

POLICY DIALOGUE ON COMMUNITY RADIODEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA BEING AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS - ORGANIZED BY NIGERIA COMMUNITY RADIO COALITION -AT THE REIZ CONTINENTAL HOTEL, ABUJA ON TUESDAY, JUNE 29, NIGERIA COMMUNITY RADIO COALITION 2010.

Good people of a Great Nation, all protocols observed,

It is with great desire and high esteem for the organizers of this forum that I express my appreciation for being so honoured to be your Special Guest at this august forum in which history is about to be made as we gather to dialogue on a very critical decision making effort in a subject that is very likely to change the face of broadcasting in our dear Nation where we are yet to establish a community radio anywhere in Nigeria.

It is my belief still stand on my belief that Nigeria as a country has what it takes in all manner of resources, human, natural and technical to achieve results in all aspects of developmental endeavors including this one which will affect our rural communities positively and impact on our democratic agenda for creating awareness of government development programmes and raising the standards of living of the common man.

The African Charter on Broadcasting designed a policy for modern broadcasting in Africa with the need for a modernized technology in broadcasting and information technology on a three-tier structure to involve not only the public and commercial terrains in broadcasting but to include the rural community. This agenda will definitely increase the horizon of more people in what I term "participatory governance in democracy". The African Union adopted the idea in its meeting in Maputo Mozambique in 2003.

Based on this adoption, it all means that the AU recognizes the need for community radio which will eventually pluralize the broadcasting industry every where in Africa. By this definition, a community is a group of people who live in the same area, or a group of people with a common background or with shared interests within society or the area in which they live or still- • the financial community.

Implicitly a community refers to a town, an educational institution, a Ministry like my own (Information and Communications), in view of the common interest we share. Therefore, as the name goes, a community radio is a radio station established to serve particularly the interest of any of the communities described above. Technically, a community radio is said to be a low powered FM or AM radio station designed or established strictly to serve the particular interest of the host community.

The KFAI Radio without boundaries [KFAI has been broadcasting since 1978 with major signal expansions in 1982, 1994 and in 2008 to its current level of 900 watts. KFAI, 1808 Riverside Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55454 Tel: 612-341-3144]] is a volunteer-based community radio station that exists to broadcast information, arts and entertainment programming for an audience of diverse racial, social and economic backgrounds. By providing a voice for people

ignored or misrepresented by mainstream media, KFAI increases understanding between peoples and communities, while fostering the values of democracy and social justice.

Basically and for the interest of all stakeholders in this project, it should be understood that people of diverse race and interest reside in the very interior of our rural areas and our own Community Radio Stations when established will serve not only the purposes of indigenous Nigerians but that of their entire residents including our foreign residents and their interests like the KFAI Radio referred above. As a radio station meant to assist the host community in achieving the good intentions for which they are established its management and ownership is representative of the host community which pursues a social development agenda and is non-profit oriented.

Considering the fact that this forum is out to dialogue on and formulate the legislative framework for the establishment of community radio stations in Nigeria, the stakeholders desire the support of government to achieve this laudable objective. The advantages of community radio as can be adjudged from existing ones in developed countries cannot be over-emphasized. Looking at the programmes of KFAI- Radio without boundaries, it will be necessary to use the ideas of the board of directors of KFAI in the formulation of the legal structures that will guide the operation of community radios in Nigeria when they come on board.

They will help to preserve our cultural heritage especially our local languages and traditional dance styles, arts and other cultural backgrounds. (Children cannot speak their local languages anymore. . The reforms in our broadcasting and telecommunications sector is more or less giving great impetus to the organizers of this forum to forge ahead and make community radio broadcasting a reality.

In view of the aforementioned, I wish to urge the organizers of this forum, the Institute for Media and Society, the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission, all stakeholders in this sector and the various communities in our country to synergize their efforts and come up with a very convincing legislative content to convince government to pass into law, all the necessary frameworks that will generate broadcasting licence for community radio. The ethics of the profession must be respected. Fake journalists must not be allowed to take the community radio for granted to cause havoc in this new dispensation.

It is very necessary at this point in time to underscore the need to avoid any situation in the building blocks of the legislative framework of community radio that will give impetus to unscrupulous elements to hijack community radios for clandestine and unruly broadcasting. This might be the challenges Government will not like to encounter because broadcasting is a very powerful tool that could be used to make right things go wrong or inflame low degrees of temper to higher levels that would lead to chaos and anarchy. .

In view of the above, broadcasting of political contents must follow the rules while appropriate consideration will be given to the broadcasting of religious contents.

Licence fees for community radio stations must be made affordable and flexible to allow a level playing ground for all players.

The prerogative of granting licences to communities and every person or group of persons who intend to establish a radio station in Nigeria lies with the President. Advocates of this project must convince Mr. President of their good intention to encourage the establishment of Community radios in our communities in view of its developmental benefits. Hopefully, this will empower investors to look towards our rural communities for economic advancement and other developmental indices. Our communities as stakeholders in the Nigerian project has a lot to do in helping government to restore, protect, and enhance farmlands, prairies, forests, and habitat for fish, game and wildlife. Attention will be given on local media discourse to our cashew industries, rice and other grains farms and above all impact positively on our exuberant youths in their education and other endeavors aimed at improving their standards of life and living in general. Undoubtedly, general living standards will be impacted upon positively and political activities, health matters and other sensitive aspects of rural life will change.

Nevertheless, we must respect and keep to the rules of the game if we are to enjoy the patronage of government at the highest level. The basic broadcasting codes at the community level must be spelt out to avoid any threats to government and its communities.

It is my belief that this exercise will achieve more and far-reaching decisions that will impact on the legal frameworks being formulated to achieve the objectives of the organizers of this forum if this dialogue could be replicated in other geopolitical zones of our country to gather more diverse ideas on the project.

Good people of a great Nation, Today, the Nigeria Community Radio Coalition has set the beacon of direction for the achievement of the aims and objectives of our rebranding project in building a better Nigeria through the establishment of Community Radio Broadcasting in Nigeria. Once again I feel highly honoured and I am proud of your endeavors.

Please accept my gratitude as I wish you great success in this history you are about to write starting from today.

Thank you for listening.