COMMUNIQUÉ

TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS FOR SMART ECONOMY

SmartEco 2024

1.0 PREAMBLE

The **Nigeria Computer Society (NCS)**, since its inception in 1978, has been committed to advancing Information Technology and its applications. NCS consistently provides a platform for championing IT awareness and growth nationwide through conferences, workshops, and forums. It remains the umbrella body and dependable voice for all Information Technology practitioners in Nigeria.

The NCS 2024 Conference, themed "Technological Solutions for Smart Economy" and tagged SmartEco 2024, brought together professionals, scholars, and industry leaders in information technology from across Nigeria and beyond. The goal was to explore innovative strategies and solutions aimed at driving the country toward a smarter and more prosperous economy.

The conference sought to address the following objectives:

- To unite key stakeholders in the IT sector to discuss challenges and opportunities on Nigeria's journey towards a smart economy.
- To highlight the role of technological innovation in economic diversification and development.
- To propose actionable recommendations to advance Nigeria's digital economy.

After exhaustive discussions, presentations, and deliberations, the conference concluded with the recommendations outlined in Section 2.0.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

i. **Capacity Building in AI and FinTech:** The conference urged the government and relevant organizations to prioritize the development of skills and knowledge in AI ethics, engineering, and architecture to support Nigeria's growing FinTech sector and ensure the country remains competitive in the global digital economy. This would include training initiatives and policies to promote the responsible and innovative use of AI and FinTech technologies.

ii. **Development of Local Solutions:** The government should focus on developing solutions tailored to Nigeria's unique challenges, particularly in the fintech and digital services sectors.

iii. **Regulatory and Ethical Considerations:** Agencies like National Centre for AI and Robotics (NCAIR) should ensure that transparency, accountability, and social responsibility are central to AI development and deployment, creating a foundation for sustainable technological growth.

iv. **Blockchain Innovation:** Financial institutions and FinTech experts should leverage blockchain technology to transform national financial systems, reduce transaction costs, and enhance transparency and security.

v. **Collaboration for Smart Economy Development:** The government should establish clear policies and frameworks with active stakeholder engagement to drive smart economy initiatives, fostering innovation and economic empowerment.

vi. **Cybersecurity Awareness:** The government and related organizations should strengthen cybersecurity awareness and protection efforts, including vulnerability management and social media monitoring, to safeguard Nigeria's digital infrastructure.

vii. **Youth and Entrepreneurship Development:** The conference emphasized the need for NITDA and other relevant organizations to promote the active participation of youth in the digital economy by providing platforms and opportunities for entrepreneurial growth and innovation.

viii. **Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration:** NCS and CPN should encourage greater collaboration between government agencies, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to foster a conducive environment for technological innovation.

ix. **Adoption of Computing in States' Affairs:** The conference highlighted the importance of adopting computing technologies in all states of the federation, including Rivers State. To eliminate quackery in the civil service, NCS/CPN certification should be made compulsory for anyone holding key ICT positions in the civil service. Additionally, NUC should mandate that all federal universities, and by extension state universities, establish faculties of computing.

x. **Investment in Local Technologies:** The Nigeria Computer Society should advocate for increased investment in local technological solutions to address Nigeria's unique challenges and drive sustainable growth..

xi. **Policy Development and Implementation:** The government should develop and implement robust policies that support the growth of the smart economy, ensuring alignment with international standards and best practices.

xii. **Public-Private Partnerships:** The government should promote the establishment of strong public-private partnerships to accelerate the adoption of smart technologies and foster innovation.

xiii. **Ethical AI Development:** NCAIR and other relevant organizations should encourage the incorporation of ethical considerations in AI development to mitigate potential risks and ensure the technology benefits society as a whole.

xiv. Cybersecurity Initiatives: The government should enhance cybersecurity initiatives to protect the nation's digital infrastructure and ensure the safe and secure use of technology.

xv. **Continuous Learning and Professional Development:** NCS and NITDA should support continuous learning and professional development for IT professionals to keep pace with rapidly evolving technologies.

xvi. **Inclusion of All Stakeholders:** The conference supports the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders, including the government, academia, industry, and civil society, in discussions and decision-making processes related to smart economy development.

