

2ND EUROAFRICA-ICT AWARENESS WORKSHOP AT PROTEA HOTEA, OCTOBER 20 – 21, 2008

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I am much honored to have this opportunity to speak at the 2nd EuroAfriCa-ICT awareness workshop. It's the first of its kind in Uganda. This clearly says something about Uganda's credentials as a potential hub for ICT research and development. Indeed the Ministry of ICT is proud to be associated with this workshop as it is in line with our key objectives of raising ICT research a crucial engine for regional innovations and development.

The Government of Uganda unreservedly commits itself to champion the development and use of ICT in the country; and the Policy Vision: A Uganda where national development, especially human development and good governance, shall be sustainably enhanced, promoted and accelerated by efficient application and use of ICT, including timely access to information. The ICT Policy Objectives include: Sensitization and awareness on the role of ICT; Building ICT human resource capacity; Establishing an appropriate infrastructure for ICT development and enable universal access; Promotion of competition and investment in the sector and encouraging local participation ; Development of Innovative financing tools in ICTs; Production, storage and dissemination of information; Facilitation of access to public information; Creation of a conducive environment for media pluralism; Promotion of multi-linguism; Promotion of and ensuring gender mainstreaming in ICT development; Establishment of desirable legal framework; Support and encouragement of Research and Development in ICT; Recognition of intellectual assets; and Enhancement of regional and international collaboration.

I would like to use this opportunity to encourage ICT Stakeholders here today to play a greater role in the development of standards for the ICT Sector. The Ministry will continue to work together in close collaboration with the academia and industry in research projects whose outcome could help to contribute to the development of the ICT sector.

However, it has been noted with concern that there are limited partnerships existing between the academic Institutions and the local private and public sectors in the sub-Saharan Africa. A lot of research has been undertaken by universities although little has been absorbed by the different sectors. There is need for cooperation among the Universities, Private and public sectors if these roles are to be effectively achieved. None can work successfully in isolation of others. The EuroAfriCa-ICT project presents an opportunity that will enable us as a country as well as the region to explore new areas of collaboration such as: Joint Research; ICT applications development especially software solutions; Producing quality and relevant ICT graduates and thereby reduce training time after graduation; ICT innovations; Mentorship and industrial attachments; and Commercialization of the research/ intellectual outputs from

the Universities. It is on this ground that I am here today to emphasize the importance of research collaborations with regard to the development of ICT in Africa.

A challenge confronting the sector, not only in Uganda but also the regional countries is the lack of access to international undersea cable system. This has inevitably denied our people access to the cheap international bandwidth due to the sole dependence on satellite which is expensive and limited in capacity. The recent regional undersea cable initiatives such as EASSy, TEAMS, Seacom, and Uhurunet are expected to address this constraint hopefully by end of 2009. A national team of experts consisting of stakeholders has been established spearheaded by the Ministry of ICT to work out a national strategy which will serve as a guide for Government to come up with a policy framework for the development of access to the global submarine cable systems, and broadband infrastructure in general. With proper infrastructure in place Universal access becomes more and more feasible with rapidly declining costs for networking and telecommunication technologies. This allows developing countries to leapfrog ahead through the use of cutting-edge technologies. This would enable among others cost effective Research Education Networking.

Let me conclude this address by thanking the Vice Chancellor, EuroAfrica-ICT project partners and the Organizers of the workshop most sincerely for giving me the opportunity to share with you briefly our expectations in the sector. I believe this workshop will come out with constructive proposals to propel the sector forward.

I thank you for your attention and I wish you successful deliberations.