

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

ADDRESS BY MR STEPHEN ISABOKE, EBS, PRINCIPAL SECRETARY FOR BROADCASTING AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS, MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS & THE DIGITAL ECONOMY, DURING THE KENYA TOURISM AWARDS GALA DINNER

WEDNESDAY, 4TH FEBRUARY 2026

ARGYLE HOTEL, NAIROBI.

SALUTATION

- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening,

I. It is a great pleasure to join you for the second Kenya Tourism Awards Gala Dinner. We are here to celebrate excellence, innovation and leadership within our tourism and hospitality sector. The over 300 entries and more than 500 attendees gathered here reflect the growing relevance and credibility of the Awards and the tourism sector's collective commitment to quality.

II. The Government recognises tourism as a key driver of economic growth and global positioning, and we have seen this power firsthand. Recently, a young, globally recognised American streamer, **iShowSpeed,** toured our country and showcased Kenya's culture to the world in collaboration with some stakeholders present here today. This demonstrates how media, digital platforms and storytelling can amplify our tourism brand globally.

III. Under the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA), tourism plays a vital role in expanding opportunities for micro, small and medium enterprises, many of which are youth-led, community-based and embedded within local economies.

IV. The sector continues to be a powerful platform for youth entrepreneurship, creating opportunities across accommodation, tour operations, transport, food and beverage, creative industries and digital marketing. By lowering entry barriers and rewarding innovation, tourism enables young Kenyans to turn talent, culture and creativity into sustainable livelihoods, directly advancing BETA's focus on grassroots wealth creation.

V. The sector's strong performance in 2024 reflects the collective effort of all stakeholders in upholding excellence. We recorded 2.4 million international visitors, representing a 15 percent growth compared to 2023. Domestic tourism grew by 12% from 4,618,094 bed-nights in 2023 to 5,173,966 bed-nights in 2024.In this context, the Kenya Tourism Awards promote accountability, higher industry standards and competitiveness across the entire tourism value chain.

VI. Tourism's economic contribution is equally significant. Inbound tourism earnings rose from approximately **KSh377 billion in 2023 to KSh452 billion in 2024,** a nearly 20 percent increase in foreign exchange earnings. Domestic tourism bed occupancy also grew by 12 percent, reflecting a renewed appetite among Kenyans to explore and invest in local destinations.

VII. I want to commend all participants represented here this evening. From world-class accommodation services to rich and diverse culinary services; from our tourism operators connecting Kenya to regional and global markets to our media and digital storytellers whose content, platforms and narratives continue to shape how the world sees Kenya. We appreciate and value all of you.

VIII. As the State Department for Broadcasting and Telecommunications, we remain committed to strengthening the digital and communications ecosystem that supports tourism visibility, innovation and growth.

IX. As we celebrate tonight's winners, let us continue to raise standards, embrace innovation and deepen collaboration as we position Kenya

as a resilient, competitive and globally respected tourism destination.

Once again, congratulations to the winners tonight, and to the sector as a whole.

Thank you!