The conference successfully fostered collaboration and knowledge sharing among attendees, contributing to advancements in the fields of communication and electronic systems.

3.0 APPRECIATION

The International Conference on SmartEco 2024, held in Rivers State, was a grand success, thanks to the tremendous support received from the Rivers State Government under the leadership of **Sir Siminalayi Fubara GSSRS**, Executive Governor of Rivers State. Additional gratitude is extended to government agencies and representatives, notably **Senator Shuaib Afolabi Salisu FNCS**, Chairman of the Senate Committee on CyberSecurity and ICT; the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA); Galaxy Backbone Ltd; the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC); Computer Professionals (Registration Council) of Nigeria (CPN); Plateau State Internal Revenue; the Nigerian Internet Registration Association (NIRA); and the Nigeria Interbank Settlement System (NIBSS).

We also appreciate the generous sponsorship from **Zinox Technologies Ltd, Motopay, AnitaB.Org, Ecalpemos Technologies, Bluechip Technologies Ltd, Sabilink Consulting, Oracle Academy, FinTrak Software Ltd, Precise Financial Systems, Digital Communication Konsult (DCK) Ltd,** and CISCO Academy.

Special recognition goes to **Prof. Stella Chiemeke FNCS, Sir Demola Aladekomo FNCS (SmartCity), Prof. Tanko Ishaya FNCS,** and **Prof. Adenike Osofisan FNCS** for their invaluable support.

We are also deeply grateful for the participation of our international partners, including the **Association of Computing Machinery (ACM), British Computer Society (BCS), Computer Society of Zimbabwe, the International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP), and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE).**

We extend our sincere appreciation to all the distinguished speakers from various sectors across continents. These included **Prof. Mike Hinchey**, the keynote speaker and IEEE Regional Director; **Dr. Heloisa Candello**, Distinguished Speaker, ACM/IBM Manager; **Hon. (Alhaji) Mohammed T. Othman**, Commissioner for Science, Technology, and Innovation, Kano State; **Hon. (Dr.) Chimezie Amadi**, Commissioner for Digital Economy, Science & E-Government, Imo State; **Prof. Benjamin Segun Aribisala**, Lagos State University; **Prof. Victor Ekong**, Faculty of Computing, University of Uyo; **Mrs. Ekanem Uduakobong**, Handong Global University, Republic of Korea; **Mrs. Tola Jimoh**, Founder & Chief Information Security Officer, Cyber Strategy Consulting Inc, Canada; **Mrs. Adaranijo Kikelomo**, CEO, Kyke Vintage Collection; **Chief Babajide Apata**, CTO, Gird Finance, USA; **Mrs. Enoabasi Daniel Emah**, CEO/Founder, Sheedx Africa; **Mr. Oluwatoyin Odutola**, Relationship Manager OFI, Nigeria Interbank Settlement System (NIBSS); **Mr. Simeon Oyebola**, Senior Software Engineer, ATB Tech; and **Mr. Solomon Kershima Yateghtegh**, Founder, SKYHub Nigeria.
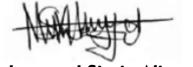
3.0 CONCLUSION

The 1,500 participants, including 1,092 inductees, unanimously commended the Nigeria Computer Society (NCS) for organizing this significant conference and urged the Society to ensure the implementation of the recommendations made. The conference highlighted the critical role of technological innovation in shaping Nigeria's economic future and set the stage for continued advancements in the country's digital economy.

Professor S. Adebukola Onashoga, *FNCS*
Chairman, Conferences Committee (CCC)

Dr. Muhammad Sirajo Aliyu, *FNCS*
President