

SPEECH BY THE CHIEF GUEST FOR THE ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR
AFRICA ICT TRADE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH COUNTRY ROUNDTABLE
MEETING HOLIDAY INN 8TH TO 9TH FEBRUARY, 2007

THE ICT SECRETARY
THE REPRESENTATIVES FROM UNECA
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

I AM PLEASED TO BE INVITED TO THIS ICT TRADE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH ROUNDTABLE MEETING WHICH WILL EXAMINE THE ROLE OF ICT IN TRADE. THE STUDY WHOSE CONTENTS WILL BE PRESENTED HERE GOES A LONG WAY TO PROVIDE INFORMATION THAT WILL ASSIST POLICY MAKERS IN DEVELOPING APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES. I UNDERSTAND THE STUDY WAS CARRIED OUT IN SIX AFRICAN COUNTRIES AND I BELIEVE THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES WILL BE USED TO ENRICH THE DELIBERATIONS FROM THIS MEETING.

THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY STRATEGY FOR WEALTH AND EMPLOYMENT CREATION (ERS) FOR THE PERIOD 2003-2007 AIMS AT SPURRING RAPID ECONOMIC GROWTH THUS CREATING JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND WEALTH FOR THE CITIZEN. IN THIS REGARD, ICT IS HIGHLY REGARDED AS A DEVELOPMENT ENABLER AND HAS BEEN GIVEN HIGH PRIORITY BY THE GOVERNMENT.

AS YOU ARE AWARE TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENT HAS CREATED AN UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY TO DISTRIBUTE KNOWLEDGE, CULTURE, AND INFORMATION TO ALL, AT NEAR ZERO COST. THE EMERGENCE AND GROWTH OF THE INTERNET HAS ENABLED THE FREE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS, CREATIVITY AMONG CITIZENS, AND EDUCATION FOR THE IMPOVERISHED. ALREADY, IN AFRICA AND OTHER DEVELOPING REGIONS, THE RAPID SPREAD OF MOBILE TELEPHONES AND WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATION HAS SPURRED ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND HELPED SMALL AND MEDIUM SIZED ENTERPRISES TAKE ROOT; PARTICULARLY THOSE RUN AND OWNED BY WOMEN.

DOCTORS IN REMOTE AREAS HAVE GAINED ACCESS TO MEDICAL INFORMATION ON TROPICAL DISEASES. STUDENTS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TAP INTO WORLD-WIDE DATABASES OF BOOKS AND RESEARCH. EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS OF NATURAL DISASTERS HAVE IMPROVED, AND RELIEF WORKERS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE QUICKER, BETTER COORDINATED RELIEF. THESE OPPORTUNITIES AND OTHER NEW ONES CAN BE UTILIZED TO BENEFIT PEOPLE IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD BY THE EFFECTIVE USAGE OF ICTS' FOR DEVELOPMENT.

THE ADVENT OF INTERNET IMPLIES TRADE PROMOTION, FACILITATION, TRANSACTIONS AND PAYMENTS COULD ALL BE CONDUCTED VIRTUALLY OVER A SECURE INTERNET PROTOCOL.

E-TRANSACTIONS INVOLVE THE ACT OF BUYING AND SELLING GOODS, SERVICES OR INFORMATION OVER AN ELECTRONIC NETWORK. TRANSACTIONS ARE NEGOTIATED ELECTRONICALLY AND ARE COMPLETED WHEN AN AGREEMENT IS REACHED TO TRANSFER OWNERSHIP OF GOODS OR RIGHTS TO RECEIVE SERVICES OR INFORMATION AT A SPECIFIC PRICE. E-COMMERCE ENTAILS LETTING CUSTOMERS HAVE ACCESS TO THE SUPPLIER'S SYSTEMS AND LETTING THEM SERVE THEMSELVES

AS YOU MAY BE AWARE, E-COMMERCE IS STILL AT AN EMBRYONIC STAGE IN KENYA, BUT IS GROWING RAPIDLY WITH TECHNOLOGY AND MARKET DYNAMICS SHAPING ITS GROWTH. THE GROWTH OF E-COMMERCE HAS BEEN LIMITED BY PROBLEMS AND CONCERNS INCLUDING SECURITY OF PAYMENTS, THE PRESENCE OF POTENTIALLY FRAUDULENT MERCHANTS, QUESTIONS REGARDING THE PRIVACY OF PERSONAL DATA, AND THE DIFFICULTY AND COST OF ACCESSING E-COMMERCE MERCHANTS.

THE FOREGOING FACTORS AFFECT THE POTENTIAL GROWTH OF E-COMMERCE AND REPRESENT SIGNIFICANT POLICY AND LEGAL CHALLENGES. IT IS WITH THIS RECOGNITION THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS INITIATED A PROCESS THAT WILL CULMINATE INTO AN APPROPRIATE E-TRANSACTION REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR KENYA AND ALREADY, A SERIES OF

WORKSHOPS HAVE BEEN HELD WITH RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES.

I WISH TO REITERATE THE GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TOWARDS THE IMPROVEMENT OF SERVICE DELIVERY TO KENYANS. THE GOVERNMENT IS ALSO COMMITTED TO ENHANCING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC SERVICE AND ENHANCED COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION AMONG ALL STAKEHOLDERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS. THIS ROUNDTABLE MEETING COMES AT AN OPPORTUNE TIME GIVEN THE RAPID INITIATIVES THAT ARE EVIDENT IN THE ICT SECTOR IN KENYA.

AT THIS JUNCTURE, LET ME TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO APPRECIATE THE ASSISTANCE FROM UNECA IN PARTNERING WITH THE KENYA GOVERNMENT IN THIS INITIATIVE.

WITH THOSE FEW REMARKS, I NOW DECLARE THIS MEETING OFFICIALLY OPEN AND I WISH YOU FRUITFUL DELIBERATIONS.

THANK YOU.