

Comments by Chief Ebitimi Banigo, Honourable Minister of Science and Technology, Federal Republic of Nigeria, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, at the High-level segment of ECOSOC Substantive Session

New York, 5 July 2000

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Group of 77 and China, I must first of all congratulate you and the ECOSOC for convening this year's annual session of the Council and particularly for the High-level segment which has featured such rich and highly relevant presentations from the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO, and Heads of the UN funds and programmes.

Time constraint will not permit a lengthy comment or a battery of questions, which the presentations richly deserve. Clearly, from the points of view of the World Bank, the WTO, UNDP, the UNCTAD, we have seen today not only the crucial importance of Information Technology (IT) in a globalizing economy but also the need to address one central question: How can IT promote development in the face of the huge digital gap between the developed and developing countries?

We have, however, not yet found any convergence in the views expressed today by the UN specialized agencies as well as the international financial and trading institutions on funding or putting up basic infrastructure towards ICT. Perhaps, the World Bank or the UNDP would like to proffer some comments as to how much of funding is going towards ICT acquisition and other capacity-building component such as research and development efforts of developing countries?

How is the long distance learning being designed and conducted effectively to ensure not only that the course content taught is relevant to the developmental needs of the recipient developing countries by packaging inputs from the developing countries but also by ensuring that the fund thus spent on the courses does not end up going back to where it came from?

In which way can such crucial issues as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative and transfer of technology be speedily implemented to accelerate the objectives of enabling developing countries enjoy the benefits from the digital dividend, which I am confident, the international community and the private sector can help to put in place?

I thank you.