Telecommunications
Law and Regulation
in Nigeria
To Sir Moses Orji & Lady Christiana Orji (KSJ).
To my siblings: Ify, Ngozi, Tobechukwu, and Ugochukwu.
To Emmanuel Orji.
And to the living memory of Orji Jerome Arochukwu Esq.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Cases ........................................................................................................... xvi
Table of Statutes and Regulations ........................................................................... xx
Table of International Instruments ......................................................................... xxiii
List of Tables ............................................................................................................ xxiv
Foreword .................................................................................................................. xxv
Preface ..................................................................................................................... xxvi
Author’s Biography ................................................................................................. xxxi
List of Abbreviations ............................................................................................... xxxii

Chapter One ............................................................................................................... 1
An Introduction to Telecommunications Law and Regulation
  1. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1
  1.1 Defining Telecommunications ................................................................. 1
  1.2. The Historical Origins and Evolution of Telecommunications ......... 4
  1.3 An Overview of Major Telecommunication Systems ....................... 10
  1.3.1 Fixed Telecommunication Systems .............................................. 10
  1.3.2 Wireless Telecommunication Systems ....................................... 12
  1.4 Law and Regulation in the Telecommunications Industry ............. 21
  1.4.1 Early Regulation of the Telecommunications Industry .......... 22
  1.4.2 Major Objectives of Telecommunications Regulation ............ 25
  1.4.3 Essence of Regulating the Telecommunications Industry ...... 27
  1.5 Approaches to Telecommunications Regulation .......................... 32
  1.5.1 The Ex ante Approach ................................................................. 32
  1.5.2 The Ex post Approach ................................................................. 34
  1.6 Critical Components of Telecommunications Regulation ........... 35
  1.6.1 Policy and Legal Components .................................................. 36
  1.6.2 Organizational/Institutional Components ............................... 39
  1.7 Institutional Regulatory Models ......................................................... 42
## Table of Contents

1.7.1 Single Sector Regulation ....................................................... 42  
1.7.2 Converged Regulation ........................................................... 43  
1.7.3 Multi-Sector Regulation ......................................................... 45  
1.7.4 Regulation through a General Competition Regime .............. 45  
1.8 Telecommunications as a Field of Law ........................................ 47  
1.9 Concluding Remarks ............................................................... 48  

Chapter Two .............................................................................................. 49  
An Overview of the Nigerian Telecommunications Industry  
2. Introduction ..................................................................................... 49  
2.1 Background on Nigeria ............................................................... 49  
2.2 The Historical Development of the Telecommunications Industry in Nigeria .................................................. 51  
2.2.1 The Colonial Era: 1886-1960 ................................................. 51  
2.2.2 The Post-Colonial Era: 1960-1985 ....................................... 53  
2.2.3 1985-1999: The Beginning of Commercialization and Liberalization .................................................. 57  
2.2.4 1999-2017: Full Market Liberalization ................................ 63  
2.2.5 The Privatization of NITEL ................................................... 77  
2.3 A Brief Overview of the Contemporary Telecommunications Industry in Nigeria .................................................. 83  
2.4 Concluding Remarks ............................................................... 89  

Chapter Three ............................................................................................ 90  
Policy and Regulatory Frameworks Governing the Nigerian Telecommunications Industry  
3. Introduction ...................................................................................... 90  
3.1 The Legal Basis for the Regulation of the Nigerian Telecommunications Industry .................................................. 90  
3.2 The National Policy on Telecommunications ................................ 92  
3.3 The National Radio Frequency Management Policy ............... 96  
3.4 The Commercial Frequency Management Policy (Administrative Procedures and Technical Guidelines) ................................ 98  
3.5 The Nigerian National Policy for Information Technology ....... 99  
3.6 The National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Draft Policy .................................................. 100  
3.6.1 Proposed Governance Structure for ICT Sector ............... 102  
3.6.2 Regulatory Convergence ................................................... 102  
3.7.1 Broadband as an Essential Right ........................................ 109  
3.8 The Guidelines for Nigerian Content Development in ICT ....... 111
4.10 Management and Assignment of Numbers and Electronic Addresses ................................................................. 189
4.11 Technical Standardization of Telecommunications Network Equipment ......................................................................................... 190
  4.11.1 Type Approval of Telecommunications Equipment .......... 192
4.12 Concluding Remarks .......................................................................................................................... 195

