



**Address by His Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta, C.G.H, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Defense Forces of the Republic of Kenya, during the Official Opening of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) Conference of Plenipotentiaries 2018 held in Nairobi, Kenya, on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> August 2018**

**Ministers Present**  
**Heads of Delegation**  
**Distinguished Delegates**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen**

- 1) It gives me great pleasure to address this distinguished assembly of ICT Ministers and delegates attending the 5<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the ATU Conference of Plenipotentiaries and related meetings here in Nairobi.
- 2) As you may have noted, Kenya has opened its doors to Africa, by allowing visitors from the entire length and breadth of the continent to receive visas on arrival at the port of entry. This move, which is unconditional and therefore not based on reciprocity, came into effect in November 2017.

- 3) It is informed by the understanding that our quest for pan-Africanism and integration of the region can only be achieved in an environment where our people are allowed to move freely across our 'artificial' boundaries. The freer we are to travel and live with one another, the more integrated and appreciative of our diversity, we will become. I therefore encourage you all to feel welcome to visit our country any time you fancy, as Kenya is your home.
- 4) Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), which is the subject of your deliberations here today, have a huge role to play in nurturing our continent's integration agenda and in boosting intra-African trade.
- 5) Indeed, ICTs are the engines driving cross-border communications and interactions without which our coordinated efforts at integration and promoting intra-regional trade would not be realized. We must, therefore, dedicate our efforts as a region towards scaling up ICT infrastructure development and universal access.

- 6) **Ministers, Heads of Delegation, and Distinguished Delegates**, the fundamental link between infrastructure and socio-economic development is widely acknowledged. In the old economy of the past century, infrastructure development focused mainly on the construction of highways, railway lines, airports, harbours and to a limited degree telephone landlines and post offices.
- 7) While the traditional forms of infrastructure remain important today, ICTs now play an equally, if not a more important role in the global digital economy.
- 8) Africa needs to appreciate that the global digital economy is evolving pretty fast. According to 2017 UN statistics, global production of ICT goods and services was estimated at 6.5% of the global gross domestic product and over 100 million people were employed in the ICT sector alone.

- 9) Worldwide e-commerce sales in 2015 reached US\$25.3 trillion, 90 per cent of which were in the form of business-to-business e-commerce and 10 per cent in the form of business-to-business sales. Africa's share of the global e-commerce market remains insignificant.
- 10) For the African region to tap into this growing global digital economy, we must invest heavily in the development of ICT infrastructure and in particular broadband. As I speak, the average broadband penetration in Africa remains below the 40% mark. Access to broadband has the potential to accelerate the achievement of the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals and thus free a sizeable proportion of our people from poverty and want.
- 11) E-commerce presents Africa with an opportunity to increase its share of the global trade. With the ubiquitous penetration of the mobile signal, e-commerce offers our youth, who are very innovative, new opportunities to access the global market.

- 12) We must, as a region, move with speed to tap into the resourcefulness of the young generation, a large proportion of who are jobless.
- 13) **Distinguished Delegates**, Africa is slowly but surely coming of age. Between 2000 and 2014, Africa recorded a strong economic performance on the back of better macro-economic management, high commodity prices, better business environment and rising entrepreneurship.
- 14) Overall, in spite of recent setbacks occasioned by subdued outlook for commodity prices, the old narrative of hopelessness that was synonymous with our continent is now being replaced by a new sense of hope and optimism, aptly christened as the African Renaissance. ICTs are unleashing innovative and entrepreneurial potential across the continent. We need to leverage on ICTs to leapfrog and thus keep alive the 'Africa is rising narrative'.
- 15) The private sector has played a fundamental role in driving the mobile revolution in Africa. Governments and policy makers in the region should

remain alive to the need to put in place the right policies to encourage and sustain investment in this strategic sector of the economy. Public Private Partnerships are key in addressing the digital divide particularly in broadband.

- 16) My Government acknowledges the important role that ICT plays in Kenya's socio-economic development. We have identified technologies as critical enablers and drivers of Kenya economic blueprint – the Vision 2030, and indeed my current Administration's Big 4 Agenda.
- 17) The Big 4 Agenda specifically focuses on Enhancing Manufacturing; Food Security and Nutrition; Universal Health Coverage and; Affordable Housing. ICT is the gel that brings everything together.
- 18) The *2018 Economic Survey* notes that the value of the ICT output increased by 10.9% from USD3.1billion in 2016 to USD3.45 billion in 2017.
- 19) Over the same period mobile commerce transactions grew by 85.5 per cent from USD 0.08 trillion in 2016 to USD 0.32 trillion in 2017. At

the same time, total mobile money transfers increased by 8.4 per cent from USD 33.56 billion in 2016 to USD 36.38 billion in 2017.

20) I am positive that this trend is felt across almost all ATU member countries represented here today. To ensure that the ICT sector remains - so to speak – ‘the goose that lays the golden eggs’ – African countries must support sub-regional and continental intergovernmental organizations in the sector by meeting their obligations.

21) Sometimes, we, as a region attach far too much premium to global intergovernmental bodies while neglecting our very own that are very close to us. This trend needs to change. African institutions dealing with ICTs must also step up and rise to the occasion by proffering appropriate solutions to our local problems.

22) I am informed that the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) has done well in this respect, but there is still room to upscale its efforts. I

wish to congratulate the outgoing Secretary General, Mr. Abdulkarim Soumaila, on his superlative performance.

- 23) **Distinguished Delegates**, Kenya has been hosting the ATU Secretariat on a temporary basis since 1998. In that regard, Kenya has provided all the support that ATU members states have called upon us to do. I wish to assure you that my Government is ready to host the Union on a permanent basis if this Conference so desires. We already have framework agreement with the African Union Commission (AUC) for hosting AUC institutions, and ATU is one such institution.
- 24) On another note, Kenya has offered its candidature for the position of the ATU Secretary General, and I call on your support.
- 25) As you chart the way forward for the Union for the next five-year period, remember technology in this sector changes fast, creating disruptions in the market.
- 26) As I conclude, let us work together to provide a promising future for our youth, who present the largest demography in Africa at the moment.

The onus is therefore on us to lay strong foundations and create an enabling environment across all levels including political, economic, social and technological spheres, to support the growth of local enterprises and innovations

27) Africa is counting on you for the continued success of the ICT sector.

I am sure you will not let our people down.

28) With those remarks, it is now my pleasure to declare the 5<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Telecommunications Union Conference of Plenipotentiaries officially opened.

**Asanteni Sana. Thank you.**