

**THE KENYA INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS ACT, 1998**

**THE KENYA INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION (INTERCONNECTION)  
REGULATIONS, 2022**

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*Regulation*

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**THE KENYA INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ACT, 1998**  
*(No.2 of 1998)*

**THE KENYA INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION (INTERCONNECTION)  
REGULATIONS, 2022**

**IN EXERCISE** of the powers conferred by section 27 and 84W of the Kenya Information and Communications Act, 1998, the Cabinet Secretary for ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs, in consultation with the Communication Authority of Kenya, makes the following Regulations—

**THE KENYA INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS (INTERCONNECTION)  
REGULATIONS, 2022**

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## **PART 1—PRELIMINARY**

Citation. 1. These Regulations may be cited as the Kenya Information and Communications (Interconnection) Regulations, 2022.

Interpretation. 2. In these Regulations, unless the context otherwise requires—

**“Calling line identity”** means the information generated by a telecommunications system that identifies the calling number and forwards it through the telecommunications network to a receiving communications system;

**“Customer”** means a user of a telecommunications service provided by a telecommunication service licensee;

**“End-to-end connectivity”** means system or capability that allows all nodes of the network to send information to all other nodes of the network, and do not require intermediate network elements to further interpret them;

**“Interconnect capacity”** means a transmission and switching capability and any other facility for connecting telecommunications networks of two or more telecommunications service licensees;

**“Interconnect licensee”** means a provider of a telecommunications service who, in accordance with a license issued by the Authority, is required to provide interconnection service to other telecommunications licensees;

**“Interconnecting licensee”** means a provider of telecommunication services who has interconnected or has requested to interconnect its telecommunications system to the telecommunications system of an interconnect provider;

**“Interconnection”** means the physical and logical linking of telecommunication networks used by the same or different service licensees in order to allow the users of one licensee to communicate with users of the same or another licensee or to access services provided by another licensee;

**“Interconnection agreement”** means an agreement, entered into, before or after the commencement of these Regulations, between an interconnect licensee and an interconnecting licensee in relation to the interconnection of their telecommunication systems;

**“Interconnection information”** means information in the possession or control of parties to an interconnection agreement or intending to interconnect their telecommunications systems and services which may assist such parties to formulate their interconnection or plans, to establish or maintain their telecommunication systems or a telecommunication service for the purpose of interconnection, which information may include–

- (a) technical, traffic and other relevant information system and facilities specifications; and
- (b) any material changes to that information or specifications which may impact on the parties’ interconnection arrangements or the services they intend to provide to customers by means of that interconnection;

**“Interconnection offer”** means a document setting out the terms and conditions under which the interconnect licensee undertakes to permit access to its telecommunications network in a non-discriminatory manner;

**“Interoperability”** means the ability of telecommunication systems, units, or elements to provide services to and accept services from other systems, units or forces and to use the services exchanged to enable them to operate effectively together;

**“Licensee”** means the holder of a license issued by the Authority under the Act;

**“Point of interconnection”** means a mutually agreed upon point where the exchange of traffic between the telecommunication system or apparatus of an interconnect provider and the telecommunications system or apparatus of an interconnecting licensee, takes place, including the exchange of traffic between a local access provider or mobile cellular communication service

provider (where applicable) and another licensed telecommunications network service provider; and

**“Tribunal”** means the Communications and Multimedia Appeals Tribunal established under section 102 of the Act;

Purpose.

3. (1) These Regulations shall provide the framework for regulation of interconnections by the Authority for all interconnect licensees and interconnecting licensees.

(2) In addition, the Regulations define the role the Authority is expected to play in order to facilitate interconnection negotiations between telecommunications licensees and to establish a conducive environment for interconnection in Kenya.

## **PART II—NEGOTIATIONS AND EXECUTION OF INTERCONNECTION AGREEMENTS**

Rights and obligations.