Chapter Five .......................................................................................................................... 196
Installation of Telecommunication Network Infrastructure
  5. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 196
  5.1 General Principles Governing the Installation of Network Facilities .............................................................. 197
    5.1.1 The Duty of Care .................................................................................................................. 197
    5.1.2 Compliance with Environmental Standards ........................................................................ 199
  5.2 Design and Installation of Telecommunication Masts and Towers .................................................................................. 202
  5.3 Installation of Fiber Optic Cables ................................................................. 206
    5.3.1 Fiber Optic Submarine Cables .................................................................................................. 207
    5.3.2 Metropolitan Fiber Optic Cables ............................................................................................ 209
  5.4 Installation of Earth-based Network Infrastructure for Communication Satellites .................................................. 210
  5.5 Challenges to the Deployment of Telecommunications Network Infrastructure ................................................................. 213
    5.5.1 Multiple and Conflicting Regulation by State Actors .......... 214
    5.5.2 Multiple and Illegal Taxation .............................................................................................. 227
    5.5.3 Security of Telecommunications Infrastructure ....................................................................... 236
    5.5.4 Lack of Adequate Power Supply .......................................................................................... 241
    5.5.5 Unharmonized Administration of Right of Way Permits ................................................ 245
  5.6 Concluding Remarks .................................................................................................................. 248

Chapter Six .......................................................................................................................... 250
Consumer Protection
  6. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 250
  6.1 The Concept of Consumer Protection .................................................................................. 250
  6.2 The Essence of Consumer Protection in Telecommunications .......................................................... 253
  6.3 The Consumer Protection Regime in the Nigerian Telecommunications Industry ........................................................................... 255
  6.4 Consumer Protection under the NCA .............................................................. 255
  6.5 The Consumer Code of Practice Regulations .......................................................... 257
    6.5.1 Specific Obligations of Service Providers under the NCC’s General Consumer Code of Practice ........................................................................... 257
7.4.1 Regulation of Mergers and Acquisitions under the CPR ..... 392
7.4.2 Regulation of Mergers and Acquisitions under the Investment
and Securities Act ................................................................. 397
7.4.3 Regulation of Mergers and Acquisitions under the Companies
Income Tax Act ................................................................. 402
7.5 Enforcement Procedures for Competition related Complaints
under the CPR .................................................................. 402
7.5.1 Enforcement Proceedings Initiated by an Interested Party .. 402
7.5.2 Enforcement Proceedings Initiated by the NCC .......... 404
7.5.3 Conclusion of Enforcement Proceedings ..................... 404
7.6 Concluding Remarks ................................................... 406

