

FAREWELL REMARKS AT THE 7TH ANNUAL E-GOVERNANCE AFRICA FORUM 2013

COMMONWEALTH SPEKE RESORT MUNYONYO

*(By Dr Wilberforce Kisamba Mugerwa
Chairperson National Planning Authority)*

The Session Chairperson

The Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Sierra Leone, Hon Shaka Tarawalie

The Deputy Minister for ICT for the Republic of Uganda, Hon Nyombi Tembo

The Chairperson, National Information Technology Authority Uganda, Dr Francis F Tusubira

The Secretary General, Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation, Prof Tim UNWIN

The Executive Director, Uganda Communications Commission, Mr Godfrey Mutabazi

Hon Members of Parliament

Ladies and Gentleman

Permit me to thank the organizers for giving me this opportunity to bid farewell to you all the distinguished participants in these three-days of highly interactive forum, the 7th Annual E-Governance Africa 2013. However before I say the few parting words I would like to invite you to reflect briefly with me on our experiences in this 2013 E0GOV Africa Forum. You will agree with me that this has been an extremely educative and enriching experience in matters pertaining to e-governance policies, structures and administration. For the latter some of you may have encountered situations whereby there exist the right policies and

structures but things fail to materialize because of the dysfunctional reporting mechanisms to be used by e-governance implementing agencies. We also may have witnessed some issues of poor institutional collaboration that tend to revolve around the contention of whose mandate it is to promote the agenda of ICT and e-governance. (Sometimes this challenge is termed '**mandate migration**' when one institution assumes the mandate of another one in an attempt to occupy an apparent void or vacuum). I am convinced that we all gained tremendously from the wisdom of Hon Shaka Tarawalie from *Sierra Leone* and the other distinguished panelists *Rwanda, Kenya and Tanzania* who handled ably the institutional frameworks and government approaches to overcoming the challenges that often impair effective e-governance administration in Africa.

When it comes to ICT infrastructure for e-governance, Africa is lagging far behind all the other continents especially with very few available large undersea fibre optic cables. But on the continent we take note that regionally West Africa, the ECOWAS countries have done a lot better than Eastern and Central Africa and so the COMESA region needs to put in more efforts to rectify the situation. There is also the e-governance broadband connectivity for e-service delivery that needs greater attention from the service providers working closely with governments. With these firmly in place then one can truly state that there is hope for making the continent of Africa better for ourselves, and the generations to come provided

we invest in enabling technologies and apply appropriate practices in e-government, open data, m-government and ways and means of reaching the rural person and the urban poor. Improving the quality of the people is the focus of any democratic government and this cannot be attained without enhancing efficiency in service delivery. We recognize that the application of ICT contributes to the reduction not only of the production costs but also of the transaction costs at every node in the value chain of any one product and/or service. This technology application serves to improve accessibility and affordability of the services.

We have also noted that whatever model a government may adopt of e-governance it needs commitment to attain transparency and accountability. I think this is a very pertinent message to our leaders at different levels in our respective countries. In case of Uganda the Forum has been well attended by the cross-section of stakeholders including Honourable Ministers and Members of Parliament and we must thank them for creating room in the very busy schedules to come and attend religiously this Forum. I am very confident that your attendance has benefited not only the other distinguished participants but also the constituents that you represent who will be the lucky beneficiaries especially when you apply the knowledge and best practices that you have gained from this Forum.

The provision of good nutrition, through a system that ensures food security, would highly contribute to the quality of the population of any Nation. It is even more fundamental among

developing countries where food security depends on the rain fed agricultural production that is influenced by the vagaries of nature now termed as 'Climate Change'. The information on the pattern of weather and farm practices influences greatly the level of food security due its unpredictability that unsettles the mind and operations of the rural farmers. Hence they affect the output of these farmers leading to substantially reduced productivity. The matters are not helped when extension system itself is either very weak or near non-existent.

Therefore accessing information through appropriate ICT applications and modules is crucial as a source of knowledge about farm practices not only through publications but also through an extensive network of FM radio stations of over 140 in number in Uganda that have facilitated mobilization and sensitization of the people about their development and well-being. Even better still, the flexibility of using mobile telephony to access information has revolutionalised the way of doing business in rural Africa. Who would have believed, ten years ago, that a mobile phone would be a major banking facility whereby one would be able to remit and receive payments, check one's bank accounts to establish balances and also transfer funds from one account to another? This is just amazing of what incredible things that can be done using this otherwise innocuous looking gadget called a mobile phone. These days it is possible to scan pregnant women in rural setting and then transmit the information to experienced gynecologists for diagnosis and referral or treatment all done

despite the great distances between the patients and the medical experts! These are the wonders of modern technology that we must embrace for socio-economic transformation of our countries.

Here in Uganda the government implemented a liberalization policy of ICT from a state mono-poly to several private service providers which had spurred rapid growth and expansion of the ICT infrastructure by attracting substantial private sector investments. This has improved significantly the ICT services in this country. These private sector players must be thanked for the tremendous contribution to nation building and socio-economic development. We believe that ICT and ICT enabled services industry has enormous opportunities that Uganda can exploit to transform the economy and people's lives through *job creation, accelerated economic growth and significantly increased productivity*. Given our belief and collective commitment to making Uganda a globally competitive nation, ICT provides an opportunity to improve national productivity through making government and business enterprises more efficient, effective and hence globally competitive.

We trust that the networking that has been cultivated and nurtured by this Forum will catalyze the exploitation of our potential to improve the availability of digital content and e-products, automation of government processes and inter-agency connectivity, innovation, bridging the gap between industry and the academia and commercialization of research and

development for accelerated socio-economic transformation of our respective countries and hence the Continent of Africa. As we are in process of formulating the Uganda Vision 2040, and while still grappling with ICT gestation period during which we have not yet exported any ICT-value added products, we envisage that instead of making Uganda a net-importer of ICT products, Uganda will focus on developing, improving and retooling its ICT talent building mechanism by adopting globally-bench-marked, industry-rated skills assessments and training and certification standards. In this endeavor the government will promote the development of hi-tech industry by, among other things, establishing a hi-tech city through attracting and supporting investments in hi-tech industries. As the Minister responsible for ICT has already intimated, the Government of Uganda has identified ICT as one of the core growth areas that can catapult the country in realizing its vision of “***Transforming Uganda from a Predominately Peasant Society to an Upper-Middle Income Country in the next 30 years***”.

As I conclude these farewell words, I must commend your active participation in this **7th Annual E-Governance Africa 2013** and I hope that you have benefited greatly from the interactions and discussion during these three days and that your respective countries will be the primary beneficiaries of the wealth of knowledge and best practices gathered here so far. Furthermore in the true networking manner, let us value and nurture the many friends that we have made here in this Munyonyo 2013 E0GOV Africa Forum. In the same breath if

you are visiting Uganda for the first time please do not go away without savoring the beauty that ' Pearl of Africa' offers coupled with the unequalled hospitality of its people. If you have been here before then you know that a refreshing look again at Uganda's beautiful treasures will do you tremendous good and will bestow on you such a wonderful memory that will last for many years to come. I wish to thank the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) in collaboration with the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation (CTO) for holding a successful E-Governance Africa 2013 in Uganda.

I also wish to thank the Hon Ministers who spared time despite their usual busy schedules and joined us. We appreciate their interactions that have exposed us to their rich experiences from their respective countries. We look forward to working together to make our region more attractive and productive. We wish you safe return journeys to your respective countries and please come back to Uganda again and again and AGAIN!!!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION