**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**
**MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY**

**SPEECH BY MR. JOE MUCHERU EGH, MBS, CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF ICT DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE NAIROBI INNOVATON WEEK ON 12TH JUNE, 2016 AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**Cabinet Secretary, Prof. Margaret Kobia, Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs**

**Cabinet Secretary, Prof. George Magoha, Ministry of Education**

**Chancellor, University of Nairobi, Dr. Vijoo Rattansi**

**Vice Chancellor, University of Nairobi, Prof. Peter Mbithi**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Innovators**

**Ladies and gentlemen**

This is yet another year that we gather here to celebrate our innovators and their innovations.  I'm glad that I have been part of the Nairobi Innovation Week since its inception.

I commend the University of Nairobi, for having identified Innovation as a defining pillar of our development and convening the Nairobi Innovation Week, not just as a showcase platform, but also as a celebration and recognition of innovators and innovations, and the role they play in the growth and development of this country.

The theme for this year, '***Innovation and the big 4 Agenda'*** is quite pertinent.  I can't wait to see some of the innovations that people have come up with, considering that the Big 4 is our development agenda as a country.

This is particularly so because as a government, we recognize that innovation and technology will be at the heart of job creation and the manufacturing industry, guaranteeing food security for the country, ensuring that universal healthcare is not just a question of access, but of cross-boundary use and that

there are many advancements, both simple and complex ones, that will go into the thousands of homes that the government will make available under affordable housing.

As a country, we have always taken pride in the space that we have provided to tech start-up communities, who have gone ahead to build some of the most amazing apps and systems. Now let us harness this tech community and the years of experience that we have garnered, to innovate for the Big 4 Agenda.

**Ladies & Gentlemen**

In the Kenya Vision 2030 blue print, the government aims at transforming the country into a newly industrializing middle-income economy providing a high quality of life to all its citizens in a clean and secure environment.

The Vision recognizes the role of science, technology and innovation (ST&I) in a modern economy, in which new knowledge plays a central role in wealth creation, social welfare and international competitiveness through effective exploitation of knowledge, innovation system and flourishing entrepreneurship, among others.

As a Ministry, our strategy is to build capacity in tech innovation and utilization of knowledge to transform the economy of this country.

We have developed a number of frameworks to drive this development, such as the recently launched Digital Economy blueprint for Africa, the national broadband strategy, the national ICT Master Plan and the ICT Strategic Plan aimed at transforming the use of ICT to spur economic growth in the country.

In developing the frameworks, we recognized that technologies and innovations are rapidly changing. In view of this, my Ministry set up a task force on Distributed Ledgers and Artificial intelligence, to look into opportunities created by emerging technology and make recommendations on the best approaches to transform the Kenya economy.

The Task Force has completed its work and we are expecting to share tis with the public before mid-July. We hope that their findings and recommendations will spur the growth of ICTs in the country.

**Ladies and gentlemen**

As a government, we commit to continue ensuring that the space available to innovators, in whatever field or area, and to the tech community in particular, is always open. We are committed to ensuring that the policy and legislative framework that will allow you to do your innovations or launch your start-ups is in place.

As part of this, the government has ensured that internet access and the space needed for tech company to operate freely is available. In fact, for this reason, Kenya was voted as the country with the Best Digital Life in Africa, by Expatriates living in Kenya.

On top of this recognition, a study published about 4 weeks ago said that Kenya was the most tech ready country to adopt Artificial Intelligence in Africa.

These two recognitions and endorsement of Kenya's tech space by independent entities point to the fact that Kenya, as a country, is in the right path of being at the forefront of 4th Industrial Revolution.

To ensure that these innovations you build are not lost, The Ministry last year launched Whitebox. Whitebox is a government innovation space, run by ICT Authority, where innovators can bring their ideas, for testing and checking viability of the same. I encourage you to go to www.whitebox.go.ke

For you as innovators, this is an affirmation that the tools and space to build your innovations exist in the country. As such, go forth, dream and think big, and wild…and small too. Constantly work on those innovations and bring these things to life. And remember, innovate in the areas and spaces that will add value and improve quality of life to Kenya and the rest of the world.

**Ladies and gentlemen**

And with this few remarks, I thank the University of Nairobi once again for leading in this noble initiative of recognizing innovators and innovations across the country. Today I stand here not only as the Minister of ICT, but as a proud Father whose daughter is here, attending the conference out of interest in ICTs and innovations to impact our future.

**God Bless You all…**