Chapter Eight ................................................................................... 407
Regulation of Telecommunications Interconnection and Network Access
8. Introduction .............................................................................. 407
8.1 The Concept of Telecommunications Interconnection .......... 407
8.2 The Essence of Interconnection Regulation ....................... 410
8.3 Regulation of Interconnection Arrangements in Nigeria ...... 412
8.4 Interconnection Rights and Obligations .............................. 416
8.5 Interconnection Agreements ................................................. 418
8.5.1 Registration and Approval of Interconnection
Agreements ........................................................................ 420
8.6 Interconnection Procedures .................................................. 421
8.6.1 Request for a New Form of Interconnection ............... 423
8.7 Principles Relating to Interconnection Charges ................. 424
8.8 Location of ‘Points of Interconnection’ and Interconnection
Links ......................................................................................... 425
8.9 Obligations Relating to the Technical Compatibility
of Interconnected Networks ................................................. 427
8.10 General Interconnection Principles .................................... 427
8.11 Special Interconnection Obligations of Dominant Operators . 428
8.11.1 Special Obligations of Dominant Operators with respect to
Interconnection Charges ......................................................... 431
8.11.2 Special Obligations of Dominant Operators with respect to
Accounting Separation ......................................................... 432
8.12 Termination of Interconnection Agreements .................... 433
8.13 Resolution of Interconnection Disputes ............................ 435
8.14 Collocation and Infrastructure Sharing ............................. 436
8.15 General Regulation of Telecommunications Network Access .. 442
8.16 Concluding Remarks ....................................................... 444
Chapter Nine ........................................................................................................ 446
Universal Access and Service
9. Introduction ........................................................................................................ 446
9.1 The Concept of Universal Access and Service ............................................. 447
  9.1.1 Objectives of Universal Access and Service Regimes ......................... 449
  9.1.2 Approaches to Implementing Universal Access and Service Regimes ..... 454
9.2 Universal Access and Service in the Human Rights Context ...................... 455
  9.2.1 Recognition of Internet Access as a Human Right ................................. 458
9.3 The Universal Access and Service Regime in Nigeria ................................. 466
9.4 The Universal Access and Service Regime under the National Policy on Telecommunications ................................................................. 467
9.5 Universal Access and Service under the Vision 20:2020 Framework ............ 468
9.6 Universal Access and Service under the Draft National ICT Policy .............. 468
9.7. The Universal Access and Service Regime under the NCA ....................... 469
  9.7.1 The Universal Service Provision Fund .................................................... 472
9.8 Universal Access and Service in the Context of Nigeria’s Broadband Regime ................................................................. 488
  9.8.1 The Broadband Regime under the Draft National ICT Policy ................. 493
  9.8.3 The Nigerian Open Access Model for Next Generation Optic Fiber Broadband Networks .............................................................. 495
9.9 Challenges Hindering Universal Access to Broadband in Nigeria ............... 497
9.10 Access of Persons with Disabilities to Telecommunication Services in Nigeria ................................................................. 502
  9.10.1 Legal Basis for Promoting the Access of Persons with Disabilities to ICTs and Telecommunications ............................................. 504
  9.10.2 Access of Persons with Disabilities to Telecommunications under the NCA and CCPR .......................................................... 507
  9.10.3 Access to Telecommunications under the Nigerians with Disability Act ................................................................. 508
  9.10.4 An Overview of Trends in Other Jurisdictions .................................... 510
9.11 Concluding Remarks ..................................................................................... 512
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Ten</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Introduction</td>
<td>514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1 Environmental Protection and Public Health</td>
<td>515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2 Legal Basis for Promoting Environmental Protection</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3 Environmental and Public Health Concerns in the Telecom Industry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3.1 Habitat Alteration</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3.2 Aesthetic Harm</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3.3 Interference with Property Rights</td>
<td>523</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3.4 Discharge of Hazardous Materials and Waste</td>
<td>525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3.5 Green House Emissions and Noise Pollution</td>
<td>526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3.6 Exposure to Radiation from Electromagnetic Fields</td>
<td>527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4 The Environmental Protection and Public Health Regime under the NCA and the NCC Guidelines for the Installation of Masts and Towers</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4.1 Siting of Telecommunication Masts and Towers</td>
<td>537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4.2 Prevention of Air and Noise Pollution</td>
<td>539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4.3 Prevention of EMF Radiation Exposure</td>
<td>539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.4.4 Maintenance and Abandonment of Towers</td>
<td>539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.5 The Environmental Impact Assessment Act</td>
<td>540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.6 The National Environmental (Standards for Telecommunications and Broadcast Facilities) Regulations</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.6.1 Installation of Telecommunication Base Stations and Towers</td>
<td>544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.6.2 Environmental Audit and Monitoring of Base Stations and Towers</td>
<td>547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.6.3 Abandonment and Decommissioning of Base Stations and Towers</td>
<td>547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.6.4 Prevention of Human Exposure to EMF Radiation</td>
<td>549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.6.5 Prevention of Pollution from Power Generators</td>
<td>549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.6.6 Enforcement Powers and Sanctions</td>
<td>551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.7 Challenges to the Environmental Regulation of the Telecom Industry</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.7.1 Multiple and Conflicting Regulation by State Actors at Different Tiers of Government</td>
<td>553</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.7.2 Prolonged Environmental Impact Assessment of Proposed Telecom Sites</td>
<td>557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.7.3 Poor Urban Planning</td>
<td>559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.7.4 Poor Infrastructure Sharing</td>
<td>559</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE OF CASES

AG v. Edison Telephone Company of London [1880] 6 QBD 244........... 23
AKZO Chemie BV v. European Commission (Case C-62/86)
[1991] ECR I-3359 ........................................................................... 373
All Progressive Congress (APC) v. NCC & Others [2015]
(Unreported Suit) ........................................................................... 124
Amadi v. NNPC [2000] 10 NWLR (Pt. 674) ...................................... 583
Ambulanz Glocker and Landkreis Sudwestpfalz v. Commission
[2001] ECR 1-0000 ........................................................................... 383
Attorney General of Lagos State v. the Attorney General of
the Federation [2003] 12 NWLR (Pt. 833) ................................... 217, 226, 554
Attorney General of Ogun State v. Aberuagba [1985] 1 NWLR
(Pt.3) 395 ....................................................................................... 217
Aribisila v. Ogunyemi [2005] 6 NWLR (Pt. 921) ............................ 583
ATC Reality LLC v. Town of Kingston 303 F. 3d 91, 94
(1st Cir. 2002) ............................................................................... 226

