



REPUBLIC OF KENYA
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND
TECHNOLOGY

**SPEECH BY HON. JOE MUCHERU, EGH, CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF
ICT DURING THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE MBEERE SOUTH
CONSTITUENCY INNOVATION HUB ON 28TH JUNE 2019 AT KIRITIRI, EMBU**

H. E. Martin Wambora, The Governor, Embu County

**Hon. Col (Rtd) Geoffrey King'ang'i Muturi, Member of Parliament,
Mbeere South**

All other invited dignitaries

Ajira Digital beneficiaries

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning!

1) I am happy to be here today to join the Mbeere South community in the launch of the 1st Constituency Innovation Hub (CIH). I take this opportunity to thank the Member of Parliament, my brother, Geoffrey Kingangi for agreeing to partner with us in the roll out of the Ajira Digital Program.

- 2) The program aims to empower our youth to earn decent wages from digital platforms and the establishment of this CIH center is a noble initiative that will see all the constituents benefit from the use of free internet, training and work spaces to grow and advance in their professional paths.

- 3) Over the past three decades, ICT has played a critical role in transforming economies and societies across the world. The adoption of ICT has seen enterprises enhance performance and develop tools to solve complex problems. With the use of technology, enterprises make better decisions, improve marketing and customer support while improving resource management at the same time. But the greatest impact of ICT has been the acceleration of innovation.

4) We have been able to reap the dividends of this ICT boom here in Kenya. This is evident by the growth in mobile telephony and mobile money, growth in the number of Internet users and broadcasting services; to name but a few. It is recognizing the critical role of ICT as an enabler, that the government initiated the roll out of the Constituency Innovation Hubs (CIH) through the Ajira Digital Program, to spur economic development in rural areas.

Ladies and Gentlemen

5) As we enter the fourth industrial revolution, work as we know it, is changing. We can no longer solely rely on the traditional formal jobs to offer employment to our unemployed population. In the past, work was akin to a place or location. *“I am going to work”* is a common phrase that every citizen relates to, the act of going to a physical place, to apply one’s trade and earn wages to meet our basic needs.

- 6) Technology has revolutionized the concept of 'going to work'. In the 1940s through to the early 1960s, individuals worked in few jobs during their careers, with many working at the same organization from graduation to retirement.
- 7) Today however, workers are changing jobs on average every two years or less. And in the very near future, workers are earning decent wages from temporary work (more commonly known as gig-work), where one works for multiple employers globally and work in itself is broken down to chargeable chunks that can be delivered on-demand. This is known as the 'gig-economy'.
- 8) I believe that, "Digital work is WORK", meaning that being engaged in the growing gig-economy is similar to any other job that equally demands commitment, hard work and diligence. Digital work is decent, credible, and prestigious just as any other highly regarded profession.

Digital work requires skills and ethical values; parents and guardians need to support their children to accept the reality that digital work is authentic. The active involvement of government in encouraging the youth to take up digital work is a surety that the work is genuine.

- 9) That is why, as a government, we are empowering the youth with skills and knowledge to exploit the millions of jobs available in the digital space. Parents, guardians and our youth need to know that digital work pays and supports millions of people around the world.
- 10) As countries transform into information societies and embrace the digital economy, the global demand for digital workers keeps growing. Right now, hundreds of thousands of workers are needed and many more will be required every passing day.

11) More Kenyans can benefit from those opportunities to bridge the employment gap. Digital technology creates new emerging opportunities and is continuously improving living standards for Kenyan youth. Some of these new jobs require special and specific skill sets, a combination of basic ICT know-how, problem-solving, and critical-thinking, as well as soft skills such as human centric strengths such as perseverance, collaboration, and empathy.

12) It is for this very reason that we are working together to transform this community into a digitally enabled, knowledge-based society. *“Mheshimiwa, I assure you that the Ministry of ICT is committed to supporting you in transforming Mbeere South to benefit from the new opportunities that are coming up. We will work as one Government to realize our country’s Vision 2030 - a knowledge-based economy with opportunities for all”*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- 13) In May 2019, His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta launched Kenya's Digital Economy Blueprint for Africa during the Transform Africa Summit. For the attainment of Vision 2030, the Digital Blueprint proposes five pillars as foundations for the growth of a digital economy. The pillars are: Digital Government; Digital Business; Infrastructure; Innovation-Driven Entrepreneurship and Digital Skills and Values.

- 14) All the identified pillars contribute immensely to job creation, but in particular, 3 of the pillars digital business, Innovation-driven entrepreneurship and digital skills & values are critical as creators of employment and harnessing of talent to thrive in the new digital ecosystem. Citizens will need to have the appropriate digital skills to take advantage of the opportunities that arise from a digital economy.

15) Kenyans will have the ‘first mover’ advantage to lead Africa into the digital ecosystem and the Government is well positioned to ensure that we truly are recognized as the silicon savannah of our continent. Digital business and innovation-driven entrepreneurship of a robust marketplace for digital trade, digital financial services and digital content.

Ladies and gentlemen

16) From my docket we see the potential for technology and innovation and have fully prepared to harness it - **This potential lies in the skills and creativity of our people.** The Government is making deliberate efforts to mainstream ICT in all sectors of the economy. The Presidential Digital Talent Program (PDTP), now in its 4th year of operation, is a flagship project that is a vital component of Kenya’s human capital strategies.

17) The Digital Literacy Program will see our very young exposed to technology from a very early age, empowering and preparing our future citizenry to the expected future, of a digital society where man and computer interact seamlessly for efficiency and economic growth. The SME Sector is not only opening up in Kenya, our neighbors are also on the rise. Adoption of international practices and embracing globalization is necessary for scale and success. Let's purpose to explore other opportunities available in the region and other parts of the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

18) Kenya is at a point of critical growth, both with Government leading in all the big infrastructure projects (roads, housing etc.) as well as the rolling out of a development agenda known as the Big 4 that seeks to provide food security, universal healthcare, affordable housing and local manufacturing.

- 19) The focus on these 4 pillars will transform the country into a middle-income economy and taking this opportunity to drive efficiency and service delivery of government by outsourcing work through the digital ecosystems and BPO sector will have a significant impact in the local economy.

- 20) The number of youth linked to employment through the government programs can contribute to 40% of jobs in the ecosystem, with the majority of the work being generated through the private sector who often deliver on Government programs – but avoiding the importation of our labor as is often the case in the past in the implementation of Government’s big infrastructure projects.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

21) As I conclude, I want to assure you that, we at the ICT Ministry, continue to work on achieving universal access to technology by formulating policy frameworks that seek to provide accessible and affordable internet to increase uptake at all levels and stimulate innovations and investments in ICT. Additionally, we are working with service providers to expand internet infrastructure to ensure increased network coverage and at the same time increase access and affordability.

22) As a government, we will continue to work with the private sector, to reinforce the positive efforts already undertaken such as infrastructure rollout and ease of doing business. At the same time, we will continue to improve on areas such as access to credit, financial inclusion and capacity building. This is a journey in which we are enjoined collectively; and a journey in which we succeed or fail together.

23) We those remarks, I wish to declare the Mbeere south Constituency Innovation Hub officially launched. Thank you for your attention.

Asanteni Sana!