

BENIN MONARCH COMMEND STARCOMMS ON YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

BENIN. The Oba of Benin Kingdom, His Royal Majesty, Oba Erediauwa has commended Starcomms Nigeria's 4th largest telecommunications operator and leading "triple-play" (mobile, fixed wireless voice, wireless broadband) provider for empowering 50 youths of the area through the provision of business opportunities. The monarch made the commendation in his palace during the official commissioning ceremony of Starcomms services and products in Benin City.

The Oba said the provision of *Smart Center* phones, chairs, tables and umbrellas will go a long way in alleviating the chronic unemployment situation in the state. He applauded Starcomms bold initiative which should be emulated by other service providers who should identify one area of social need and tackle it. He offered his royal blessing and prayer for the success of the company.

Speaking prior to the Oba's endorsement, Mr. Maher Qubain CEO Starcomms said 'This official launch is indeed a very special occasion for the company because we will not only be launching our services, but we will also be giving 50 indigent citizens of Benin Kingdom *Smart Centre* phones so that they can start business on their own.'

Qubain who was represented at the occasion by Dr. Sam Nwosu, Sales Director of the company stressed that the road that has led Starcomms to this momentous occasion has been long but 'we have navigated it in a sure-footed manner.'

He presented the scorecard of Starcomms in the last couple of months with emphasis on what transpired since the company received the unified licence in late 2006 which further gave the company the impetus of penetrating the market in spite of mounting competition through the deployment of cutting edge technology.

He told the royal audience that Starcomms is the first CDMA network to cross the million mark at a time most of its competitors are struggling to make half the figure. This feat clearly, he stressed, 'marks us out as Nigeria's fastest growing CDMA Company and consolidated our position as the 4th largest telecommunications operator in the country.' In recognition of this feat the company won a series of awards which includes the Telecom Company of the Year, CEO of the Year and the Most Customer Sensitive Company of the Year award among other awards won.

The 50 youths that were empowered were further assured that the company will not stop there but will continue to provide opportunities to further empower them through consumer engagement promotion such as the recently concluded BOYO promotion which produced 12 millionaires, a brand new Kia car owner, motorcycles, thousands of phones and millions of Naira worth of airtime.

Oubain concluded by saying that the company's 'business model is designed in a way that most of our operations are driven largely by Nigerians and a limited number of expatriates. I am bold to say that we are the only major operator with the least number of foreigners. You can crosscheck that.'

Speaking on behalf of the recipients of the *Smart Center* facilities, Mr. Odin Edebiri poured encomium on Starcomms for recognizing a social need and addressing same. 'Youth unemployment is one of the greatest problems we face here and for a company to identify that and take a bold step at addressing it is worth commending. There are thousands of graduates walking the streets with virtually nothing to do. I hope other companies will take a cue from this and assist in other spheres of endeavour.' Edebiri added.

The highly successful launch, which was widely endorsed by the people of Benin, attracted other Bini chiefs including Chief Tayo Akpata, former secretary of Petroleum Trust Fund (PTF), The Edo cultural group and other stakeholders.