

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY

REMARKS BY MR STEPHEN ISABOKE, EBS, PRINCIPAL SECRETARY FOR BROADCASTING AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS, MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY DURING THE ANNUAL PAN-AFRICAN MEDIA SUMMIT 2026.

WEDNESDAY, 13 MAY 2026.

SAFARI PARK HOTEL, NAIROBI.

SALUTATION

- Distinguished Guests
- Members of the 4th estate
- Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning,

I. It is my pleasure to welcome you to Kenya as we convene to advance conversations on information integrity, digital platforms, and the future of media in Africa. This Summit comes at a defining moment, when the rapid evolution of digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and platform economies is fundamentally reshaping how information is created, distributed, and consumed across our continent.

II. The Government of Kenya remains firmly committed to strengthening a media environment that is free, responsible, innovative, and adaptive to technological change. Our approach is anchored in the Constitution of Kenya and supported by progressive broadcasting regulations, cybersecurity frameworks, and digital governance reforms designed to promote information integrity while safeguarding freedom of expression and media independence.

III. Kenya's broadcasting landscape continues to expand significantly, with over 200 licensed broadcasters operating across the country. This growth reflects a vibrant and diverse media ecosystem. However, it also underscores the urgent need for modern regulatory frameworks capable of responding to emerging realities such as synthetic media, AI-generated content, algorithmic amplification, and platform accountability.

IV. Africa's media space remains vast, influential, and dynamic, yet it continues to face structural and institutional constraints. Genuine media freedom requires strong legal protections, sustainable business models, and responsive regulatory systems. Broadcasting regulation can no longer be viewed solely through the traditional lens of spectrum management. It must evolve to address converged, AI-driven, and cross-platform content ecosystems that transcend national borders.

V. Allow me to place this transformation into perspective through a few important statistics.

VI. Today, Africa has more than 615 million internet users, representing approximately 43 percent of the continent's population. Mobile

penetration has reached nearly 67 percent, while over 408 million Africans actively use social media platforms. Importantly, almost 98 percent of internet traffic in Africa is now mobile-based, demonstrating how deeply digital connectivity has become integrated into everyday life.

VII. These developments present extraordinary opportunities for African media. Digital platforms are expanding access to information, amplifying African voices, and enabling the rise of new creators, podcasters, digital publishers, and citizen journalists. Across Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and other African countries, young creators on platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, and X are reshaping public discourse and engaging audiences that traditional media has struggled to reach.

VIII. The African media economy is also evolving rapidly. Total advertising expenditure across Africa reached approximately 25 billion US dollars in 2023, with digital advertising accounting for nearly one quarter of that expenditure. Mobile advertising now represents more than 70 percent of digital ad spending on the continent. These trends confirm that Africa’s future media growth will be digital, mobile-first, and increasingly AI-enabled.

IX. Yet alongside these opportunities come significant challenges.

X. Across Africa, misinformation and disinformation continue to threaten public trust, democratic institutions, public health, and electoral integrity. Recent incidents in parts of Africa have demonstrated how false information amplified through social media can trigger panic, violence, and even loss of life. The rise of generative AI and synthetic media further complicates this environment by making manipulated audio, video, and images increasingly difficult to detect.

XI. Studies now show that a majority of journalists globally believe artificial intelligence will significantly increase disinformation risks. In Kenya specifically, recent findings indicate that while nearly 59 percent of citizens are aware that AI is being used in media, most still struggle to distinguish AI-generated content from authentic journalism. This growing gap between awareness and verification capability poses a serious threat to information integrity.

XII. Economic sustainability also remains a major concern. Traditional revenue models for journalism continue to weaken as advertising

shifts toward global technology platforms. Many African newsrooms face declining revenues, shrinking staff numbers, and increased operational pressures. In some countries, media organizations are increasingly dependent on platform algorithms for visibility and audience reach, raising concerns about editorial independence and long-term sustainability.

XIII. At the same time, Africa must confront persistent digital inequalities. While urban centers continue to experience rapid digital transformation, rural internet penetration in many African countries remains significantly lower than in urban areas. Without affordable connectivity, digital skills, and infrastructure, millions of Africans risk exclusion from the digital information economy.

XIV. We must also remain vigilant against emerging threats such as coordinated inauthentic behaviour, cyber-enabled propaganda, and the malicious use of artificial intelligence. Kenya continues to strengthen national capabilities to detect, attribute, and respond to these threats through enhanced institutional coordination, regional cooperation, and cyber resilience measures.

Distinguished guests,

XV. Despite these challenges, the future of African media remains exceptionally promising.

XVI. Africa is the world's youngest continent. This youthful population represents not only a large audience, but also a new generation of innovators, creators, technologists, and storytellers. Artificial intelligence, data analytics, multilingual digital platforms, and mobile journalism are opening entirely new possibilities for African content production and distribution.

XVII. Research shows that AI adoption within journalism is accelerating rapidly, with many newsrooms already using AI tools for research, transcription, translation, verification, and audience engagement. If governed responsibly, these technologies can improve newsroom efficiency, strengthen fact-checking capabilities, expand local language journalism, and support more personalized and accessible media services.

XVIII. The future African media ecosystem must therefore be built on three pillars: trust, innovation, and inclusion.

XIX. First, trust. Citizens must have confidence in the integrity and credibility of the information ecosystem.

XX. Second, innovation. Africa must not merely consume global technologies but actively develop local digital platforms, AI tools, and content ecosystems that reflect African realities and values.

XXI. Third, inclusion. No African should be excluded from the digital conversation because of geography, language, gender, disability, or economic status.

XXII. I commend the Media Council of Kenya for convening this important Summit and for its continued leadership in promoting professional standards, ethical journalism, media sustainability, and policy dialogue within the sector. The Ministry remains committed to supporting the Council's mandate and strengthening institutional collaboration across government, industry, academia, and civil society.

XXIII. As this Summit progresses, let us ensure that our discussions translate into practical and measurable action. We must pursue updated broadcasting codes, responsive licensing frameworks,

enforceable platform obligations, and harmonized regional approaches that reflect today's realities — including AI content governance, child online protection, and election-period safeguards. Kenya remains committed to regulatory modernization that protects both innovation and information integrity.

XXIV. Africa has an opportunity not merely to participate in the global digital transformation, but to shape it in ways that reflect our values, aspirations, and democratic principles. Let us therefore work together to build a media and digital ecosystem that is inclusive, trustworthy, resilient, and future-ready.

Thank you.