



**MINISTRY OF INFORMATION,
COMMUNICATIONS AND THE
DIGITAL ECONOMY**

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SECRETARY FOR BROADCASTING AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS,
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE DIGITAL
ECONOMY, DURING THE WORKSHOP ON KENYA'S DIGITAL AND AI
DIVIDEND.**

MONDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER 2026.

NORFOLK HOTEL, NAIROBI.

SALUTATION

- **Hon. John Kiarie**, The Chairperson of the Departmental Committee on Communication, Information and Innovation;
- **Mehnaz Safavian**, Digital and AI Practice Manager for Eastern and Southern Africa Principal Secretaries present;
- Development Partners present
- Representatives from Government agencies and State departments
- Partners from private sector
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

- I. It gives me great pleasure to join you today for this important conversation on **Kenya's Digital and AI Dividend: From Promise to Practical Action**. Let me begin by expressing our sincere appreciation to the **World Bank Group** for its continued partnership with the Government of Kenya and, in particular, for the analytical work that has brought us together today. The World Bank policy notes on **The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Jobs in Kenya** and **Unlocking E-Commerce in Kenya** provide timely evidence as we consider how technological change can translate into **higher productivity, better jobs, stronger enterprises and improved public services**. I also wish to acknowledge our colleagues from Government, the private

sector, academia, civil society and our development partners.

Your presence here reflects an important reality: **Kenya's digital transformation cannot be delivered by Government alone.**

- II. **We are living through a period of profound technological change.** Artificial Intelligence is no longer a distant or emerging concept. It is already changing how people work, how firms produce, how knowledge is generated and how public institutions deliver services. At the same time, e-commerce is transforming how businesses interact with consumers and access markets. These are not separate conversations. **AI will increasingly shape how Kenyans work and how our firms produce, while e-commerce will increasingly shape how those firms reach customers and markets.** Both depend on the same foundations: **reliable connectivity, trusted data, digital skills, secure platforms, effective regulation and capable institutions.**

- III. The Government has established a strong policy and institutional foundation for the digital economy. This includes the **National ICT Policy 2019, Digital Economy Blueprint 2019, Kenya National Digital Master Plan 2022–2032, Data Protection Act 2019, National Cybersecurity Strategy 2022–2027, National**

E-Commerce Strategy 2023, and National Artificial

Intelligence Strategy 2025–2030. The National AI Strategy provides a framework around three critical pillars: **AI digital infrastructure; data ecosystems and governance; and AI research, innovation and commercialisation.** Our task now is clear: **we must translate this policy foundation into measurable results.** The true measure of our digital transformation will not simply be the number of policies developed, platforms launched or strategies published, but whether these investments result in **more productive businesses, better jobs, more efficient public services, greater inclusion and improved quality of life for our citizens.**

- IV. **The future of work must be at the centre of this conversation.** The World Bank analysis indicates that approximately **87 per cent of Kenyan workers are currently in occupations with relatively low direct exposure to AI capabilities**, while about **9 per cent are in highly exposed occupations where AI is more likely to complement their work**, and approximately **4 per cent are in highly exposed occupations facing greater displacement risk.** This evidence

helps us move beyond the simplistic question of whether AI will take jobs. Our focus should instead be on **how we prepare people and institutions for an economy in which AI becomes an increasingly important tool for productivity and innovation.** We must equip our people to capture the productivity gains created by AI while providing targeted support to workers and occupations that may experience greater disruption.

- V. This requires sustained investment in people. We need broad **AI literacy among citizens, public servants, teachers, MSMEs and informal workers**, while integrating applied AI skills into sectors such as **agriculture, health, education, finance, engineering, law and public administration.** At the same time, we must develop advanced capabilities among researchers, developers, data specialists and enterprises that can build, adapt, test and commercialise AI solutions. **Kenya should not aspire to be merely a consumer of AI developed elsewhere.** We should progressively position ourselves as a **builder, innovator and creator of AI solutions**, particularly in areas where we have distinctive opportunities and capabilities, including **natural-language processing, Swahili and other**

local-language AI, remote sensing, agriculture, climate resilience, sport, tourism and public-service delivery.

- VI. **Kenya does not start from zero.** We have made significant investments in **submarine cable access, the National Optic Fibre Backbone Infrastructure, mobile broadband, Government networks, public Wi-Fi, digital hubs and the Digital Superhighway programme.** We have also made considerable progress through platforms and services such as **eCitizen, digital payments including M-Pesa, and Huduma services.** These investments provide an important foundation for the next phase of our digital transformation. We must now go further by strengthening **interoperability, secure information exchange, reducing manual processes, improving data governance and delivering more seamless digital public services.** We must increasingly move from individual digital platforms to an **integrated digital ecosystem** in which systems can securely communicate, data can be responsibly shared and citizens and businesses can access services more easily.
- VII. **As we embrace AI, innovation must be accompanied by responsibility.** We must build AI systems that citizens can trust,

that respect their rights and privacy, and that allow innovation to flourish within appropriate safeguards. Responsible AI should therefore not be viewed as an obstacle to innovation. **It should be part of the foundation that allows innovation to scale sustainably and gain public confidence.**

- VIII. Ladies and Gentlemen, the theme of today's engagement is particularly important: **From Promise to Practical Action**. The World Bank policy notes provide us with valuable evidence and insights, but the real value of today's engagement will be determined by **what we do with that evidence**. Government will therefore continue to review these recommendations against our existing policies, mandates and programmes, identify clear institutional responsibilities, and prioritise interventions capable of delivering measurable public value. Our focus should be on practical action in **AI literacy and workforce skills; digital and AI infrastructure; data ecosystems and governance; responsible AI; digital public infrastructure and interoperability; connectivity and meaningful digital access; e-commerce and digital enterprise development; and stronger monitoring and results frameworks.**

- IX. **This agenda requires partnership.** We welcome continued collaboration with the **World Bank Group** in areas including workforce intelligence, AI literacy and skills, responsible AI, digital public infrastructure, connectivity, e-commerce reforms and the development of stronger results frameworks. Kenya has important strengths: **established policy foundations, mature digital payments, an innovative private sector, expanding connectivity and a young and dynamic workforce.** The opportunity before us is significant, but our biggest test is whether we can **translate these strengths into results.**
- X. The digital and AI dividend will not be realised simply because technology is available. It will be realised when **a farmer uses digital tools and AI to increase productivity; when an MSME reaches new customers through e-commerce; when a teacher uses technology to improve learning; when a public servant delivers a service faster; when a young Kenyan acquires a new digital skill and accesses a new opportunity; and when our innovators are able to build solutions that address Kenyan and African challenges.** That is the practical meaning of the digital and AI dividend.

XI. I therefore encourage all of us to use this engagement not simply to discuss the future, but to identify the **partnerships, priorities and actions required to build it**. Let us move **from strategy to implementation, from potential to productivity, and from promise to practical action**. The Government remains committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure that Kenya's digital transformation and adoption of AI translate into **inclusive economic opportunities, better public services, stronger enterprises and improved livelihoods for our people**.

XII. **Let us therefore seize this moment—not simply to prepare Kenya for the future, but to build that future together.**

Thank you, and I wish you fruitful deliberations.