

2ND EUROAFRICA-ICT AWARENESS WORKSHOP AT PROTEA HOTEA, OCTOBER 20 – 21, 2008
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It gives me great pleasure to be here today to open this EuroAfriCa-ICT Awareness Workshop. It is also a great honor to be invited to meet with such an erudite group of people - ICT stakeholders from across the world. It's also important for me to be here to discuss something that is fundamentally changing society: the importance of ICT and how it affects our lives today and the lives of our children - the future, through ICT awareness, research and developments done in institutions by researchers such as yourselves.

Sub-Saharan countries are lagging behind in access to ICT. This gap is widened by the lack or limited cooperation and information sharing among research groups between the sub-Saharan Africa, the Europe, Caribbean and elsewhere. Investments in ICTs are a key factor in driving innovation in companies, driving productivity growth, honing competitiveness, cutting red tape and creating jobs. Therefore organizing such workshops creates platforms and networking for key stakeholders in the ICT field.

ICT cooperation provides an opportunity for Joint Research in ICT. Collaborative research is emerging as the principal route to securing substantial research funding. Large-complex projects require financial investments that may exceed the capacity of a single academic unit or company especially for universities in Uganda and the region. Large grant proposals require up front investments to cover expenses such as travel and meeting costs for planning purposes, grant writing, cutting-edge equipment, infrastructure and other professional services that may not be available in-house. It is through pilot projects leading to larger collaborations that synergies could be realized. Collaborative projects enable institutions to bring together what they have and could easily share facilities and resources. Having European and Caribbean universities/companies partnering with regional Universities/companies will strengthen research collaboration. Besides, Uganda can benefit from Europe's competitive advantages such as key ICT technologies, successful industrial clusters and business sectors. Europe has a lot of expertise in undertaking research of different kind related to science and technology which could be of great advantage to many young researchers in the region.

Ladies and gentlemen,

ICT's have transformed societies and this can be attested to by countries in the Asian Countries. Our region has the potential to reap very big from the use of ICT's from different fronts for example; Health through E-Health or Telemedicine, E-Education or Tele-education or E-Learning, E-Commerce/Business, Business Process Outsourcing among others. In order for these to take root it is very important that research provides the foundation for the implementation of such project. I am aware that there have been initiatives to kick start some of these projects in the region and I am sure that with such initiatives coming in place realizing the potential of ICT's is going to be real in the shortest time possible.

I take this opportunity to appraise the EU for funding this project. This is awakening research opportunities among the Ugandan researcher and ICT practitioners. I however challenge the project partners to identify other areas where such cooperation can be enhanced and to reflect on the degree of collaborations, cooperation and interaction to benefit the ordinary Ugandan. I challenge you to enforce south to south collaboration among universities and the private sector. Most partnerships being

experienced in Uganda are with international organizations rather than local companies. The point I am making is that Universities have the talent which the local companies need to exploit, such as software development. ICT is an important tool in improving delivery in the education sector, Institutional management and causing development through providing information to the general masses. Use it.

There is an urgent need to advance and solve the exclusion risk that new services based on ICT may present to certain groups of people such as the elderly, disabled, or simply people that are isolated from such ICT- having in mind that ALL citizens are willing to use and enjoy those new services that may support and improve their quality of life. This workshop in my opinion provides the opportunity to reinforce the relationship between technological partners and people willing to be directly benefit from ICT solutions; this workshop is a channel to understand better user's needs and expectations and how ICT developers may design the tools and solutions to cover such expectations. Of course, this cannot be achieved over night. It comes gradually, one step at a time. There are break throughs and setbacks; some pushed forward while others pulled back; but we hope to experience rapid progress and unexpected obstacles.

Once more I must express my profound gratitude to you for inviting me to participate in this important workshop. I now pronounce the workshop open. I thank you all for your attention.