Remarks by Ezra Chiloba, Director General, Communications Authority of Kenya (CA) During the International Telecoms Week Africa (ITW-Africa) on 12ᵗʰ September 2023 at Radisson Blue Hotel, Upper Hill, Nairobi

Organizers of the ITW-Africa

Distinguished participants from across the world

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning.

1. I am truly honored to join you all at this important forum, that sets the pace and engenders a sense of urgency towards meaningful Internet connectivity in Africa.

2. As country, we are privileged to host this International Telecoms Week Africa forum, that connects policy makers, thought leaders, service providers and potential investors to discuss emerging realties around the question of Internet connectivity.

3. Looking at the depth of thematic areas lined up for discussion in the next three days, I am convinced that this forum is intentional in spurring the development of the ICT infrastructure value chain across cloud, data centres, carriers, undersea cable, satellite and finance sectors.

4. For many countries, Kenya included, efforts to ensure all citizens are connected to the Internet and its manifold benefits remain the paramount.

5. With emerging realities and new frontiers unfolding each passing second, the critical nature of such discussions as what we are having here cannot be gainsaid.

6. I am therefore pleased to be in the midst of thought leaders and industry captains and experts to put critical issues into perspective and engender positive conversations on what Africa stands to gain if we are to exploit the full potential of ICTs in general and Internet connectivity in particular.

7. I say so because no single country has one size-fit-all solutions to the most pressing challenges around Internet connectivity. That's why by tapping into the vast reservoir of expertise and experiences from diverse actors in this space, we can forge a common direction on how to achieve connectivity for our people.

Distinguished participants

8. While Africa has been touted as the next frontier for exponential growth in connectivity, there still much work that needs to be done to make this goal a reality.

9. Much of the work revolves around creating enabling environments and interventions that can spur widespread access to and availability of Internet to the greatest number of our citizens. Leveraging innovative technologies and mechanisms such as the Universal Service Funds we can connect a great number of oir people.

10. In the last five years alone, we have connected about 750,000 people across 127 sub-locations, our lowest administrative units, through deployment of 108 towers. As I speak now, about 117 other administrative units are currently being connected.

11. An access gaps study we commissioned two years ago, showed that about 3.6 per cent or 1.7 million people were still not connected to mobile network and broadband.

12. We are therefore ramping up diverse avenues to reach out to these people. That's why we are supporting the deployment of 2,500kms of last mile fibre connectivity across 19 underserved and underserved Counties across Kenya.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

13. There is an even greater urgency in the need to foster efforts that resonate to our unique national contexts meaning that any interventions must be tailored towards our specific needs and priorities.

14. In Kenya for instance, we are keen on enabling our citizens to play an active and meaningful role in the global digital economy through ubiquitous broadband connectivity.

15. Allow me share with you some of the things we are doing to push forward the connectivity agenda. From a regulatory perspective, we are determined to create an enabling environment that not only attracts new investments in the sector, but also enables increased connectivity through other collaborative mechanisms.

16. We are currently reviewing the regulatory framework in a bid to make them respective to the new realities within this space, and also address any gaps that have impeded the growth of the sector in the face of new realities.

17. We have developed an IPV6 migration strategy and the 5G roadmap which outline our interests in the realization of enhanced connectivity and deploying cutting edge technology to power our digital economy.

18. Coupled with the creation of an enabling environment is the need to leverage cost effective technologies that can avail affordable Internet connectivity to our people.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

19. Perhaps they key highlight for me in at this forum is the Kenya Peering Forum, which specifically provides an introspection for all of us on how we can achieve more by working together.

20. Through synergy across the ICT ecosystem, cutting across Internet, content provision, as well as infrastructure considerations, we can do more if we align our efforts.

21. Another key priority for all countries is strengthening national Internet exchanges which are critical to vibrant Internet ecosystems, that not only improve end-user

experience, but can also greatly lower the cost of Internet access, and stimulate cross-border interconnection.

22. It is clear to all of us here that if we manage our IXPs well, we can open new possibilities for our countries by enhancing efficiency and cost-effectiveness within our Internet traffic exchanges.

23. And, given the numerous prospects of investment deals, I encourage our local companies present here to take advantage of these valuable opportunities to shore up their businesses and enhance Internet connectivity and associated benefits.

24. With those remarks I thank you once again for the invitation and wish you all productive deliberations ahead.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.