4. (1) Subject to the provisions of the Act and any guidelines on interconnection the Authority may publish from time to time, an interconnecting licensee shall have the right to choose its interconnection licensee to route its data traffic and calls towards customers of another licensee.

(2) Notwithstanding sub-regulation (1), an interconnecting licensee shall route its data traffic and calls towards international destinations through a licensee who has been licensed to provide the service.

(3) An interconnect licensee shall have the right and, when requested by an interconnecting licensee, an obligation, to negotiate the interconnection of its telecommunications system, facilities and equipment with the telecommunications system, facilities and equipment of the interconnecting licensee, in order to provide end-to-end connectivity and interoperability of services to all customers.

(4) An interconnect licensee shall accept all reasonable requests for access to its telecommunications system at the network termination points offered to the majority of the interconnecting operators.

(5) The Authority may exempt an interconnection licensee from the

obligation under sub-regulation (1), if—

- (a) an interconnection agreement is prohibited by law;
- (b) the license issued to a licensee does not permit a licensee to offer the services for which the interconnection is requested;
- (c) the requested interconnection is rendered impossible as a result of technical specifications; or
- (d) the interconnection would endanger the life or safety or result in injury of any person or harm to the interconnect licensee's property or hinder the quality of the services provided by the interconnect licensee.

(6) The Authority shall publish any exemption granted under sub-regulation (5) of this Regulation.

Negotiation of interconnect agreements.

5. (1) An interconnect licensee shall provide all relevant interconnection information to an interconnecting licensee upon receipt of a written request.

(2) An interconnecting licensee's request for interconnection shall be given reasonable priority over customer orders of the interconnect licensee.

(3) The parties to an interconnection agreement shall negotiate in good faith and resolve disagreements that may arise relating to the form and subject of an interconnection agreement.

(4) While in the process of conducting interconnection negotiations, the parties to the proposed interconnection agreement shall not—

- (a) intentionally mislead the other party;
- (b) coerce the other party into making an agreement that it would not otherwise have made; or
- (c) intentionally delay or obstruct negotiations.

(5) The terms and conditions for interconnection of telecommunications networks shall be based on the agreement

executed between the parties to an interconnection agreement and shall promote increased access and efficient use of telecommunications systems services and facilities.

(6) All interconnection agreements shall facilitate end-to-end connectivity by ensuring that all telecommunication services traffic originated on the telecommunications system of an interconnecting operator can be terminated at any point on the telecommunications system of any other telecommunications service provider on a non-discriminatory basis.

(7) The telecommunication licensees shall make all interconnection agreements between them in writing and provide for the following–

- (a) the scope and specification of interconnection;
- (b) access to all ancillary or supplementary services or access to and use of premises or land necessary to support interconnection;
- (c) maintenance of end-to-end quality service and other service levels;
- (d) charges for interconnection;
- (e) billing and settlement procedures;
- (f) ordering, forecasting, provisioning and testing procedures;
- (g) points of interconnection or co-location;
- (h) the amount of, or the forecast procedures to be used to determine, interconnect capacity to be provided;
- (i) transmission of call line identity;
- (j) information regarding system modernization or rationalization;
- (k) technical specifications and standards;
- (l) interoperability testing, traffic management, measurement

and system maintenance;

(m) an information handling process and confidentiality agreement;

(n) duration for and renegotiation of the agreement;

(o) formation of appropriate working groups to discuss matters relating to interconnection and to resolve any disputes;

(p) formal dispute resolution procedures;

(q) definition and limitation of liability and indemnity;

(r) adequate capacity, service levels and reasonable remedies for any failure to meet those service levels;

(s) force majeure;

(t) termination procedures

(u) other contractual terms and conditions; and

(v) any other matters that the Authority may prescribe.

Prohibitions.

