SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY, MALAM DIKKO UMARU RADDA, PHD, THE EXECUTIVE GOVERNOR OF KATSINA STATE, AT THE AREWA TECH FEST 2.0 ON 21ST MAY 2025.

Protocol:

Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuh.

It is with great honor and a deep sense of pride that I stand before you today to address this distinguished gathering at Arewa Tech Fest 2.0 — a platform that not only celebrates innovation but also redefines what is possible for our region through the transformative power of technology.

I bring to you warm greetings from the people of Katsina State, a land steeped in history, tradition, and scholarship, now boldly stepping into a new era as a hub of digital transformation, technological advancement, and inclusive growth.

This event symbolizes more than just a convergence of minds around technology — it represents hope, ambition, and the dawn of a new narrative for Northern Nigeria. One where we are no longer defined by our challenges, but inspired by our potential.

Let me be very clear: the future is not something we wait for — it is something we must actively build. And in Katsina State, we are not waiting. We are building — brick by brick, code by code, idea by idea.

When we assumed office, we were guided by a singular vision: to create a future powered by knowledge, driven by innovation, and open to opportunity — not just for a privileged few, but for every citizen, especially our youth, who are the heartbeat and hands of our great region.

To realize this vision, we took bold and decisive action early on. One of our first policy decisions was to waive Right of Way (RoW) charges across the

entire state. This was not just a symbolic gesture — it was a clear message to investors, telecom operators, and tech infrastructure providers:

We understand that without connectivity, there can be no meaningful participation in the digital economy. Without access, opportunity remains a distant dream for many. That is why we have laid the foundation — quite literally — by investing in fiber optic networks, **telecom towers, and smart infrastructure that connects our cities, towns, and even remote communities.

But infrastructure alone is not enough. Technology must be accessible, understood, and utilized by the people it is meant to serve.

That is why we are making massive investments in digital literacy and capacity-building programs for our civil servants. We are equipping them with the tools and skills necessary to deliver services efficiently, transparently, and effectively —

transforming governance into a responsive, data-driven enterprise.

Beyond the walls of government, we are reaching into classrooms and communities. In Katsina, we are ensuring that our children begin learning digital literacy from a young age — not just how to use technology, but how to create it, shape it, and lead with it.

Through targeted initiatives, we are identifying and supporting brilliant young minds with scholarships to study cutting-edge disciplines such as Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, and Biotechnology in some of the world's leading universities.

Because we don't want our youth to merely consume global innovations — we want them to be creators, inventors, and leaders in the global tech space.

To institutionalize and accelerate this vision, we established the Katsina State Directorate of

Information, Communication, and Digital Transformation (KATDICT). This is not another bureaucratic arm of government — it is a strategic Launchpad designed to drive our digital agenda forward.

KATDICT exists to support our innovation ecosystem, facilitate partnerships, and ensure that technology becomes a powerful tool for solving real-life challenges — whether it's poverty, unemployment, healthcare delivery, education, or public service efficiency.

At the heart of all of these efforts lies a clear and focused mission: to build an economy beyond agriculture, to create technical skills at scale, to attract new investments, and to give our young people a genuine and sustainable shot at a better life.

We are not here to replicate the development models of others. We are here to leapfrog — to move boldly and creatively, using technology as a catalyst

to break the cycle of underdevelopment and write a new chapter of prosperity for the North.

Our digital transformation is not a side project — it is central to everything we do. It is the engine driving our broader economic diversification strategy. It is how we intend to generate revenue, create jobs, and restore dignity and purpose to our youth.

To our young people here today: The time of waiting is over. You are not the leaders of tomorrow — you are the innovators of today. The future is already here, and it has your name written all over it.

To our partners, investors, and ecosystem builders: Join us. Collaborate with us. Build with us. The doors of Katsina are wide open — not just for investment, but for shared impact, sustainable growth, and mutual success.

To my fellow leaders across the North: Let us not fear the future — let us shape it together. Let us implement policies that empower, invest in

infrastructure that connects, and foster a shared vision that leaves no one behind.

In closing, allow me to remind you that in the knowledge economy, power does not reside in the ownership of land or resources alone — it resides in the ability to generate, manage, and apply ideas.
And in this North that we call home, ideas are rising.

Thank you.
God bless Arewa.
God bless Katsina State.
God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.