MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

TALKING POINTS BY MR JOE MUCHERU, EGH CABINET SECRETARY FOR INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY DURING THE WORLD READER DIGITAL READING SUMMIT ON WEDNESDAY, 8TH MAY 2019 AT THE CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL, NAIROBI

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I welcome you all to this annual Worldreader Digital Reading Summit. I want to thank the organizers of this event for having identified Nairobi as a suitable location for convening this thought-leadership Summit.
2. This move goes to demonstrate the ever-increasing interest in Kenya as a country due to its advancement in the digital space.
3. I note that this is a meeting of action - I therefore want to support the Call to Action because it resonates well with our ICT promise to transform our country into a knowledge-based economy. Digital reading as a cross sectoral approach to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a befitting theme for this event.

4. Indeed, technology continues to radically disrupt our traditional way of conducting business by revolutionizing information flow that is instantaneous from any location in the world with great impact on production and human development.
5. The rapid evolution of ICT has informed the Government's deliberate strategies to prioritize the development and expansion of the ICT infrastructure, building of human capital resources and re-engineering of policy and legislative frameworks.
6. To bring you up to speed on this, the government has laid down over 6000 kilometres of fiber optic cables across all the 47 counties to create a robust infrastructure. The government also supports the Presidential Digital Talent Program, which provides one-year paid internship opportunities to ICT and Engineering graduates as a move to develop skilled human capital to support ICT innovation capacity.

7. Similarly, legislative and policy frameworks have been reviewed to accommodate the emerging technologies and innovations in the digital space. These include cyber security, data protection, artificial intelligence (AI) and distributed ledger technologies.
8. I cannot forget to touch on the Digital Literacy Program through which we equip every class one child was issued with a digital learning device. The program aims at imparting ICT skills to pupils in lower primary schools.
9. Phase two of the program will involve the setting up of ICT labs to provide opportunity to pupils in upper primary to acquire ICT skills. As opposed to the traditional acquisition of learning content from the printed books, the technology will accord learners an opportunity to access constantly updated content online. This way, our children can be encouraged to be tech savvy in readiness for the future.

10. Partnerships are key in the delivery of our mandate. We collaborate with private sector companies to support the development of talent and capacity building through scholarships and training programs. We also partner with companies that provide additional last mile broadband connectivity especially in underserved schools.

11. The value of access to appropriate content that allows for critical thinking and valuable information for citizens is key. There are huge repositories of data, e-books, and useful digital content that can transform individuals, communities, and institutions.

12. As long as the content is in line with guidelines provided by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), our learners can benefit immensely. The recently crowned "World's Best Teacher", Mr. Peter Tabichi exemplified the benefit of tapping into online resources to improve the performance of his students in science lessons.

13. In addition to providing enabling policy and regulatory environment to support innovation, the government is gaining from the expertise of the International Telecommunication Union to promote online safety and protection of our children.

14. We also recognize the influence of mobile phones, which are primarily used to access broadband. According to the Communications Authority of Kenya, the mobile phone subscription currently stands at 49.5 million representing mobile penetration level of 106.2 per cent as at December 2018.

15. The internet subscriptions stood at 45.7 million of which 47.9 per cent were on broadband during the same period. This adoption and huge penetration of mobile technology presents a huge opportunity for digital reading and advancement in our society.

16.   Kenya has a largely youthful population and these are the primary data consumers. There is an opportunity for local content that promotes our culture and values to be imparted through digital platforms - and this includes using the platforms to read and acquiring knowledge that can be used for nation building.

17. To tap into the vast network of digital workers in Kenya, the government continues championing the Ajira Digital Program, through which we hope to connect one million youth with digitally-enabled jobs. As at now, we estimate that over 600,000 people have benefitted from online and digitally enabled jobs across the country.

18. We implement the Ajira program in close collaboration with the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), which has the potential of encouraging its members to create digital jobs for specialized tasks as this can rationalize their operational costs and also enhance their turnaround time.

19. As I conclude, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to commend all the Public and Private learning institutions in Kenya that support our digital inclusion journey, by enabling access to learning through introduction of digital devices and e-learning platforms.

20. As we continue in this trajectory, learning across the country will soon become seamless and equalized. Our learners will benefit through access to quality and relevant education that will enable them compete globally.

Thank you.