Bluechip Communications Nigeria Ltd v. NCC [2008] Unreported,
Appeal, No. CA/A/108/2004 ......................................................... 136, 581

Cable and Wireless (Dominica) Ltd v. Marpin Telecoms
and Broadcasting Co. Ltd [2001] W.L.R. 1123 ......................... 566
CELTEL Nigeria Ltd and MTN Nigeria Communications Ltd

Digital Rights Ireland v. Minister of Communications & Others,
Judgment of the European Court of Justice (8 April, 2014) .......... 341
Dunlop Pneumatic Tyre Co. Ltd v. Selfridge Ltd [1915] AC 847 .... 272

ECONET Wireless Nigeria Ltd v. NCC, [2005] Unreported,
Appeal No.CA/A/83/2004 ............................................................. 135, 581
EMTS (Etisalat) Ltd v. MTN Ltd & Visafone Ltd [2016]
(Unreported), Suit No. FHC/L/CS/130/2016 ......................... 134, 386
Ekeogu v. Aliri [1991] 3 NWLR (Pt. 179) ....................................... 582
Europeballage and Continental Can v. European Commission
[1973] ECR 215 ................................................................. 459, 460
European Commission v. Portuguese Republic (Case C-154/09),
ECR [2010] I-00127 ................................................................. 459, 460
European Commission v. Portuguese Republic (Case C-76/13)
[2013/C 123/17] ................................................................. 460
France Telecom SA v. European Commission (Case C-202/07)
[2009] ECR I-2369 ................................................................. 373

General Sani Abacha v. Chief Gani Fawehinmi [2000] 6 NWLR
(Pt. 660) ................................................................. 520
GKF Investment Nigeria Ltd v. Nigerian Telecommunications Plc
[2009] 15 NWLR (Pt. 1164) ................................................................. 275
Goldfinch v. Auckland City Council [1996] NZRMA 97 .... 524

Helios Tower Ltd v. Mr. Isiaka Bello (Unreported) Appeal
CA/EK/71/2014 ................................................................. 525

Hoffman La Foche v. European Commission ("Vitamins"),
Case 85/76, [1976] ECR 461 ................................................................. 379, 428

Intercellular Nigeria Plc v. MTN Nigeria Ltd (NCC Decision,
3 March, 2006) ................................................................. 434, 435
Interconnect Clearing House Nigeria Ltd v. MTN Nigeria
Communications Ltd [NCC Decision, 9 May, 2006] .... 417

Italy v. Commission (British Telecommunications),
Case 41/83 [1985] ECR 873 ................................................................. 566

Jeph C. Njikonye Esq. v. MTN Nigeria, [2008] 9 NWLR
(Pt. 1091) ................................................................. 276, 277

John Byer’s Case [1414] YB 2 Hen 5 ................................................................. 361

Katsina Local Government v. Makudawa [1971] 1 NWLR (Pt.100) ...... 583


Marper v. the UK [2008] ECHR Nos. 30562/04; 30566/04, [2008] ...... 331
Michley v. Christchurch City Council [1996] NZRMA 289 ........... 524

