Remarks By Hon. William Kabogo, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Information, Communications and the Digital Economy, Republic of Kenya, During the Opening of ITU Regional Development Forum (RDF) for Africa on April 7th, 2025, at Safari Park Hotel & Casino, Nairobi, Kenya

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Hon. Nthati Moorosi , Minister of Communications, Science, Technology and Innovation, Lesotho

Hon. Dr Michel Boukar, Minister of Posts and Digital Economy, Chad

H.E Samuel Nartey George, Minister of Communication, Digital Technology, and Innovations, Ghana

H.E Dr. 'Bosun Tijani, Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Nigeria

H.E. Mr. Peter Maddens, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium to Kenya

Kanono Ramashamole, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Information, Communication, Science, Technology and Innovation, Lesotho

Eng. John Tanui, MBS, Principal Secretary, State Department for ICT & Digital Economy, Ministry of Information, Communication & The Digital Economy, Kenya

Hon. Allan Chesang , Chairman, Senate Standing Committee on ICT, Kenya

Dr. Cosmas Zavazava, BDT Director, International Telecommunications Union (ITU)

Dr Emmanuel Manasseh - Regional Director, ITU Regional Office for Africa

Mr. John Omo, Secretary General, African Telecommunications Union (ATU)

Dr. Stephen Jackson, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Kenya

Dr. Ally Simba, Executive Director, East African Communications Organization (EACO)

CEO's Present

ITU Officials present

Representatives of the Regional Telecommunications Organizations

UN Organizations represented here

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

It is my great honour to welcome you all to Nairobi for this year's International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Regional Development Forum (RDF) for Africa – a pivotal platform for shaping our collective digital future. I especially wish to welcome foreign delegates, with a warm Karibu Kenya to our ICT Ministers and dignitaries from across the continent. Your presence here is a clear testament to the heightened priority that African governments are now placing on digital transformation, ICTs, and strategic engagement with global Big Tech.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our deliberations today come at a critical juncture in the continent's digital trajectory. Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) are no longer peripheral—they are central to Africa's socio-economic transformation. They underpin the African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy 2020-2030, which is an integral enabler of Agenda 2063—the Africa We Want.

This continental strategy seeks to drive inclusive economic growth, foster regional integration, stimulate decent job creation, promote digital inclusivity, bridge the digital divide, and advance sustainable development. It is projected that digital transformation could add as much as $180 billion to Africa's GDP by 2025, according to the International Finance Corporation and Google's 2020 report.

Globally, we see the digital economy averagely contributing over 15% of global GDP and growing at a rate two and a half times faster than the global GDP average. Africa is claiming its stake in this global opportunity.

ICTs are the lifeblood of our economies. They drive cross-border communication, facilitate trade, enhance government services, and enable innovation across sectors—from agriculture and health, to education, manufacturing, and finance. They hold the key to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

Yet, while the potential is vast, so too are the challenges.

Bridging the Connectivity Gap

Despite commendable progress, the digital divide persists. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Facts and Figures Report 2024, internet penetration in Africa stands at just 38%, significantly below the global average of 67%. Broadband access is still limited and uneven, with rural areas particularly underserved.

Smartphone penetration in Africa is only about 50%, and the average cost of 1GB of mobile data in sub-Saharan Africa remains high at USD 3.31, compared to the global average of just USD 0.50–1.00. These disparities curtail our ability to democratize digital access and empower citizens equitably.

This forum provides a vital opportunity to forge regional strategies to address these bottlenecks—through smarter investments, regulatory reforms, and innovative financing models.

Distinguished Delegates,

Kenya is proud to be a pacesetter in Africa's digital transformation journey. Our Government, through the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Digital Economy, is advancing policies to ensure we do not merely adapt to change—we lead it.

Just the other day, we launched the National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy—a bold step to position Kenya as a global AI hub. This strategy will guide the ethical,

inclusive, and impactful deployment of AI across key sectors such as agriculture, health, education, and public service.

We are championing local manufacturing and assembly of affordable smartphones, reducing barriers to access, while ensuring devices remain within the financial reach of the majority. We are also intensifying efforts to expand our fibre optic infrastructure to cover 100,000 km, and to establish 25,000 public Wi-Fi hotspots and 1,450 digital hubs countrywide.

In line with the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA), over 22,000 government services are now accessible through the e-Citizen platform, reinforcing digital inclusion and improving transparency, efficiency, and public service delivery.

We are expanding 5G coverage beyond major cities, and exploring green digital initiatives as we develop the first eco-datacenter fully powered by clean energy aligned with climate action as the cabinet recently approved the Cloud First policy, including circular ICT production models.

Dear delegates

Africa must boldly chart a course that ensures no country or community is left behind. Our efforts must focus on:

- Expanding broadband infrastructure, especially to rural and remote areas.
- Lowering broadband costs through regional harmonization and innovative market interventions.
- Building digital skills at scale to prepare our youth for jobs of the future.
- Investing in AI, Big Data, and cloud technologies, while establishing enabling data governance frameworks.
- Fostering intra-African digital trade, leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).
- Strengthening regional cooperation on cybersecurity and data protection.
- Harmonizing our data sharing corridors and service infrastructure tariffs regionally

We are all alive to the fact that Cybersecurity is a Global Concern as well as a Local Priority as it is said "With digital opportunity comes digital risk". The World Economic Forum's Global Cybersecurity Outlook 2025 warns of a growing sophistication of cyber threats, exacerbated by geopolitical tensions, AI misuse, and supply chain vulnerabilities. Africa must not be caught off guard.

Kenya has taken a proactive stance. Our National Kenya Computer Incident Response Team – Coordination Centre (KE-CIRT/CC) continues to enhance national resilience and promote cross-border collaboration to detect, prevent, and respond to cyber incidents. Our cybersecurity framework includes all stakeholders—government, law enforcement, financial institutions, private sector, academia, and civil society. We must in partnership enhance our collaboration as Africa

The African region must urgently converge around common standards, share intelligence, and build capacity in real-time cybersecurity response, if we are to secure the foundations of our digital economies.

As we prepare for the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) 2025, Africa must speak with one voice—assertive, bold, and united. This Regional Development Forum (RDF) presents an opportunity to critically assess our progress, accelerate our strategies, and ensure WTDC outcomes are responsive to Africa's unique needs and aspirations.

I commend the Africa Telecommunication Union (ATU) under the leadership of Secretary General Mr. John Omo, and the Communication Authority (CA) for championing Africa's collective digital agenda on the global stage by facilitating this event and for the proactive engagements it continues to steer in the region, galvanizing our collective aspirations, ensuring we derive maximum value from critical decision-making platforms like the WTDC.

The tireless efforts of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Communications Authority of Kenya in convening this forum deserve our deepest appreciation.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Africa's time is now. With a population set to reach 2.5 billion by 2050, and a median age under 20, we are sitting on a demographic dividend that—if equipped with the right digital tools, infrastructure, and opportunities—can drive global innovation and growth.

Let us leave this forum with a renewed sense of purpose—to build a connected, inclusive, resilient, and prosperous digital Africa.

I wish all of us fruitful deliberations over and look forward to our shared progress on the road to WTDC 2025 and beyond.

Asanteni sana, and thank you for your kind attention.