



REMARKS BY MS. MAUREEN MBAKA, CBS, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY FOR ICT AND BROADCASTING, MINISTRY OF ICT, INNOVATION AND YOUTH AFFAIRS DURING THE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP: DEVELOPING A GENERATION OF JOB CREATORS FOR A BETTER FUTURE YOUTH FORUM HELD ON THURSDAY 5TH MAY, 2022 AT THE NAIROBI SERENA HOTEL.

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

- 1.) It is an honour and privilege to be with you all here today. I commend the **Impact Philanthropy Africa** for this timely forum that seeks to create youth who are job creators rather than seekers. It is high time we get to discuss and come up with concrete actions**

on how to further empower the youth and to reap the youth dividend in our country and Africa,

2.) I am reliably informed that the theme for this forum is Youth Empowerment, Employment and Entrepreneurship: Developing a generation of job creators for a better future which I believe is apt, happening at just the right time as young people are expected to play a key and positive role in Kenya by being job creators.

3.) The Government of Kenya acknowledges that the youth of the country are an invaluable resource to the Community and to the future of the Country as a whole. With 75% of the population being under the age of 35, we need to leverage on the youth dividend as a central resource to scale impact in every aspect of Kenya's development and the society at large.

In 2019, the Government of Kenya adopted the **Kenya National Youth Development Policy** which provides avenues for meaningful youth engagement through their effective participation in political, economic and social development processes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4.) I would like to underscore the priorities of the Kenya Youth Development Policy, 2019 and the role that can be played by both the Government and private sector towards empowering the Kenyan youth.

The policy prioritizes these areas on which efforts and resources meant for the youth of Kenya shall be focused in the next 5 years.

The areas include:

1. Realize a healthy and productive youth
2. Build skilled, competent and disciplined youth workforce
3. Create opportunities for youth to earn decent and sustainable livelihoods
4. Enhancing creativity, talent identification and intellectual property rights for youth innovators
5. Nurture value driven, morally upright and ethical and transformative generation of youth
6. effective civic participation and representation among the youth
7. promoting a crime free, secure, peaceful and United Kenya where no young Kenyan is left behind
8. Support Youth engagement in Environment Management for Sustainable Development

These areas comprise a set of interventions that will help Kenya realize a youth population that is empowered, healthy, safe, competent, earning decent livelihoods, creative, innovative, patriotic, and participating in decision making, upholding ethical values, and protecting the environment.

All stakeholders are urged to collaborate under the coordination framework provided to realize the goals set out in the policy.

Ladies and gentlemen,

5.) As a government, we are working towards building of a skilled, competent and disciplined youth workforce for sustained social economic development. We can only achieve this through harnessing of the demographic dividends of youth and the provision of relevant skills and competencies which are consistent and aligned with job market requirements.

6.) The Government of Kenya is alive to the importance of **technology and innovation** in achieving Kenya's strategic goals, advancing our economy, and promoting solutions for meeting development challenges facing the country.

- 7.)Kenya's Economic Blueprint the Vision 2030, and the priority areas as set out by HE the BIG 4 AGENDA, recognize the ICT sector as a critical driver and enabler to Kenya's socio-economic development.
- 8.)It is for that reason that the Government has launched several programs which are in place to prepare the youth of Kenya, who are a critical resource to development, for the digital world and to prepare them to contribute to the digital economy and enable them harness their innate innovative nature.
- 9.)Kenya's Digital Economy Blueprint and recently launched Digital Masterplan recognise, **Digital skills** as a prerequisite for benefiting from any technology, across all sectors of the economy, and at all levels of the skills spectrum.
- 10.) To impart digital skills upon young minds from an early age, the Government has in place the **Digital Literacy Program**, which has seen the distribution of over 1 million digital devices in over 22,000 public schools across the country and the training of over 300,000 teachers.

- 11.) Further, The Ministry of ICT, through the ICT Authority also piloted the **SchoolNet project** targeting 9,600 students and 200 teachers in 13 schools across the country. The SchoolNet initiative is part of the government's efforts for sustainable solutions for school connectivity to spur learning and utilization of the digital devices.
- 12.) Already over 1500 schools have been earmarked under phase 1 of the Schoolnet connectivity project being implemented by a partnership of Ministry of Education, Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs, the ICT Authority, UNESCO and HUAWEI.
- 13.) **In recognition of the immense opportunities online for the youth** of the country, and to prepare the youth for the future of work, the GOK has in place the **Ajira Digital Program** – under which free training on how to work online is provided to the youth of Kenya on the platform **ajiradigital.go.ke**. Here the youth learn how to take up the opportunities provided by the gig economy.
- 14.) **Further, the ICT Ministry encourages innovative youth in the country** to take advantage of one of our programs known as the **Huduma Whitebox** - a one-stop shop for anyone who wants to present, share or sell their idea, innovation, invention or solution.

Through the website, **whitebox.go.ke**, the youth can forward their innovations and ideas for promotion and support upon evaluation of viability.

15.) The program evaluates the innovations and provides linkage to markets and marketing expertise; access to legal guidance; Linkage to research institutions and universities; to innovation hubs and centres; linkage to investors and mentors and the appropriate industry players.

16.) The Whitebox website also has an eLearning Portal that provides self-paced modules on:

- Business modeling
- Pitching
- Validation
- Marketing
- Sales
- Startup Funding, and
- Legal processes for Early-Stage businesses

Huduma Whitebox has seen over 1500 registered innovators and around 300 innovations and I encourage the young innovators to access the program on **whitebox.go.ke.**

17.) The Government of Kenya has put in place structures needed increasing the number of youth in dignified and fulfilling work through offering of internships, mentorships, apprenticeships, job placement mechanisms, funds, technology and innovation support, and entrepreneurial skills development trainings.

18.) We have several other programs in place such as the NYC, KYEOP, YOUTH FUND and Uwezo Fund.

14.) On Development of youth talent, creativity and innovation for wealth creation, we are all aware that youth constitute a huge pool of untapped potential in sports and performing arts. This potential of the youth could be tapped and nurtured to create alternative pathways of earning a living. “**Studio Mashinani**” and “**Talent pia ni Kazi**” programs where young people can affordably record and expose their creative talent to the market as we harness their talent to create new jobs. **Effective civic participation and representation among the Youth** is another area that needs to

considered taking into consideration the numerical strength of the youth population.

15. In this regard Ladies and Gentlemen, Kenya has made intentional and deliberate efforts of incorporating the youth at the forefront by ensuring young people are at the decision table. H.E. The President of The Republic of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta has so far appointed six (6) Youth to the position of Chief Administrative Secretary in various Ministries.

16. I am happy to announce that I am one of these Six Youthful Chief Administrative Secretaries appointed by H.E the President of Kenya and continue to work tirelessly to grow this very critical sector covered by the Ministry for accelerated development.

As I conclude, Ladies and gentlemen,

20.) The Government and private sector need to work collaboratively to realize optimal youth empowerment and I look forward to the deliberations made here towards the realization of youth empowerment, employment and entrepreneurship. I reiterate that the government is committed to achieving the goal of an empowered youth, as outlined in the Big-4 Agenda, and such an effort will not be successful without the active engagement of young people.

With these few remarks I wish to laud Impact Philanthropy and the convenors for this initiative, and wish you fruitful deliberations moving forward.

Asanteni sana.