

KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY MRSAMMY ITEMERE, PRINCIPAL SECRETARY, STATE DEPARTMENT FOR BROADCASTING AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS, MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY, DURING THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 52ND AFRALTI GOVERNING COUNCIL MEETING ON 21ST SEPTEMBER 2016, SAROVA STANLEY HOTEL, NAIROBI

The Chairperson of the AFRALTI Governing Council, Mrs. Lindiwe Malaza,

Representative of the Director General, Communications Authority of Kenya, Mr. John Omo,

Director, AFRALTI, Mr. Eustace Maboreke,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Government of Kenya, I wish to warmly welcome you all to Nairobi, the cradle of African hospitality. It is always our pleasure to have guests visiting from time to time, and I hope your stay in Nairobi will be a memorable experience.

This meeting comes at a time when demand for ICT capacity is high. It therefore means that AFRALTI has its work cut out as governments, regulators, industry and other partners seek to build and transfer required skills sets to foster growth. This is not unique to our region but it's a global phenomenon.

It is evident today that despite the good progress since the turn of the century, capacity deficits remain a major challenge facing African countries in their quest for sustainable development. It is these deficits that continue to prevent us from implementing our development strategies and policies and from achieving our desired development outcomes.

According to the 2015 Africa Capacity Index, 73% of the 45 member African countries have medium capacity and 9% have low capacity, while only 18% have high capacity. Technical and leadership capacity is said to be woefully lacking across the continent. We require an urgent and concerted effort to address this conundrum if Africa has to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, Agenda 2063, our respective national development strategies and coming nearer home, our ICT agenda in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The situation paints a grim picture of the continent and indeed the region. Yet therein lies the opportunity for AFRALTI whose core mission is capacity building. Appropriate skills are critical to the much-needed digital technological transformation that we all admit is important for catalyzing development.

History tells us that there is a strong positive correlation between a country's skills base in engineering and its economic development. AFRALTI occupies a strategic position that if harnessed well, could greatly assist in transforming human as well as institutional skills to catapult the continent to greater socio-economic advancement.

Perhaps the greatest concern of the moment and which member states are grappling with is whether or not, AFRALTI has seized the opportunity to narrow the skills gap.

Even more important is how we can expand AFRALTI membership into a truly Pan African institution that can play a greater role in driving the 2063 continental agenda.

As new technologies emerge, and the pace of ICT development increases, new sets of skills are also required for companies to turn them into business opportunities and create new jobs. Policy makers today also realize the importance of equipping people with the necessary ICT skills so that they can be part of the digital society. These equally bring with them new capacity building challenges.

I am confident that AFRALTI Governing Council, sitting in the next few days, will provide the direction required for AFRALTI in its very crucial role of building capacity in the ICT sector. Partnerships between governments, regulators, private sector and development partners is a key ingredient if we are to nurture an environment that fosters long-term policies for the creation of capacity building programmes in ICT. As countries seek to stimulate investments in the development of ICT capabilities and in the new areas that demand new sets of skills, it is my hope that AFRALTI will take advantage and strategically position itself for the task ahead.

Distinguished delegates,

It is clearly evident that this continent relies on institutions like AFRALTI to help narrow the skills gap that exists today. As member states of AFRALTI, we must be prepared to make tough decisions that will revamp AFRALTI in terms of its responsiveness to the demands of skills. It is we, the stakeholders of AFRALTI, who must go all the way to ensure this is done, lest we run the risk of underutilizing the potential within.

I am informed that past Governing Council deliberations have focused on revitalizing AFRALTI, indicating a willingness by member states to take concrete measures to actualize this aspiration. It is now time to transform all the efforts into meaningful actions. One of the key considerations is sustainability of AFRALTI and its existing models within the context of the competing demands for resources. It is not only enough to have member states contributions. Alternative means of income and resource mobilization must be explored in order to ensure a sustainable institution that can serve the region and beyond.

As the host country, Kenya remains committed to seeing AFRALTI play a greater role in continental capacity building. We are open to any progressive proposals that can help us realize this aim.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and look forward to this meeting's outcomes.

It is now my pleasure to declare the 52nd AFRALTI Governing Council meeting officially opened.

Thank you and God bless you all.