Mike Nkwocha & Others v. MTN Nigeria Communications Ltd &
ECONET Wireless Nigeria Ltd [2008] 11 NWLR (Pt. 1099) ... 279, 280
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Cases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mims v. Arrow Financial Services LLC (2012) 132 S.Ct. 740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.K v. France [2013] (No.19522/09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Producing (Nig) Unlimited v. LASEPA [2002] 18 NWLR (Pt. 798)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobitel Ltd v. The Minister of Information and Communication &amp; Others [2010] (Unreported), Suit No. FHC/ABJ/M312/09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTN Nigeria Ltd v. Godfrey Eneye [2017] (Unreported) Appeal No. CA/A/689/2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multichoice Nigeria Ltd v. Mr. Bankole Azeez, [2010] 15 NWLR (Pt. 1215)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationwide Action against Corruption &amp; another v. ECONET Wireless Ltd &amp; Others, [2008] (Unreported) Appeal No. CA/A/10/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCC v. Motophone Ltd &amp; Another, [2007] LPELR-CA/A/189/05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NESREA v. Helios Towers and the Kaduna Environmental Protection Agency [2015] (Unreported Suit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigerian Telecommunications Plc v. Chief S.J. Mayaki, [2007]4 NWLR (Pt.1023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nnonye v. Ayichie [2005] 2 NWLR (Pt. 910)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okoi Obono-Obla v. NCC and MTN Communications Nigeria Ltd [2010] (Unreported), Suit No. FHC/ABJ/382/CS/2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orakul Resources Ltd v. NCC &amp; Others [2005] (Unreported), Appeal No. CA/A/96/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebold Industries Ltd v. Olubukola &amp; Others, NSCQR (April –June, 2015)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Registered of the National Association of Community Health Practitioners of Nigeria & Others v. Medical Health Workers Union of Nigeria (2008) NWLR (Pt. 1072) ................................................. 506
Residents Living Next to a Phone Mast v. Bouygues Telecom S.A. [2009] (Judgment of the Versailles Court of Appeal, 4 February 2009) ........................................................................................................ 543
Rogers v. Parrey [1613] 80 ER 1012 ........................................................... 361
Shehla Zia v. Water Development Authority (WAPAD) [1994] SC 693 ................................................................................................. 533
Social and Economic Social Rights Action (SERAC) and the Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) v. Nigeria, No.155/96, ACHPR/COMM/A044/I (27 May, 2002) ........................................... 519
Shirley Primary School v. Telecom Mobile Communications Ltd [1999] NZRMA 66 .............................................................................. 524
Shuwa v. Chad Basin Authority [1991] 7 NWLR (Pt. 205) .................... 272
Telecom Corporation of NZ Ltd v. Clear Communications Ltd (1992) 4 NZBLC .......................................................... 30, 47, 367, 412
Telemarketing v. CLT [1985] ECR 3261 .................................................. 379, 428
Town of Amherst v. Omnipoint Communications Inc, 173 F. 3d, 13 (1st Cir. 1999) ............................................................... 226
Tweedle v. Atkinson (1861) 1 B85 393 .................................................. 272
Umukoro v. NPA [1997] 4 NWLR (Pt. 502) 667 .................................... 583
Yabugbe v. C.O.P [1992] 4 NWLR (Pt. 234) 152 .................................. 582
# Table of Statutes and Regulations

**Nigeria**

- Cable and Wireless Act (1962)
- Companies and Allied Matters Act (1990)
- Companies Income Tax Act
- Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention etc) Act (2015)
- Education Tax Act (1993)
- Environmental Impact Assessment Act (1992)
- Industrial Training Fund (Amendment) Act (2011)
- Investment and Securities Act (2007)
- Lagos State Urban and Regional Planning and Development Law (2010)
- Land Use Act
- National Lottery Act (2005)
- National Space Research and Development Agency Act (2010)
- Nigerian Communications Commission Act (1992)
- Nigerians with Disability Act (1993)
- Public Officers Protection Act
- Standard Organization of Nigeria (SON) Act
- Taxes and Levies (Approved Rates for Collection) Act
- Terrorism (Prevention) Act (2011)
- Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act (2013)
- Wireless Telegraphy Act (1961)
- Wireless Telegraphy Ordinance (1948)

- Annual Operating Levy Regulations (2014)
Competition Practices Regulations (2007)
Consumer Code of Practice Regulations (2007)
Consumer Protection (Sales Promotions) Regulations (2005)
Draft Lawful Interception of Communications Regulations (2013)
Draft Licensing Regulations (2013)
Guidelines on Advertisements and Promotions
Guidelines on Procedure for Granting Approval to Disconnect Telecommunications Operators (2012)
Mobile Number Portability Regulations (2014)
National Environmental (Standards for Telecommunications and Broadcast Facilities) Regulations (2011)
Numbering Regulations (2008)
Quality of Service Regulations (2012)
Registration of Telephone Subscribers Regulations (2011)
Short Form Procedure Applicable for Small Claims Consumer Disputes Arbitration (2004)
Telecommunications Networks Interconnection Regulations (2003)
Telecommunications Networks Interconnection Regulations (2007)
Universal Access and Universal Service Regulations (2007)

