the nation's gross domestic product (GDP), representing 14.13 per cent. The strategic importance of this input cannot be overemphasized. This indicates that leadership is central to the NCC's ability to deliver on its mandate.

I am glad that Aminu Maida is living up to expectations. He has displayed a grasp of the issues in the sector. He has subsequently deployed brilliant policies and plans towards unlocking the endless possibilities in the industry to benefit Nigeria and Nigerians.

Aminu Maida is an astute professional who comes in handy with the requisite qualifications and

experience to steer the ship of the NCC. His appointment by President Bola Tinubu remains a masterstroke. Dr Maida has displayed a brilliant work ethic that resonates with the human resources department of the NCC. Under such circumstances, productivity would thrive. This is the new atmosphere at the NCC.

I agree with the quote by Herry Kissinger that the task of the leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been. This is at play at the NCC, and the chief driver is Aminu Maida.

In the months and years ahead, the reforms introduced in the telecommunication sector would begin to manifest. I think Aminu Maida has written his name in gold within a short period. He hit the ground running and matched his words with action. I recall that when he assumed office, he stated that under his leadership, the NCC would ensure effective broadband infrastructure diffusion across the length and breadth of Nigeria. He also mentioned his aspiration to increase broadband penetration to 70% and to cover 90% of the population by 2025.

These are lofty aspirations, and I must confess that the NCC is poised to create a dynamic regulatory environment that ensures universal access to affordable and equitable service and supports the nation's economic growth through the entrenchment of integrity, excellence, professionalism, responsiveness, innovation, and commitment.

It is a new dawn at the NCC. Someone joked that Aminu Maida has the Midas touch. Anything he touches turns to gold. I agree. He is a lesson in leadership. Others occupying leadership positions in the country can emulate his passion and commitment. The Renewed Hope Agenda will remain a mirage if heads of agencies and parastatals in the country do not imbibe these attributes.

Ochonu, a public affairs analyst, writes from Abuja.

This Opinion article was culled from www.thecable.ng

NCC targets 50% improvement in telecom quality of services by 2024 end

THE Nigerian Communication Commission (NCC) has said it is working towards achieving a 50% improvement in the telecommunications industry's quality of services (QoS) by the end of this year.

The Commission said this in a statement signed by its Director of Public Affairs, Reuben Mouka, where it highlighted activities of the telecom regulator in the first year of President Bola Tinubu's administration.

According to the NCC, the 50% QoS improvement is one of the targets the Minister of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy, Dr. Bosun Tijani and the Commission is working towards realising this goal.

NCC said other targets in Tijani's Strategic Agenda 2023, include boosting Nigeria's broadband penetration rate to 70% by the end of 2025; delivering a data download speed of 25Mbps in urban areas and 10Mbps in rural areas by the end of 2025; and providing coverage for, at least, 80% of the country's population, especially the underserved and unserved populations by the end of 2026.

Other targets include to reduce the gap of unconnected Nigerians in rural areas from 61% to less than 20% by 2027 and to secure between 300% to 500% increase in broadband investment by the end of 2027.

Highlighting how the NCC is driving improvement in the quality of telecom services, the regulator stated:

"The Commission, under Dr. Aminu Maida, rather than taking a national outlook on data collection for quality of service delivery, has adopted an approach where more granular data is collected from operators and analysed to determine the quality of service at very small, local levels, to allow the deployment of optimised solutions or regulatory actions where needed.

"Maida's approach focuses on ensuring that the consumers receive an enhanced Quality of Experience, beyond the narrow and very technically-evaluated Quality of Service."

"Quality of experience takes into account all touch points along the consumer's journey in using telecom services from selection, through onboarding, usage, support and even off-boarding.

This means that consumers are empowered to make the right network selection, enjoy a seamless onboarding into the network of their choice, enjoy quality service at fair costs, receive responsive customer service and enjoy protected off-boarding, where they choose to leave the network," the Commission added.

'The capacity behind NCC's digital enabler of the Renewed Hope Agenda'

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In order to ensure that the industry is in line with current realities, the Commission is also undertaking a review of its extant Regulatory Instruments and Licensing Frameworks. For instance, Quality of Service Regulations have been reviewed to incorporate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 5G and other participants that are critical to the Quality of Service.

By achieving expected QoS KPIs, high-speed internet connectivity, and forging a resilient and innovative telecommunications industry, the Commission is actively supporting the Ministry's vision of boosting economic growth and productivity through technological innovation, delivering on the promise of Renewed Hope for all Nigerians.

