SPEECH BY DR. FRED MATIANG’I CABINET SECRETARY MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY DURING THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE NATIONAL BROADBAND STRATEGY ON 17TH JULY 2013 AT THE STANLEY HOTEL, NAIROBI.

H.E. Deputy President, William Ruto,
Principle Secretary for Information, Communications and Technology, Mr. Joseph Ole Tiampati,
Cabinet Secretaries from National Treasury, Education, Devolution and Planning, Transport and Infrastructure,
Director General of CCK, Mr. Francis Wangusi,
Chairman and Members of the CCK Board,
Mission Director USAID, Ms Tina Dooley Jones,
Members of the National Broadband Strategy (NBS) Steering Committee,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

Your Excellence, it is a great honor and privilege to have you in our midst this morning as we mark an important milestone for the ICT industry. This morning, we shall unveil a National Broadband Strategy that aims to transform the country into a knowledge based society driven by high-capacity nationwide broadband connectivity.

The National Broadband Strategy (NBS) provides a holistic and coordinated approach in ensuring that high-speed and reliable networks are universally accessible throughout the country; that local and relevant content shall be generated and availed; that our citizens including children in primary schools and adults across the country shall be empowered through digital literacy and awareness; that a vibrant and well-funded innovations ecosystem shall be nurtured to tap into our youth to provide creative solutions that will stimulate the uptake of ICTs; and that our policy, legal and regulatory frameworks will be enabling and facilitative to drive the Strategy.

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Your Excellence, ladies and gentlemen, access to broadband has been recognized worldwide as an accelerator of economic development and a major enabling factor in socio-economic wellbeing. It is for these reasons that the Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology in collaboration with the Communications Commission of Kenya (CCK) have worked tirelessly to deliver a National Broadband Strategy in Kenya.

We recognize the support of the American government through the Global Broadband Program of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The technical support provided by the USAID has been instrumental in the success of delivering the Strategy. The NBS cuts across various sectors of the economy and as such, attracts diverse stakeholders including ICT infrastructure and service providers, the education sector, finance, complementary infrastructure sectors including Roads and Energy among others.

Let me also take this opportunity to appreciate the tireless efforts by the members of the National Steering Committee and the Technical Working Groups who ensured that a wholesome strategy representing the interests of all Kenyans was developed. Your Excellence I am glad to report that players in the ICT industry, relevant government ministries and state corporations were well represented in the Technical Working Groups that worked under the guidance of the National Steering Committee.

The strategy will usher in an era of coordinated investments in national ICT infrastructure by both the private and the public sector and eliminate the unnecessary duplication of investments and also ensure optimal use of resources in the sector. In the last decade the ICT sector in the country has experienced exponential growth largely attributable to liberalization, and a robust regulatory regime under the Communications Commission of Kenya.
Your Excellence, as a Ministry we are concerned that, despite heavy investment in ICT infrastructure, there exist a wide “digital divide” in the access to internet services in the country. While we cherish the unprecedented growth of voice services, which currently reaches approximately 80 per cent of the population, the same cannot be said about high-speed Internet or data services. Internet subscription is currently at 9.6 million, out of which, only 1.17 million are broadband subscriptions. Moreover, the speed used to define broadband services in Kenya is amongst the lowest in the world. While progressive countries have adopted minimum broadband speeds of 1Gigabytes per second, ours is at a mere 526 Kilobytes per second. This cannot enable us as a country take full advantage of ICTs for socio-economic development. The Strategy has defined the minimum broadband capacity for Kenya as 5 megabytes per second.

Kenya has access to four submarine cables providing international bandwidth capacity of approximately one Terabyte. However, actual utilisation is low and stands at 307 megabytes per second which is slightly over 30percent of the total available capacity.

Your Excellence, through the initiatives articulated in the National Broadband Strategy the government shall support development of backbone and last mile networks to ensure connectivity to Kenyans and an increased utilisation of the available international bandwidth. The Ministry shall ensure that the 4,233 km National Optic Fibre Infrastructure (NOFBI), which shall be extended to connect all county headquarters is fully operationalized. Based on the recommendations of the National Broadband Strategy, the Ministry shall review the management, operations and maintenance framework of the NOFBI to ensure that Kenyans realise value for money from this highly strategic public funded infrastructure.
By fully operationalizing the Fibre network, access to ICT services in some parts of the country which hitherto lacked services shall be immediately unlocked.

Ladies and gentlemen, at this point I would like to challenge service providers and software developers to come up with creative and innovative applications that will stimulate the uptake and utilization of ICT services. The NBS promotes nurturing and development of talent in ICTs, in addition, the Government has a role to ensure that the laws governing intellectual property rights are safeguarded to eliminate exploitation of inventive ideas.

The Strategy recognizes that while development of infrastructure and connectivity networks is fundamental to broadband development, devices that allow users access to the networks need to be affordable. The NBS has defined strategies to subsidize and offer for free such devices and it is within this context that the students’ laptop project finds residence within the strategy. To further entrench ICTs among Kenyans, the Strategy outlines the integration of ICTs in our schools curriculums alongside mandatory training of teachers.

Your Excellence, content is noted as a driver for utilization of broadband services. Digitizing existing content within Government shall provide opportunities for electronic interaction between the Government and its citizens enhanced by a mandatory use of Government online services. Under the strategy, the government’s goals to provide electronic services to citizens across the country shall be closely coordinated with infrastructure and access strategies.

Your Excellence, my Ministry shall champion a nationwide ICT awareness campaign to demonstrate the significant role of ICT in socio-economic development and of the commitment of this government to have a “digital Kenya”. In order for us to realize the targets outlined in the Strategy your Excellence, the required funding toward the various initiatives is estimated at
approximately Ksh260billion over the next 17 years. This is a huge investment that calls for collaboration of all stakeholders through public-private-partnership (PPP) frameworks. The NBS calls for innovative fund raising mechanisms by government including a Broadband Infrastructure Bond and as well as a Broadband Venture Capital Fund under the Ministry of National Treasury.

Your Excellence, the launch of the Strategy is timely as the Communications Commission of Kenya is in the process of implementing the Universal Service Fund which will meet some of the costs of implementing the Strategy.

As I conclude, your Excellence, may I reiterate that the broadband strategy shall play a catalytic role to overall economic growth and development in this country. I wish to assure you that the Ministry shall take a lead role in overseeing and coordinating its implementation to the letter. The Vision 2030 IT Enablers Directorate within my Ministry shall ensure that a robust performance, monitoring and evaluation framework is in place to support this Broadband strategy that promises to meet the ICT aspirations and commitments that the government pledged to the people of Kenya.

Thank You.