Background Information

Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, with over 200 million people, has vast potential to leverage digital technologies for sustainable economic growth and diversification. To take advantage of the opportunities of innovation and entrepreneurship in the digital economy, Nigeria needs a strong and forward-looking digital governance and policy framework that can guide and support its economic development.

As of December 2023, Nigeria has witnessed an exponential rise in the number of internet subscribers, with figures reaching over 164 million, according to the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC). The growth of mobile devices and improved network access has made the country one of the biggest digital markets in Africa.

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector's contribution to Nigeria's GDP is remarkable and has been on an upward trajectory. As the National Bureau of Statistics reported, the ICT sector contributed an estimated 16.66% to the GDP as of December 2023, marking it as one of the fastest-growing sectors and a cornerstone of Nigeria's economic diversification efforts.

Through the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) and the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), the government has commenced various initiatives to lay the groundwork for Nigeria's digital transformation. The NCC has been instrumental in increasing access to telecommunications services, managing spectrum allocation efficiently, and encouraging competition among service providers to enhance service quality and reduce consumer costs. NITDA, on the other hand, has advocated for and implemented policies that support digital innovation, nurtured technology startups, and fostered digital skills development among the youth.

Despite these efforts, Nigeria continues to face challenges such as regional digital divides, infrastructural deficits, and socio-economic barriers that hinder full-scale digital inclusion. Ensuring equitable access to digital services and fostering an environment where digital rights are protected, and digital responsibilities are upheld remains a complex endeavor.

The Federal Ministry of Communication, Innovation and Digital Economy’s Strategic Blueprint (2023-2027) and the Nigerian National Broadband Plan (NNBP) 2020-2025 have set ambitious targets for penetration rates and affordability to guarantee widespread internet access, a critical element of the digital ecosystem. Additionally, the government has identified the need to promote digital literacy, protect consumers’ rights online, and foster a safe and secure cyberspace. Economic diversification efforts have increasingly emphasized the digital economy, leading to initiatives like the Presidential Committee on Data Harmonization and the Nigerian Digital Identity for Development project, which seeks to strengthen digital identity ecosystems.

With these targets and initiatives as the backdrop, our "Digital Policy as a Catalyst for Economic Growth in Nigeria" session is timely, as it seeks to explore how digital governance, policy formulation, and strategic investment in digital infrastructure can catalyze Nigeria's sustainable economic development.

Our discussion will invite a cross-section of panelists from government, the private sector, civil society, and the tech community to foster a multifaceted dialogue on the opportunities and impediments faced by the nation in the context of digital advancement. By assessing the impact of existing policies and deliberating on future strategies, the session aims to contribute pragmatic insights for shaping Nigeria’s digital governance landscape.
The session aims to outline how Nigeria can use digital governance to advance its economic development and resilience in the Fourth Industrial Revolution and help achieve the Internet We Want for all Nigerians.