**Australia**

Australian Disability Discrimination Act (1992)
Australian Telecommunications (Consumer Protection and Service Standards) Act (1999)
Australian Telecommunications (Equipment for the Disabled) Regulations (1998)

**Canada**

Act for the Prevention and Suppression of Combinations formed in Restraint of Trade (1889)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Statutes/Regulations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>Estonian Public Information Act (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Estonian Telecommunications Act (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Communications Market Act (2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>New Zealand Telecommunications Act (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Zealand Telecommunications Amendment Act (2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Telecommunications Act of South Africa (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>Sustainable Economy Act (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Americans with Disabilities Act (1990)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mann-Elkins Act (1910)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sherman Act (1890)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Telephone Consumer Protection Act (1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>United States Communications Act (1934)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>United States Telephone Consumer Protection Act (1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Instruments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection (2014)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOWAS Supplementary Act on Personal Data Protection (2010)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU Directive on Privacy and Electronic Communications (2009)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Agreement on Trade in Services (1994)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (1966)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Telecommunication Regulations (2012)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCITRAL Model Law on International Commercial Conciliation,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/RES/57/18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations Frame Work Convention on Climate Change (1992)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Nigeria’s Telecommunications Subscriber Statistics  
(January, 2018) ................................................................. 85  
Table 2: Market Share by GSM Operators (January, 2018) 85  
Table 3: Percentage of Market Share by Technology (January, 2018) 86  
Table 4: Submarine Cables with Landing Points in Nigeria 86  
Table 5: EIRP and Specified Distance from Residential 
   Areas/Buildings .............................................................. 212  
Table 6: Universal Access and Service Definitions 471  
Table 7: Permissible Noise Levels for Residential Areas, Hospitals, 
   Schools and Commercial Areas ........................................... 551
The Nigerian telecommunications industry is witnessing a revolution, largely due to the country’s policy shift from monopolistic telecommunications markets to liberalized competitive markets. This policy has brought about a substantial increase in foreign direct investment and unprecedented growth in network capacity and coverage in the country. Dr. Uchenna J. Orji’s *Telecommunications Law and Regulation in Nigeria* is a highly welcome addition to the body of literature in the field.

Nigeria has embarked on a journey towards digital transformation, which is a catalyst for social and sustainable economic growth. Hence, the need to pay attention to five interdependent elements of the digital transformation ecosystem: enabling policies and institutions, human capital, applied ICT industry, communications infrastructure and ICT applications, and institutional change. Therefore, any attempt to enrich the body of knowledge of the telecommunications regulatory framework must be encouraged by all and sundry.

This book has covered in detail the evolution and legal basis for the regulation of the telecommunications industry. Furthermore, the book discussed the regulatory mandate in the Nigerian Communications Act (2003), and the vital role it played in the full liberalization of the telecommunications industry. Different aspects of the industry’s regulatory framework were elaborately discussed in chapters of the book, which include licensing, competition, consumer protection, interconnection and network access, universal access and service, environmental protection and public health, and the resolution of telecommunication disputes. The encumbering challenges facing the industry, especially the challenges impeding the deployment of the telecommunications infrastructure in Nigeria were also discussed in detail. This book makes a very significant contribution to telecommunications regulation in Nigeria and the author’s effort is highly commendable.

*Professor Umar Garba Danbatta, PhD, FNSE, FRAES  
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The Nigerian telecommunications industry has continued to grow in a phenomenal manner following the implementation of market liberalization reforms that were initiated in the 1990’s. Recent statistics from the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) indicate that Nigeria grew from having one of the world’s lowest teledensity rates with about 400,000 lines in 2000, to having over 147 million telecommunication subscribers by 2018. The NCC’s statistics also indicate that Nigeria achieved a teledensity of 105.21 percent by the beginning of 2018 from 0.38 percent in 2000. Nigeria currently has the largest population of telecommunication subscribers in Africa, and also one of the largest in the world. The National Bureau of Statistics estimates that the telecommunications industry contributes about 8.69 percent to Nigeria’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) according to the rebased national GDP data. The industry is also regarded as the fourth pillar of the Nigerian economy in terms of GDP contribution and the fastest growing at a rate of 24 percent. With these developments, the telecommunications industry has become a

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2 Ibid.
critical economic sector and a strategic enabler of Nigeria’s social and economic development.

