

**STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF  
COMMUNICATIONS, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF  
NIGERIA, DR. BELLO HALIRU MOHAMMED, AT THE  
2002 PLENIPOTENTIARY CONFERENCE OF ITU, IN  
MARRAKECH, MOROCCO, FROM SEPTEMBER 23-18  
OCTOBER.**

Mr. Chairman, permit me to congratulate you on your election to steer the activities of this Conference. I have no doubt in my mind that with your wealth of experience, the activities of the conference will be guided to a successful end. May I also acknowledge the kind gestures of His Majesty, King Mohammed VI, the Government and People of Morocco for hosting this Conference in this historic town of Marrakech.

2 There is no doubt that Information and Communication Technology are today at the center stage of global socio-economic transformations. Paradoxically, the African Continent, with as many as fifty-nine independent countries, has not been able to benefit much from the information revolution, partly because of the dearth of requisite infrastructure and manpower.

Africa cannot afford to lose out in the ICT revolution for which ITU stands. It is our fervent hope that ITU would make special efforts to carry along those countries lagging behind towards transforming the digital divide to digital opportunity. This can be attained if ITU gives more consideration to the developing member states of the Union.

**3. Nigeria fully and solidly supports the ideals of ITU. Since the return to democratic government in my country in May 1999, concerted efforts have been made to get Nigeria re-integrated into the International Community including the ITU. Nigeria has contributed immensely in the transformation of the Pan African Telecommunication Union (PATU) to the African Telecommunication Union,(ATU) an Organization established for the development of telecommunication in the African continent.**

**4. Before the advent of the present administration in Nigeria, the telecommunications sector operated as a Government monopoly. Determined to lay a solid foundation for accelerated growth and development of the sector the Government introduced new measures, aimed at liberalizing the sector; some of these measures are:**

- a. Revisions of the National Telecommunication Policy with a view to bringing it up to the current global trends in the industry.**
- b. Ensuring the independence of the Nigerian Communication Commission, which is the regulatory body for Telecommunications.**
- c. Creating an enabling environment for investment in the telecom industry.**

- d. Introduction of GSM services through an auction process in 2001 with the three GSM operators providing over one million lines within the first year of operation.**
- e. Licensing of a second National carrier in July 2002 to compete with the existing National Carrier and break the monopoly.**
- f. Establishment of universal access for the provision of telecommunication services to the rural and the under served urban Communities.**
- g. Establishment of a National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) for the purpose of ICT development in the country.**

**5. Mr. chairman, you will recall that Nigeria was in ITU Administrative Council and made positive contributions to the workings of the union. Nigeria once again wishes to serve in the Council and therefore a candidate, at the elections during this Conference**

**Thank you and God bless.**