

Remarks by Mr. Christopher Wambua, Acting Director General, Communications Authority of Kenya (CA) During the Conext East Africa Summit on 11th October 2023

Mr. Eliud Owalo, FIHRM, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Information, Communications and the Digital Economy

Ms. Fiona Asonga, Chief Executive Officer, Technology Service Providers of Kenya

Representative of the Digital Council Africa

Actors in the digital and innovation space

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Allow me first of all, to appreciate the TESPOK and Digital Council Africa for hosting this inaugural gathering of experts in the digital and innovation sphere to discuss emerging issues within the East African region.

Forums such as what we are having here now, enables policy makers and actors in the private sector to foster progressive engagements that can grow our digital economy, to transform the lives of our citizens, and catalyze our socio-economic growth.

I am particularly gratified to note that the theme for this important engagement is *Interdependence and collaboration for a shared future* which truly speaks to the realities of our time, where mutual collaborations across the private and public sectors have taken centre stage, as a key to a thriving digital economy.

Indeed, in line with the Government's digital transformation agenda, digital infrastructure, is the engine powering all sectors of our economy. From the Internet, broadband, mobile telecommunications, applications, data centres, systems and software, cloud services and the entire security framework around the safety of such infrastructure becomes paramount.

As the ICT regulator, we attach great importance to increased ICT connectivity and its impact on the digital economy, and we seek to increasingly drive its adoption in all sectors of the economy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

ICTs are having a profound impact on the Built Environment. Smart buildings have become a model for achieving sustainability and environmental consciousness by reducing carbon emissions.

Globally, the need to infuse energy efficiency in the built environment through advanced controls, energy monitoring and fault detection and promotion of energy-efficient behaviours is shaping how projects are being conceptualized and implemented.

To support adoption of ICTs within the build environment, the Authority has over the developed various regulatory instruments and measures. In particular, we have in place "*Guidelines on Undertaking of ICT Infrastructure Works*" which require those undertaking infrastructure works to ensure that they minimize the negative environmental impact.

We equally undertake regular inspections of ICT installations to ascertain adherence to the set guidelines for installations and maintenance of ICT equipment.

Further, it is a requirement for anyone carrying out major ICT installations to be licensed by the Authority as telecommunications contractor or technical personnel. Renewal of these two licenses is pegged on successful installations, per the Authority's installation guidelines.

Besides ensuring all ICT installations align with the said guidelines, the Authority requires adherence to relevant international standards and requirements by other government agencies such as the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and the Nuclear Power and Energy Agency.

To ensure conformance with international standards, the Authority undertakes type approval of ICT equipment and installations to certify they meet standards on Safety, Health and Electromagnetic Compatibility (EMC).

Further, we ensure that any electromagnetic emissions from the ICT Infrastructure are within the levels recommended by global standards-setting bodies like the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP).

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Through the Universal Service Fund (USF), we are powering the country's digital connectivity. In the last five years alone, we have connected 750,000 Kenyans across 127 sub-locations, and in the process, built 108 towers. About 117 other sub-locations are currently being connected.

We are also partnering with the ICT Authority to deploy 2,500 kilometers of last mile fibre connectivity across 19 unserved and underserved Counties in Kenya.

With increased connectivity, we are empowering our citizens to be active and meaningful participants in nation-building and the global digital economy.

The Authority is also working closely with other government agencies and Counties, to address cross-cutting concerns around ICT installations. The question of way leaves and overly exorbitant fees for ICT deployment in Counties continue to be a going concern and we hope that with continued engagements, we shall foster a mutually agreeable position.

We are also alive to the global conversations around climate action, and as such, we continue to foster efforts around efficient deployment of ICT to mitigate the negative impacts on the environment, road infrastructure and buildings to ensure specific standards are maintained.

The increased adoption of ICT infrastructure across various sectors, including the built environment, points to a growing need for us to continue engaging closely with various actors to streamline and enable the optimal leveraging of ICTs for positive outcomes.

Digital technologies continue to shape critical stages in the building sector, starting from Pre-design, Design, Construction, and Maintenance. A more typical case in point is the application and approval process of building and construction permits that have now been largely digitalized in some county governments, leading to transparency and efficiency.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In order to spur innovation within the ICT space, we have established a regulatory sandbox, a framework that will support innovators to nurture their ideas, and test them before they can be applied to solve practical problems within the economy.

Through this approach, we are able to effectively support and manage novel ideas that would otherwise fall by the wayside.

Meanwhile, it is important to underscore the fact that safety of the digital infrastructure cannot be gainsaid. In this era of heightened cyber-attacks, institutions must undertake necessary interventions to safeguard the integrity of their data and critical information infrastructure.

That's why through the National Kenya Computer Incident Response Team (KE-CIRT) we continue to enhance our cyber threat detection and prevention capabilities. As the country's focal point on cyber security, we are collaborating closely with various actors within the public and private sectors to ensure that we secure our digital infrastructure.

That cyber readiness approach, coupled with the implementation of the National Public Key Infrastructure (NPKI) will go a long way in enhancing consumer confidence on digital platforms, and guarantee security of online transactions, which will now dominate our lives as we head into the future.

In conclusion, I look forward to exciting exchanges at this forum, which will go a long way in supporting digital infrastructure connectivity within the region.

With those remarks, it is now my humble duty to invite the Principal Secretary, State Department for Broadcasting and Telecommunications Prof. Edward Kisiang'ani to address us and thereafter to invite our Chief Guest.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.