



SPEECH BY MR. JOE MUCHERU EGH, MBS, CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF ICT DURING THE INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION SEMINAR ON FRIDAY, JUNE 14, 2019 AT THE MÖVENPICK HOTEL, NAIROBI

Lawrence Njagi, Chair, Kenya Publishers Association (Kenya)

Hugo Setzer, President, International Publishers Association (Mexico)

Professor Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, Professor of English and Comparative Literature, University of California Irvine, Writer, and Activist (Kenya)

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning, Saleum Alekum, Bonjour, Bom dia

As we say here: Karibu

Welcome to Kenya and welcome to Nairobi

It gives me much pleasure to have been invited to address this gathering of publishers, writers and scholars.

I am particularly pleased especially because like all of you, books have had a defining role on my personal and professional life. It is impossible to imagine what kind of man I would have become without the books that I read out of my own volition and the books I read as a student.

As a literate person, I speak to you as one of the beneficiaries of this unique invention: the book and publishing.

It is an honour that, as the International Publishers Association, you chose to hold the second ever-African seminar here in Nairobi. I wish to thank you for identifying this beautiful City to host your seminar. You are here at a time when we are entering into a cold season - our winter that lasts upto September. For those visiting Nairobi for the first time, I want to tell you that you are lucky. This is because Nairobi is the only City in the world located near a National Park. I therefore ask you to find time to go and catch site of our rich wildlife mix. Remember also to sample our unforgettable cuisine.

As you begin this seminar, we are proud that you have chosen to make Kenya the centre of the African publishing world for the next two days, and I would like to assure you that you have our support. This is because publishing is a critical service to the society that allows readers to access information and ideas for growth and development. Similarly, as Government, we value publishing as a very important process in the society. It is through publishing of information, ideas and knowledge that we conserve our valued heritage.

As you are aware, the Fourth Industrial Revolution is here with us now. This is the ICT revolution that has reduced the world to a global village and transformed how we live and work. This development, provides enormous opportunity for many businesses, particularly, you the publishers, to flourish and go global regardless of the size of your company, made possible by technology.

Ladies and gentlemen

You will agree with me that, technology has benefited the whole publishing chain right from the production of a manuscript, to printing, marketing and distribution. With the application of ICT today, it is easy for authors to produce and submit quality digital manuscripts. At the publishing houses, it is equally easy for editors to review electronic copies compared to hard copies.

Besides making publishing easy, the use of modern ICT platforms and equipment, has made publishing affordable. Small publishers no longer need to worry of mobilising prohibitive financial and human capital to run publishing businesses. In the age of technology, all you need is digital devices with applications and internet connectivity and associated infrastructure. After the production processes, publishers can take advantage of e-commerce, to access global market. This is a huge opportunity that local publishers must tap into.

I want to inform you that, the intention to host a series of seminars across Africa is in line with the Smart Africa Initiative, a continental body championed by our leaders to create a single digital market for Africa. Already, over 24 countries have signed up. When the initiative is operational, there will be a market of 1 billion people. This presents a huge potential for publishers in the continents.

Ladies and gentlemen

Here in Kenya, I wish to inform you that, the government has developed progressive policy and legislative frameworks to support investment and growth of our local publishers, particularly in Education as we realise that publishers have a vital role to play if we are to achieve our policy objectives in education and literacy. As Government, it is our desire to have every child access universal education. To achieve this, efforts are being made to have every child issued with their own text books and be taught using a mix of digital and print resources.

That means, through this government initiative, there is potential market for publishers. I therefore encourage publishing firms to invest in the right teaching and learning resources.

In an effort to position Kenya strategically in the information society, the government rolled out the Digital Learning Program (DLP) in over 20,000 public Primary schools across the country. The

program entails, providing each class one child with a tablet and preloaded approved curriculum. To support this program, the Government will set up computer laboratories for other classes. The DLP program provides an opportunity for publishers to invest in relevant digital content for the education sector.

One of the tools that publishers in Kenya and Africa in general can take advantage of is the growth in mobile telephone. Kenya is the front runner in the Continent in mobile telephony and publishers can leverage on the mobile phone penetration to distribute digital content. According to the Communication Authority of Kenya's statistics, by end of October last year, there were over 49 million mobile subscribers representing over 100% subscription.

Ladies and gentlemen

Your visit here also comes at the end of a week when Nairobi has been the hub of international copyright discussions with heads of African intellectual property and copyright offices and a World Intellectual Property Organization seminar on copyright exceptions and limitations.

As the Government, let me take this opportunity to state our position on copyright. The Kenyan Government supports a strong copyright framework for right holders both in Kenya, and internationally. We also have a comprehensive Computer and Cyber Security Act to supplement this framework.

If we want our local publishers to support our education policy objectives through their investments, then there is need for a stable legal framework for their businesses. It is also important to ensure that compensation to the authors is commensurate to their creative work.

This is the only way to promote the interests of our authors and publishers in international arena.

Ladies and gentlemen

The good programme you have planned for the next two days demonstrates the symbiosis of domestic and international policy making. The title of your seminar, *Africa Rising: Realising Africa's Potential as a Global Publishing Leader in the 21st Century*, sums this up perfectly. As you engage, you need to remember that there is need to develop and revitalise our own publishing industries that will drive our Continent forward and demonstrate our national and continental cultural diversity.

As I conclude, I want to assure you that, we are committed to supporting Kenyan publishers. For instance, in the last three years alone, we have engaged publishers and procured millions of books for use in our primary and secondary schools. We will continue to engage publishers in future, because this is the only way we can grow local capacity and at the same time ensure sustainable supply of learning and teaching materials for our schools.

Ladies and gentlemen

As you gather here, we look forward to learning from your discussions over the next two days, to know how we can support our own publishers and to hear how Kenya can fully play its role in Africa and internationally.

Once again, Karibu Kenya.

Thank you