

FROM A GLOBAL VILLAGE TO A VIRTUAL ROOM

Text of the Address Delivered by the Vice-Chancellor, University of Ilorin, Prof. Is-haq O. Oloyede, at the Opening Ceremony of the 4th Nigeria Network Operators Group (ngNOG) Workshop and Conference at the New Geology Building, University of Ilorin, Ilorin on Monday November 9, 2009

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It is my pleasure to welcome you all, on behalf of the Council, management, staff and students of the University of Ilorin to this important forum. That your workshop/conference is holding in this University is part of the actualisation of our commitment to the promotion of scholarship, advancement of training and the enhancement of our IT infrastucture for the much-needed development. I want to thank you for giving the University of Ilorin the hosting rights for this 4th edition of your workshop/conference and I still hope you will come here again in the nearest future.

If I may go down the memory lane, our relationship with the Nigeria Network Operators Group (ngNOG) began in 2007 when the Convener of the ICT Forum, Dr. Aminu Ibrahim, intimated me with the existence of the group. The University had no hesitation in quickly joining because of our avowed commitment to the deployment of relevant technologies to our teaching, learning, research and administrative activities. This would also explain the sponsorship of five staff of the University to the last 2008 edition of the workshop held at the University of Lagos.

As I understand that the main objective of the ngNOG is to build the capacity of the staff of the member institutions and to prepare them for more advanced training on Network Infrastructure and Services, I want to commend you that this is a noble objective in this era of globalisation. The fact is that in the era of globalisation, where we witness an escalation in the mobility of labour, information and services, with geographical barriers shattered, what is most important is networking. You will agree with me because globalisation, as Prof. Alamin M. Mazrui tells us, is “the process by which regions of the world become linked, at various levels of society, through an expanding network of exchange of peoples, goods, services, ideas, traditions, etc. across vast distances”. The keywords in today’s world are thus linkage, network, exchange, peoples, ideas, etc. and all these lie within what the ngNOG should prioritise, project and disseminate.

The significance of information in the contemporary world cannot be over-emphasised. We all know we are living in a world of information explosion, the world of bits and bytes. Our world is especially different from the one inhabited by our forebears mainly because of the amount of information now available to us. From the period of months-old news just two or three centuries ago, we now know the news as it is breaking. Any major development in the world is quickly transmitted across the globe through the ubiquitous news agencies and media. The Internet especially plays a major role in this regard as anyone can upload documents, share audio and video files and make what is happening common knowledge.

It is an open truth that those who dominate the world, the Anglo-American hegemony, and lord it over us are not giants based on their physical sizes and population figures; rather they are giants as a result of their dominance in ideas and knowledge, and the concomitant generation and transmission of information. For development to be achieved in virtually all spheres of our life, information technology is critical and networking, collaborating and cooperating with others are essential. Indeed, before our very eyes, the world has metamorphosed once again, changing now *from a global village to a virtual room*. If the radio, satellite television and computers had made the world shrink to a global village, the Internet and the GSM have transformed the way we think and interact resulting in the world shrinking further to a virtual room. Nigerians cannot afford to lag behind when these stunning developments are unfolding. It is in this respect that workshops and conferences of this nature are right stones cast in the right direction.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is disconcerting that Nigeria is still trailing behind at a time the world is highly developed in Information and Communication Technology. It is disturbing that at a time the revolution known as the Internet is taken for granted in some other places, it remains an issue to us in Nigeria. At the University of Ilorin where we pioneer the integration of ICT in the achievement of vision and mission, some people still think it is a needless trouble. At a period when primary schools have their websites and online resources, some Nigerians universities do not have and those that even have are being disconnected from the .ng domain by the newly accredited private Registrars. These are critical issues that the ngNOG and ICT Forum should urgently address.

At this juncture, we urge the Bandwidth Consortium to exercise restraint in disconnecting edu.ng. domain subscribers from the rest of the world especially when these subscribers are confronted by restrictive bank regulations associated with the remittances of payments to the consortium. A situation in which universities are being disconnected portends danger to the management of information in such universities. As people talk of alternative energy sources, the Nigerian universities should also be seeking alternatives to our high bandwidth demands. This is where effective intranet facilities come handy and the ngNOG should encourage this and build the capacity of its members in this direction.

I want to reiterate my belief that fora like this would go a long way in addressing some of the IT challenges facing the nation, especially our higher institutions of learning. I urge the distinguished members of ngNOG to continue to network and collaborate with bodies like Africa Network Operators Group (AfNOG), Nigeria Internet Registration Administrators (NIRA) and others so that our challenges can be addressed and potential problems can be nipped in the bud. It behooves all stakeholders to put all hands on deck so that network operations will be seamless and hassles-free. We can all make Nigeria work by networking for development.

My sincere appreciation goes to Dr. Aminu Ibrahim for all his support and cooperation. The University of Ilorin will continue to count on his professional experience and cherished friendship.

While I wish you fruitful workshop proceedings, I thank you very much for your attention. It is my pleasure to declare this workshop open.