ADDRESS OF PROFESSOR CHARLES ONUWA UWADIA: THE PRESIDENT/CHAIRMAN-IN-COUNCIL OF THE COMPUTER PROFESSIONALS (REGISTRATION COUNCIL OF NIGERIA) [CPN] AT THE CONGRATULATORY COURTESY VISIT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) PROFESSIONALS IN NIGERIA AT THE PRESIDENTIAL VILLA, ASOKORO, ABUJA ON THURSDAY 9TH JANUARY, 2020.

PROTOCOL

We are very delighted to be here today on this historical occasion - the congratulatory courtesy visit of the Computing and Information Technology (IT) Professionals and Community in Nigeria (the **Computer Professionals Registration Council of Nigeria (CPN) and Nigeria Computer Society (NCS))**.

Let me begin by congratulating His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR for his resounding victory and re-election as the President and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Your Excellency, your re-election is certainly a glowing testimony and recognition of your landmark achievements during your first tenure in office. While we wish you a successful tenure, we offer you our hands of fellowship in the service of our dear motherland. We are most grateful to His Excellency for hosting this ocassion, and for honouring us with your esteemed presence. Your presence in our midst today is a further demonstration of your commitment to the improvement of life of our people through Information Communication Technology and Digital Economy.

Indeed, it has become a distinguished historical record of note, that His Excellency is and remains the only President of Nigeria, that has on four consecutive occasions shared fellowship with the IT Community and demonstrated the Political will to accelerate National IT Development with his physical presence at the e-Nigeria Conference & Awards over the years. Your significant presence at e-Nigeria Conferences has undoubtedly contrubuted to investors confidence in the Nigeria's Information Technology Development Landscape. That is great inspiration and phenomenal achievement. Thank you immensely your Excellency.

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Your Excellency, on behalf of IT professionals in Nigeria, we hereby also express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to you for the appointment of a Fellow of our profession Dr. Isa Ali Ibrahim Pantami as a Minister of the Federal Republic in the capacity as Honourable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy; and also the appointment of another distinguished member of the IT profession, Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, as the Director General, National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA). By these appointments, your (this) administration has demonstrated in clear terms its readiness and commitment to effectively harness the transformatory power of ICT to grow the national economy.

Your Excellency, the Computer Professionals Registration Council of Nigeria (CPN) and Nigeria Computer Society (NCS– incorporating her professional Expert Groups) are proud to be associated with you and your government for your passion in the utilization of Digital/Information Technology in moving the nation to the Next Level.

As we are all aware, the Council of **Computer Professionals (Registration Council of Nigeria)** is the body that makes policies and directives geared towards the development of the Information Technology education and practice in Nigeria. Therefore, the Council is the torchbearer of the IT profession and practice in Nigeria. The phenomenal progress and due recognition accorded Information Technology (IT) in the country today can be attributed to the hard work and commitment of the elders of the profession some of who are present here today. I feel privileged to appreciate them for their commitment and selfless services to the cause of Information Technology practice in Nigeria. It is noteworthy to mention that the elders of the Nigeria IT Profession have over the years, acidulously worked hard with Government to establish the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) and also the establishment of the Federal Ministry of Communications Technology, now Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy.

The **Computer Professionals (Registration Council of Nigeria)** was established by a Decree, now Act of Parliament 49 of 1993 to regulate and supervise the computing profession and practice in Nigeria. This task has been an arduous one requiring commitment and dedication.

Additionally, the exercise is imperative and necessary because of the importance of Information Technology in accelerating the growth and development of the nation in an orderly and secure manner.

Nigeria Computer Society (NCS), which is the umbrella body for all Information Technology practitioners and interest groups, has a core mandate of supporting government towards the effective deployment of Information Technology services for enshrining good government. Over the years, NCS has made significant contributions to the development of Information Technology in this country.

The **Computer Professionals (Registration Council of Nigeria)** and **Nigeria Computer Society (NCS)**, are conscious of the heavy responsibilities on its shoulders. The highly dynamic nature of Information Technology demands that both the regulator and practitioners act smart in order to achieve our set objectives.

Your Excellency, we are all aware of the efforts of the **Federal Government of Nigeria** under your watch at deepening Information Technology in Nigeria due to the realization that Information and Communications Technology is a tool for empowerment of Nigerians and eradicating poverty. It also has the potential of contributing significantly to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), especially at this period when we have started looking beyond Fossil Oil for the economic survival of the nation. The most listed top ten companies in the world today are in the IT sector – Alphabet, Intel, Ali Baba, IBM, Facebook, Tencent, Oracle, Google, Microsoft, and Hon Hai Precision. It has been projected that the global information technology industry is on a pace to reach US$5.2 trillion in 2020. The enormity of the industry is staggering. Economies, jobs, private lives are becoming more digital, more connected, more automated.

