



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

TALKING NOTES FOR MR. JOE MUCHERU, EGH, CABINET SECRETARY FOR THE MINISTRY OF ICT DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE FILM SCREENPLAY/SCRIPT WRITING COMPETITION, 4TH FEBRUARY 2019 AT THE MEDIA CENTRE, 11TH FLOOR, TELPOSTA TOWERS, NAIROBI

Fatuma Hirsi Mohamed, Principal Secretary, State Department of Broadcasting and Telecommunications

Jerome Ochieng, Principal Secretary, State Department of ICT

Mr. Timothy Owase, Chief Executive Officer, Kenya Film Commission

Invited Guests

Members of Press

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Last year, when the film sector was transferred back to the Ministry of ICT, I immersed myself in understanding the film industry in the country and the world. I sat and spent time with Kenyan filmmakers, actors, and distributors. I also attended events organized by industry players including award ceremonies and training sessions. And I capped this by visiting production facilities, production sites and what used to be movie theatres.
2. The stories gathered from the industry players were not comforting. In some cases, cast members and other staff cannot afford to make a living off film, and producers, in most cases, suffer a myriad of problems from getting in the right licenses from right government agencies to having the right equipment to shoot the movies.
3. However, there was general consensus on two things - first, that Kenya is awash with talent, across all levels, and second, that the country has amazing shooting locations.
4. Traditionally, the US has been leading in both film production and market. However, this is now rivalled by markets such as China and India, which have invested heavily in the film ecosystem.

5. The Chinese market sold 1.7 billion movie tickets in 2018, amounting to over USD 8.8Bn in revenues from approximately 60,000 movie theatres across the country. Locally produced films accounted for 60% of these revenues.

6. Why are these statistics important? These statistics should help us refocus our film industry. What would happen if 10 Kenyan produced films are screened in movie theatres across China and attract only 1% of the Chinese ticket sales? What would be the direct financial impact of this?

7. I was privileged to have been invited to the premiere of Subira last year, a movie that won at the Kalasha Awards. The quality of talent in the film was impressive, and so was the production quality. As I watched this movie, I pondered over what it would take to have our local productions premier and screen in theatres around the globe including China.

8. This is part of the reason my Ministry has challenged the Kenya Film School (KFS) and the Kenya Film Commission (KFC) to come up with the film script writing competition that we are launching today.

9. The overall long-term plan for the competition is to enable us pick some fantastic scripts, which we can co-produce with Chinese production houses, for airing in theatres across China – and of course across the African continent under the auspices of SMART Africa.

10. Such co-production arrangements will be beneficial for the Kenyan film industry through skills transfer, technical expertise and access to modern equipment.

11. Thinking ahead, the Ministry is exploring the viability of establishing a **film and media city** in Kenya with state of the art facilities and equipment that would rival Hollywood.

12. Such a city will support the exponential growth of the industry - actors, producers, directors will be able to earn more by incurring lower production costs. At the same time, support industries such as equipment, props, make-up, music, and sound will benefit immensely from a film and media city.

13. Infrastructure and market development is only part of the solution. The other part lies in **policy and legislation**. Over the next few months, I will ensure that the **film policy** is reviewed and passed by the cabinet.

14. With the policy in place, we should be able to streamline the industry and ensure that local jobs are created and made available for our youth.

15. But even as we review and push for the passing of the film policy, industry players have brought to my attention the proliferation of series, movies, and advertisements that broadcasters, ad agencies, and brands produce from out of the country and show locally on our screens.

16. Those buying or commissioning these ads and such material end up paying tax only equivalent to the value of the hard drive that the content is stored in.

17. This denies the local filmmakers fair competition and also denies the tax man requisite revenue. I have instructed relevant entities including the Kenya Film and Classification Board

(KFCB) to review the whole area of ads and series shot outside Kenya and broadcast locally with a view of introducing an **'airing levy'**.

18. This levy will be charged on all material that is shot and produced outside the country and aired in our local stations. The revenues collected from this will all go towards the development of a **revolving Film Fund**, which will be made available to the film sector players.

19. Finally, my challenge to the film industry is to actively integrate our **culture and heritage** in our local productions.

20. The preservation of culture is one of the reasons why economies with established movie spinners practice a foreign movies quota system. The role of film in the conservation of culture and fostering patriotism must be underscored. We all must understand that inherently, our growth and development as a country is also pegged on the preservation of our cultures.

21. To the scriptwriters out there, this is your chance to have your work produced and showcased in movie theatres across the world. It is now my pleasure to declare the film competition official launched.