



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

Office of the Deputy Speaker

Oct 14, 2024

**Deputy Speaker's Address: 149th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
General Debate on the theme: HARNESSING SCIENCE,
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION (STI) FOR A MORE PEACEFUL AND
SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

[Protocol]

It is with great honour that I address this distinguished assembly on behalf of Nigeria's parliament. The General Debate's theme, "*Harnessing Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) for a More Peaceful and Sustainable Future,*" resonates deeply with Nigeria's ongoing journey toward building an equitable and prosperous society, where technological advancements are at the forefront of our development agenda. I would like to take this moment to commend the leadership of the Inter-Parliamentary Union for their steadfast commitment to engendering peace, democracy, and sustainable development through parliamentary cooperation.

In Nigeria, we recognize that STI holds the key to addressing many of the most pressing challenges of our time, including climate change, poverty reduction, and the creation of more peaceful, inclusive societies. We believe that for science and technology to drive sustainable development, they must be harnessed for the public good, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Nigeria's Commitment to Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI)

Our legislative and executive actions clearly reflect Nigeria's commitment to harnessing STI. In 2022, Nigeria's parliament passed the *Nigeria Startup Act*, a landmark legislation aimed at engineering a conducive environment for technology and innovation startups. The Act provides a legal framework that supports innovation, entrepreneurship, and digital transformation in our country, helping STI startups to thrive. This law also emphasizes public-private partnerships, knowledge transfer, and incentives for investments in emerging technologies.

Building on this momentum, under the leadership of His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Nigeria is now working towards the adoption of a *National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy Framework*. Led by our Minister of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy, this policy will pave the way for the ethical use of AI in addressing key challenges, from automating agricultural processes to enhancing healthcare delivery. We envision a future where AI optimizes wage employment, rather than undermines it, ensuring that automation leads to job creation rather than destruction.

Artificial Intelligence and Its Impact on Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance

As digital transformation accelerates, the rise of AI brings both opportunities and challenges. In Nigeria, AI is emerging as a powerful tool in sectors such as governance, financial services, and public administration. Yet, as with any technological leap, we must be mindful of the risks.

Artificial Intelligence, while enhancing efficiency, raises concerns about data protection, misinformation, and job displacement. The integrity of universal electoral processes is a global imperative and recent developments in Artificial Intelligence are posing threats to this, especially the spread of disinformation and cyber vulnerabilities in election systems. Irrespective of this, Nigeria continues to support international efforts to develop inclusive, transparent, and ethical AI frameworks that protect human rights and democratic values. We call for AI's responsible use to safeguard the integrity of democratic processes, particularly against threats such as deepfakes and the spread of disinformation.

As a country that champions democratic governance, Nigeria seeks to lead in discussions on AI's role in protecting the rule of law. Our ongoing

development of a National AI Policy will establish the legal foundations necessary to protect citizens' rights while enabling innovation to thrive.

Bridging the Global Technological Divide: Nigeria's Role

Distinguished delegates, we must also acknowledge that STI, despite its immense potential, can widen the gap between developed and developing nations. Bridging the global technological divide is an urgent task, and Nigeria is ready to play a leading role in this endeavor, particularly within the African context.

As a participant in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), Nigeria is advocating for regional cooperation to create digital economy hubs that can empower African countries to compete globally. Our vision is one where knowledge transfer, capacity building, and infrastructure investments enable us to close the technological gap and ensure that no region is left behind.

To this end, Nigeria is committed to increasing its investment in digital infrastructure, particularly in underserved rural areas. We are actively seeking partnerships with global stakeholders to support our efforts in building a resilient STI ecosystem that can accelerate sustainable development and create opportunities for all.

Regulatory Responses to Rapid Technological Change

The pace of technological change has often outstripped our ability to develop regulatory frameworks that keep up. In Nigeria, we recognize that adaptive, inclusive, and forward-looking regulatory approaches are necessary to navigate the complexities of fintech, AI, and other emerging technologies.

In 2019, we made strides with the introduction of the *Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR)*, which set the foundation for safeguarding personal data.

Conclusion

As I conclude, I reaffirm Nigeria's commitment to harnessing the power of science, technology, and innovation for a more peaceful and sustainable future. Through international collaboration, robust legal frameworks, and investments in digital infrastructure, we believe that STI can drive global

peace and prosperity. We call upon the global community to support these efforts and work together to ensure that technological advancements are a force for good in every part of the world.

Thank you.