

Address by Hon. Samuel Pogisho, Minister for Information and Communications, during the 'HR4ICT 11' Forum on 21st March, 2011 at the Hilton Hotel, Nairobi

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Organization (CTO)

Representatives of CTO members and Liaison Officers of the Programme for Development and Training (PDT)

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am delighted to join you this morning at official opening of this annual event on HR for ICT. I wish, at the very outset, to commend the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization (CTO) for organizing this event in Kenya and thus giving the country and indeed the entire African region an opportunity to learn and share experiences on the pertinent and topical subject of Business Continuity. As a region that is prone to natural and man-made disasters, Africa needs to be prepared to mitigate the myriad forms and incidents of business interruptions and discontinuity. It is for this reason that I wish to thank the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) for partnering with CTO in hosting the event.

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) industry has experienced dramatic growth in the last decade globally. In Africa, the penetration of ICT industry has grown beyond initial projections to become an integral part of all aspects of our life, including politics, economic activities and social interactions. For more than half of our populations in Africa, life would be unimaginable without ICTs.

The over-dependence on ICTs has infused and enhanced efficiency in the productive activities of the economy. It has also created new opportunities for employment and growth of the ICT sector itself and the economy at large. Clearly, ICT infrastructure and services are the nerve-centre of today's networked economies. Any disruption to ICT infrastructure therefore poses risks to life as we know it, including the operations of the global, regional and national financial system, business, social networks, entertainment and economies. As a region, we therefore need to upscale our knowledge and skills on this subject in order to mitigate the risk of business interruptions and discontinuity.

Ladies and gentlemen, the disruptions to Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) could have diverse causes. They could be triggered by natural disasters (as seen in what is currently happening in Japan), technology upgrades, changes in the business environment, staff turnover and deficiency, and cyber wars/crime. I wish to commend the CTO for ensuring that this Forum covers all these issues in a comprehensive manner. I am positive that region shall be better for it.

Allow me at this juncture, ladies and gentlemen, to share with you some of the initiatives that the Government of Kenya has undertaken in the area of business continuity. The Government has put in place a number of mechanisms to enhance the management of ICT security in the country. Key among them is bolstering of the legal regime to cover issues relating to cyber crime.

As a result of the enhanced legal regime, the industry regulator, CCK has already set up a national Computer Response Emergency Team (CERT) to handle sophisticated cyber crime acts in conjunction with other relevant agencies.

In addition the Government has set up a National Disaster Operation Centre at the Office of the President to coordinate disaster preparedness and recovery. The Centre, which is well resourced, works in conjunction with the private sector, the civil society and other relevant agencies in the discharge of its mandate. In addition, the Government has developed a draft National Policy on Disaster Management in Kenya. The said Policy emphasizes preparedness on the part of Government, communities and other stakeholders in Disaster Risk Reduction activities. The policy is currently under discussion at high levels of Government and shall be gazetted soon.

To ensure the security of our ICT networks, the Government of Kenya has put mechanisms in place to maximize redundancy. At the moment, Kenya enjoys a fairly high level of redundancy in respect to critical national backbone infrastructure. The available redundancy has been attained largely as a result of competition in the ICT sector. In addition, my ministry is initiating a review of the law to enhance the penalties a means of tackling the rampant incidence of cable vandalism.

Ladies and gentlemen, to sustain the level of growth and innovation in the ICT sector in the country, the Government has put in place mechanisms of strengthening and streamlining ICT training.

In this regard, the Government has developed ICT curriculum to cover all levels of education from primary to university. The Government is also developing strategies to support research and innovation. We shall continue reviewing the strategies to ensure that Kenya remains the regional ICT hub.

As I conclude, I wish you fruitful deliberations. I encourage you to openly discuss, share ideas, and experiences. I also wish to encourage you to spare some time to sample the warm hospitality of our people and the rich social life in Nairobi.

With those few remarks, I wish to declare this HR4ICT11 Forum officially open.

Thank you for your attention