

**CLOSING SPEECH DELIVERED BY HONOURABLE PROF.
M.J. MWANDOSYA (MP), MINISTER FOR
COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT AT THE NATIONAL
STAKEHOLDERS' WORKSHOP ON NATIONAL
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES
(ICT) POLICY HELD AT THE ROYAL PALM HOTEL, DAR
ES SALAAM, 25 MAY 2002:**

Mr. Chairman,

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and other Members of the Diplomatic Community,

Honourable Members of Parliament (MPs),

Permanent Secretaries and all Chief Executive Officers,

Regional Administrative Secretaries (RASs),

Distinguished Guests,

Invited Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I wish to acknowledge the honour accorded to me to join you as you come to the end of this first ever national forum that was called upon to discuss and deliberate on the draft Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) Policy for Tanzania.

Mr. Chairman,

I am informed that this workshop of stakeholders has adequately covered the intended themes. Participants have represented government, public and private sector institutions, individuals and some guests from overseas and overland such as one from Malawi. I congratulate you all for being able to offer your useful contributions that will be used as inputs to the final draft of the National ICT policy. We have been overwhelmed by the turnout of participants and your contribution to this process.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am also aware that a day in the span required to craft a policy such as this is not enough. Yet the discussions you have had on the draft national ICT policy document, are very fundamental in providing effective and efficient and meaningful assessment of where we have been, where we are and where we are going or ought to go in achieving sustainable growth and development and the role of ICT in that regard. The Government recognizes the importance of ICT and that is why deliberate action was taken to initiate process of formulating the National ICT Policy under the coordination of the Ministry of Communications and Transport.

I am sure you have been able to discuss at length key issues that need to be addressed in such a document for the benefit of the present and the future. The public and private sector partnership which has been demonstrated in the ongoing process should continue in the subsequent phases of ICT policy formulation. The main challenge ahead of us is narrowing the internal 'Digital Divide' – the gap within the country between individuals, households, businesses, and geographical locations, so that we can achieve the overarching national objective of improving living standards of our people. ICT provides a real opportunity to narrow the classical rural versus urban development gap. It could be the answer to the rural/urban migration problem or to the empowerment of the disadvantaged part of urban sector.

Mr. Chairman,

The government is quite aware of the critical importance of ICT in supporting World socio-economic transformation. ICT is a major catalyst in accelerating socio-economic development and enabling good governance. An e-information society is an empowered society. It is a liberated society and that is the panacea of a corruption free society, and the real essence of good governance.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Participants,

Efficient and effective use of ICT services will enable a country have capacity to participate and benefit from its participation in the globalized knowledge economy. On that understanding, the government is committed and is at forefront participating in

different ICT initiatives at different levels of involvement. Tanzania is among active members of G8 Digital Opportunity Task (DOT) Force; soon we shall join the UN ICT Task Force, African Connection through African Information Society Initiatives (AISII) under African Development Forum (ADF) by UN-ECA, New Partnership for Development (NEPAD), and ITU – TELECOM AFRICA 2001.

Further evidence of the Government's intention to support development of ICT services in the country is found in the enactment and amendment of related laws, and regulations. You will agree with me that we have come a long way since the 1974 Prohibition Order on Electronic Computers and TV sets. Over the years, not only have we abolished the Order, we have waived taxes and related tariffs on importation of computers and the associated peripherals. These are certainly indications of our real commitment to enhance investment in ICT support facilities.

Mr. Chairman,

Your presence here as representatives of Government departments, public and private sector institutions, NGOs and other individuals signifies your true willingness to work in partnership for ICT development. In that case the policy, which, you have been shaping here today, belongs to us all; you and your Government.

It is therefore, my expectation that the ICT policy you have been involved today in crafting is enterprising, flexible, entrepreneurial, and friendly especially to the private sector and academia. Then and only then can we attract more investment and promote the ICT sector in Tanzania. I am sure you have addressed all issues that are seen as barriers to the promotion and development of ICT. I am sure you will agree with me that the process of formulating a policy and the policy itself is an input. The British do aptly remark that 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating'. What society expects are outputs, the results of the implementation of the policy.

Mr. Chairman,

Indeed ICT when applied appropriately may save some huge Government expenditure spent on executing activities which otherwise could be electronically performed. For instance, ICT should facilitate the carrying out of national population census, the simple recording or counting of death and births, national elections; and above all provide opportunities for jobs, and job creation. A collaborative effort such as that seen today is needed in fostering a partnership policy development, regulatory review and network readiness; improving infrastructure – i.e. connectivity, increasing access and lowering costs; build human capacity, develop adequate skilled personnel and encourage participation of all stakeholders in the use of digital services.

Mr. Chairman,

I am here just to mark the closure of the workshop, but I think it is worth reminding ourselves from what has been said by previous speakers. In order to achieve national and global objectives of ICT we have to pool resources together and work as a team to implement our programmes in the agreed priority areas. In that case, all the challenges highlighted need our serious attention. Each of us as individuals or in groups has a role to play. The role of the Government in the development of ICT sector includes the following: meeting the public interests by creating conducive environment for policy development and review of necessary legislation for implementation of the objectives outlined in the policy; support the development and adoption of national implementation strategy for the ICT policy that will bring together objectives and aims for national interests; devote available resources to the development of a national infrastructure to support the ICT service provision; promotion of the use of ICT at all levels of Government and institutions; creating incentive packages for investment in the ICT industry; and promote and support the production of local content for the Internet as a way of protecting our African cultural values and legacy. In this regard the Government will be highly receptive to ideas as to how we counter such vices as internet pornography and a class of crimes one would classify as e-crimes.

The role of the private sector include; stimulation of the socio-economic growth and participating in the development of a national ICT infrastructure, realizing business

opportunities available within the scope of the ICT policy in collaboration with the Government and other partners; exploiting to the maximum the new potentials and opportunities as spelt out in the ICT policy; striving to cultivate or improve dynamic innovation in products and services to ensure sustainable competitiveness in the national and world markets and assuring consumer confidence and acceptance. The civil society that represent mass organizations, NGOs, professional organizations, unions, community based organizations has a role of assisting the Government in mobilizing people for easy provision of social services such as loans, credits, education, health, etc.

Mr. Chairman,

The Government appreciates the tremendous support given to us by our development partners and other donor agencies in the process of crafting the ICT policy. The UNDP, SIDA, JICA, USAID, DFID, have been in the forefront in the development of ICT nationally and regionally. Special thanks go to the Government and the People of Sweden, represented here by His Excellency Ambassador Stern Rylander. On behalf of the Government I would like to extend our sincere thanks for the support given.

I cannot afford to conclude without congratulating the ICT TASK FORCE led by Prof. Matthew L. Luhanga, for a job well done. Other members of the task force have included Hon. Dr. Batilda Burian, Hon. Prof. H. Mgombelo, Mr. Teophilus Mlaki, Dr. Zaipuna Yonah, Mr. David Sawe, Hon. G. Nangale, Prof. B. Mutagahwa, Mr. Ali Mufuruki and Ms. Anita Ngowi.

Finally let me thank all of you who have participated in this stakeholders workshop. You have an invaluable contribution that will improve the ICT policy document. I wish to end in the same manner I started by saying how much honour you have done me to invite me to close this workshop. Since this is not the end of the process I have the honour to officially declare the workshop adjourned.

THANK YOU ALL – ASANTENI SANA.