This book presents an analysis of the legal/regulatory and policy regime that governs the Nigerian telecommunications industry. The book aims to provide a critical and informative analysis of Nigeria’s telecommunications regime with a view to identifying deficiencies or gaps in the regime or its enforcement, while also proposing remedial responses. In so doing, the book elucidates the provisions of legal and regulatory instruments that govern the industry and contributes to the development of scholarly research on telecommunications law and regulation in Nigeria.

The book comprises eleven chapters. In order to provide for a broad understanding of the subject matter, chapter one provides a background discussion on the meaning of telecommunications, the historical evolution of telecommunications and its regulation, the approaches to telecommunications regulation, the objectives of regulation, and the critical components of telecommunications regulation. The chapter also discusses telecommunications as a field of law.

Chapter two presents an overview of the Nigerian telecommunications industry, including its historical development from 1886 to 2017. It highlights the major developments that shaped the industry, including the history of policy and regulatory developments in the industry such as the implementation of market liberalization and deregulation reforms, and the privatization of national telecommunications assets. Chapter three examines the legal basis for the regulation of the telecommunications industry in Nigeria, as well as the policies and legal/regulatory frameworks that govern the industry. In particular, a special attention is given to the Nigerian Communications Act (NCA) of 2003 with an examination of the functions and powers of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) and the Minister of Communications under the Act. The chapter also examines the regulatory independence of the NCC and the mechanisms for ensuring its accountability.

Chapter four examines the licensing of telecommunications service providers in Nigeria, including the assignment of radio frequency spectrum, the allocation of numbering resources, and the technical standardization of telecommunications network equipment. The chapter also discusses the general duties of licensed operators under the NCA. Chapter five examines the regulation of the installation of
telecommunications network infrastructure in Nigeria and the major challenges that impede the deployment of such infrastructure, including multiple regulation and taxation by State actors. Chapter six examines the protection of consumers in the telecommunications industry, including legal and regulatory frameworks for consumer redress and the major challenges that impede consumer protection in the industry.

Chapter seven examines the regulation of competition in the telecommunications industry and discusses issues such as the prohibition of anti-competitive practices, the control of dominance, and the regulation of mergers and acquisitions. Chapter eight examines the regulation of interconnection and network access, including collocation and infrastructure sharing in the telecommunications industry. Chapter nine examines the universal access and service regime in the industry and also considers the challenges to universal access and service in Nigeria. Chapter ten examines the environmental protection and public health regime that applies to the telecommunications industry, as well as major challenges that affect the environmental regulation of the industry in Nigeria. The book ends with chapter eleven which discusses the regulatory regime for the resolution of disputes in the telecommunications industry.

The telecommunications industry remains a highly technical and naturally dynamic industry that has not been a usual area for legal research in developing countries including Nigeria. As such, there has been little legal research on the regulation of the Nigerian telecommunications industry. Within that context, this book aims to address the existing knowledge gap by analyzing and elucidating the legal and regulatory regime that govern the Nigerian telecommunications industry while also providing input for further reforms in the industry. The book also aims to make a contribution towards understanding the history of the industry as well as the policy and regulatory developments that shaped it.

Telecommunications as a field of law will remain an interesting area of study and practice due to the technical nature of the telecommunications industry and the rapid pace of technological innovations in the industry. This inherently dynamic nature of the industry generally tends to make it difficult for law and regulation to keep up with the fast pace of technological developments in the industry. Therefore, developments in the telecommunications industry would continue to race ahead of law and regulation. However, issues addressed in this book will remain relevant for a long time to lawyers, law students, regulators, researchers, policy
makers, legislators, consumers, operators, investors, and any person interested in the Nigerian telecommunications industry.

Most chapters of this book were developed from parts of my Doctorate Degree (PhD) thesis titled: *A Critical Review of the Legal Regime for Telecommunications in Nigeria*, which was undertaken at the Faculty of Law (Department of Commercial Law), Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria, between 2013 and 2016. I take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Professor Greg Nwakoby who supervised my doctoral thesis for his guidance and encouragement. My sincere thanks go to Professor Ian Walden (Institute for Communications Law, Queen Mary University of London) who gave me valuable material during the research for my doctoral thesis. My gratitude also goes to Professor Bert-Jaap Koops, (Institute for Law, Technology, and Society, Tilburg University) for his encouragement. Professor Muhammed T. Ladan (Department of Public Law, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria) facilitated my access to some research material of which I am grateful.

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