Your Excellency, we the **IT Professionals**, commend you for the immense and giant strides that your administration has made and is still making in nation building. Within the space of the past four years, you have achieved a lot, using the instrumentality of Information Communications Technology (ICT). The following stand out: -

1. Issuance of Executive Order (EO1)on the **Promotion of Transparency and Efficiency in the Business Environment,** Executive Order (EO3) on **Support for Local Content in Public Procurement by the Federal Government** and Executive Order (EO5) on **Planning and Execution of Projects, Promotion of Nigerian Content in Contracts and Science, Engineering and Technology**

2. Unveiling of the **National Digital Economy Policy** at the 2019 e-Nigeria Conference, Exhibition and Awards

3. Implementation and enforcement of the **Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information (IPPIS)** which saved the Federal Government of Nigeria billions of Naira by eliminating thousands of ghost workers.

4. Effective implementation of the **Treasury Single Account (TSA),** and increasing government revenue by over N3 trillion as well as entrenching transparency and accountability.

5. Implementation of the **Bank Verification Number** (BVN), thus tackling corruption by plugging loopholes for siphoning of public funds and tracking of illicit funds through multiple accounts

6. Institutionalizing E-governance thereby setting the foundation for the creation of a truly digital economy.

7. Continued support and encouragement for digital entrepreneurs to develop innovative solutions for local and global challenges

8. Your Administration's focus on economic diversification, ensuring security and fighting corruption, leveraging on enabling power of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

9. Creating the enabling environment for ICT to play a pivotal role in the activities of Agencies of government such as the **Corporate Affairs Commission** (CAC), **Federal Inland Revenue Service** (FIRS) and the **Nigeria Immigration Service** (NIS) to mention but a few.

10. The Federal Government's directive on ensuring that all ICT projects in the country are cleared by NITDA and other relevant Agencies. This aligns with government's IT-shared vision and policy, saves cost through promotion of shared services, avoids duplication, ensures compatibility of IT systems, thereby improving efficiency across government, and enforces the patronage of indigenous companies.

11. Through the **Federal Ministry of Science & Technology**, and the **Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy**, your administration has facilitated the development and deployment of Science and Technology apparatus to enhance the pace of socio-economic development of the country through appropriate technological inputs into productive activities in the nation.

Your Excellency, on many occasions, you have restated your administration's commitment towards delivering good governance and development to Nigerians; this commitment is as strong as ever, considering the huge role ICT is playing in the successes recorded in the past four years, especially in fostering the digital economy in Nigeria, including the sector's contribution of 13.85 per cent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the 2nd quarter of 2019 when compared to the Oil sector's contribution of 8.8 per cent.

We want to use the opportunity of this visit to invite your Excellency as the **Special Guest of Honour** at our annual **Information Technology Professionals Assembly** holding on Thursday 16th April 2020 at the NAF Conference Centre, Abuja.

The annual CPN **Information Technology Professionals' Assembly** is a yearly gathering of Information Technology practitioners in Nigeria and Diaspora with the objective of discussing and strategizing on emergent issues in Information Technology in order to come out with recommendations and decisions that will impart positively on the industry and the nation at large.

Your Excellency, we wish to humbly bring to your notice the following Policy Proposals.

1. **Effective Implementation of Digital Economy**
   a) In order to stimulate innovation, research and development in the indigenous software production ecosystem, MDAs should be directed to give priority to the computerization of their key processes and activities. In fact, automation of all government operations starting with the front end can be completed in one year.
   b) At least a recognized IT Professional must be member of the Boards and Councils of all MDAs. This will accelerate the nation's move towards a digital economy by ensuring appropriate and effective deployment of IT for governance.

2. **Support for IT Professionalism**
   a) Your Excellency, we seek your intervention for the recognition of our Computer Professional Examination certificates; the Office of the Head of Service of the Federation is handling the recognition process, which has been on since 2008.
   b) Recognized professionals must be the Head of all government IT departments and units at the Federal, State and LGA levels. A major requirement for appointing an individual as Director (or its equivalent) should be CPN/NCS membership.

3. **Enhanced Support for Local Content Development& Youth Employment**
   a) In order to create 1.5million Jobs in IT sector in the next two years: The Federal government should impose a Software Import Tax of an amount to be determined by the appropriate government authorities on all Software imported into Nigeria. The fund from this tax regime should be used to fund local Software development activities in Nigeria. It is also important to mandate all foreign ICT Companies to establish Local Research and Development Laboratories in Nigeria.
   Your Excellency, we respectfully invite you to be the Chief Marketing Officer for Made in Nigeria Software.
   b) Establishment of Credit Guarantee Scheme by the government to support working capital credit extension to qualified ICT firms in Nigeria. This will increase Youth employment and return on investment.
   c) Banks to reserve a percentage of their loan portfolio for Technological Research and Development thereby ensuring that 60% of their digital processes is made up of Local content.

4. **Diversification of the Economy**
   Establish a model IoT- based Agriculture in all the Zones of the Country. The Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy, Ministry of Agriculture and the IT Professionals can be saddled with this responsibility. This economic diversification strategy can yield over
   10trillion annually and contribute over 15% to the national GDP

In closing, I wish to assure His Excellency that relevant Agencies such as NITDA, and other professionals in the **Information Technology** sector will continue to co-operate and collaborate with one another to move our dear nation to the next level.

Your Excellency, please accept, once again, our utmost gratitude and warm felicitations.

May Almighty Allah bless you; God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Professor Charles O. Uwadia, *FNCS*
President/Chairman-in-Council