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**COUNTRY REPORT  
BY  
REPUBLIC OF KENYA**



**COUNTRY REPORT : KENYA**  
(By Hon. (Mr. Charles Keter, [bunge@swiftkenya.com](mailto:bunge@swiftkenya.com))

**Mr. /Madam Chairman**  
**Hon. Members of Parliament,**  
**Excellencies**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen**

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I feel immense pleasure for having this opportunity to address this May gathering and thank preparatory committee for IPAIT on conducting such relevant event. I am sure that this opportunity will strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation in parliamentary aspects of information and communication technologies. I wish the grand success of this conference.

### **Background**

The digital revolution sweeping across the world has not spared Kenya. In broad terms, Africa is perhaps the world's continent where information and communication technologies (ICTs) are least developed and used. Yet this continent which needs ICTs most since traditional modes of communication and non-existent, unreliable or outright unaffordable.

The level of ICT development in Kenya is not anywhere comparable to the developed world. However, by Africa Standards, Kenya's ICT infrastructure is relatively well developed, perhaps only surpassed by those of South Africa and some of the Northern states. But it is noteworthy that ICT development in Kenya over the past 6 years has not been as fast as expected, enable countries like Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Mozambique, etc, to perform almost as well (if not better).

Against a background of a population of 33 million, 54% poverty level, about 60% literacy level, over 50% newspaper readership, less than 1% computer access, over 40 languages, over 40 ISPs, Over 40 political parties, one can clearly see that the choice are diverse as they are limited. Limited largely by the attendant poverty level, disease, political unrest in the neighborhood, and refugee influx

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### **Efforts : initiatives so far and pledged**

Until 1998, telecommunications service was a monopoly of an inefficient state corporation, with a blotted workforce, and relying on unreliable, obsolete technology. With the passage of the telecom Act, an independent regulator was created, opening up the sector to competition. Today, there are three national mobile phone operators, one is to start operational very soon and two has been in place which scores of other telecom related value – service companies. Although skill a preserve of the national telephone company, Telkom (K) Ltd, services like VSAT, ISDN, Digital, Frame Relay, and digital packet switches, etc are available. Currently being debated are proposals for the a second network operator (SNO) and partial privatization of Telecoms (K)

In further efforts to promote the use and development of ICTs the government has over the past 8 years lowered taxes on ICT products from 200% to 5%, introduced computers studies in secondary schools, and created a national communications secretariat and a directorate of IT within the respective parent ministries.

However, recent introduction of tax (VAT) on mobile phone airtime has negated these efforts. The Kenya African National Union (KANU) the major opposition parties has opposed this new tax and called for the removal of all taxes on ICT products and services. Kenya Government has further pledged to have in place a national ICT policy once voted in introduces at least 5 years PCs in every secondary school, a telecentre and community radio-station in every district, and at least 2 pay-phones in every rural sub-location within 3 years.

The Kenya Government has taken upon itself the charge of translating this definition into definitive reality by

- Harnessing advances in IT and the opportunities so presented to restructure Government, Citizen and Business interfaces with the objective of better governance.
- Establishing institutional mechanisms to facilitate initiatives towards synergic utilization of IT as an enabling tool for efficiency and effectiveness in public administration.
- Targeting to achieve at least 25% of the government dealings & services to be delivered electronically through computers, telecommunication, TV within 5 years

### **Initiatives**

- To set “Electronic Governance Division” in the Ministry of Information Technology as an initiative to accelerate the usage of Information Technology in all spheres of Governance. The e-Governance division examines the practical implications of IT related issues in the Government with the aim of improving services to the citizens. The goal is to reach beyond current efforts to “reinvent government,” by identifying breakthrough strategies that rethink the core value of Key government services, improve service delivery, reduce costs, and redefine administrative processes.
- Ministry of Information Technology to set up a Centre for E-Governance at DIT. The objective of the Centre is to showcase existing tools and applications in e-Governance and also serve as a forum for government officials, legislators, Industry, and various other key players to come together, discuss, learn and explore issues of shared importance, The Centre also helps identify/develop applications of immediate concern to the various Central Ministries/Departments and the State Governments. The Centre showcases e-Governance projects developed and implemented by different urgent.

The primary activities of the Centre are:

- a) To showcase the best practices in the area of Electronic Governance which would encompass technology processes as well as public policies;
- b) Conduct programs for creating awareness among decision makers for the entire country
- c) Demonstrate the feasibility of Electronic Governance to decision makers through workshops, demonstration programs, video/tele-conferencing etc.
- d) Help the Central and State Governments in defining and implementing process and policy changes; and

- e) To enrich the repository of best practices through continuous interaction with subject matter experts from India and abroad.
- For effective implementation of E-Governance it is necessary that there is a political ownership. It is proposed to organize a high level national seminar under the chairmanship of Minister concerned. Important opinion makers from the political leadership and citizen forums will be invited for this conference wherein the issues related to Electronic Governance are debated with the aim of getting a strong national consensus to implement the same.
  - Establishment of E-Government website for the dissemination of public information.
  - Identify key projects of relevance for E-Governance and develop technology pilots as demonstrators.
  - Development of IT policy with the basic objectives of the Information technology of Kenya Government shall be
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### **The Kenya Parliament**

Although there are presently over 500 PCs in parliament, there only 10 Internet access points. Only 105 of the 220 legislators have private access to the Internet. However an IT training programme for MPs has recently been started and quite a number has registered for the courses. With the new acquired offices for every MP, it is expected that all will shortly be furnished with Internet as currently they have PCs in their offices. The plan is underway to have a website of parliament, live coverage of the Parliamentary proceedings and electronic voting systems in the chamber.

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### **The NEPAD Initiative**

Finally, the emerging regional integration and unification initiatives are likely to propel African countries into the information era faster. The government of Kenya is fully committed to East African Community (EAC), COMESSA, African Union (AU), and other similar regional initiatives. Of special mention is the New Partnership for African's Development (NEPAD), which has a special ICT promotion component in its programme. Besides, there are several national initiatives seeking to promote Internet use within specific sectors, But their impact is yet to be realized.

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### **An Appeal**

On behalf of the Kenya delegation and other less endowed African countries which did not make it to this Assembly, I appeal to the developed communities to willingly and generously contribute towards narrowing the digital divide, and to other developing countries to readily share with us their experiences and resources on this noble course.