6. Interconnection agreements shall not, directly or indirectly—

(a) preclude or frustrate the exercise of rights or privileges given under the Act or a licence or by any person;

(b) impose any penalty, obligation or disadvantage on any person for exercising any rights under the Act or a licence;

(c) prohibit a person from providing an interconnection service which that person is able to lawfully provide; or

(d) frustrate the provision of a telecommunications service by a person who is able to lawfully provide.

Interconnection procedures.

7. (1) An interconnecting licensee who intends to enter into an interconnection agreement with an interconnect licensee shall make a request in writing and shall provide the interconnection licensee with

the following information–

- (a) the form of interconnection;
- (b) the date for the commencement of negotiations;
- (c) the approximate date the interconnection is required;  
and
- (d) an estimate of the capacity required.

(2) A copy of the request for interconnection in sub-regulation (1) shall be forwarded to the Authority by the requesting party within seven days of the request by the requesting party.

(3) The interconnect licensee shall inform the interconnecting operator in writing within fourteen days of receipt of the request for interconnection of its ability and willingness to supply the form of interconnection requested within the time frames requested by the interconnecting licensee and its ability to commence negotiations on the date requested.

(4) Where the parties do not agree on the date to commence negotiations, the Authority shall facilitate negotiations to an interconnection agreement on a date specified by the Authority.

(5) Where the Authority finds that parties to an interconnection agreement have not concluded their negotiations within prescribed timelines, the Authority shall invite the parties to make representations before making a determination which shall be applicable during the negotiations period and after the negotiations are completed.

(6) Where the interconnect licensee has informed the interconnecting licensee that it is able to provide interconnection, the interconnect licensee shall ensure that the system conditioning and provisioning procedures required to provide such interconnection are undertaken within the time required by the interconnecting licensee.

(7) Any dispute that may arise regarding the timely provision of interconnection or notice of planned changes shall be submitted to the Authority for determination.

(8) Every interconnect licensee must keep a record of all requests received for interconnection and submit a quarterly report to the

Authority indicating the status and progress of each request.

Establishment and location of points of interconnection.

8. (1) The parties to an interconnecting agreement shall establish and maintain points of interconnection at any technically feasible points agreed by the parties.

(2) An interconnecting licensee shall, in sufficient detail, notify the interconnect licensee of the points at which they wish to be interconnected to enable the interconnect licensee to assess the systems conditioning and other requirements for establishing such points of interconnection.

(3) The licensees providing interconnection services shall mutually agree on the point of interconnection and share the costs of establishing the points of interconnection.

(4) The points of interconnection shall be established within thirty days from the date of the request.

(5) Unless otherwise determined by the Authority, interconnecting licensees shall be responsible for the cost of building and maintaining the points, data fill and switching capacity to support the interconnection and for the costs of transport from their points of origination to points of interconnection.

(6) Where a licensee seeking interconnection from any interconnection licensee requests that its facilities or systems for interconnection be co-located with the facilities or premises of the interconnection licensee, the co-location may be provided and the costs of such collocation shall be mutually agreed by the parties.

Trade or operating secrets.

9.(1) A party to an interconnection agreement may, before the filing of the agreement with the Authority, identify provisions containing trade or operating secrets as confidential and the party shall additionally submit to the Authority for review a modified version of the agreement which does not, in that party's view, disclose the trade or operating secrets.

(2) Where the Authority considers the identified provisions referred

under sub-regulation (1) unjustified, the Authority shall consult with the respective telecommunications service licensee before making a decision to allow third parties to inspect the agreements in whole or in part and may subsequently restrict inspection to the modified version of the interconnection agreement.

Approval of interconnection agreements.

10. (1) The parties to an interconnection agreement shall file with the Authority an application for approval of the proposed interconnection agreement at least fourteen days before the date of implementation of the interconnection agreement.

(2) The parties to an interconnection agreement shall file with the Authority an application for approval of the renewal or modification to an existing interconnection agreement at least fourteen days before the expiry of the agreement.

(3) The Authority may request for information from the parties to an interconnection agreement that it considers necessary to evaluate the terms and conditions and the charges set in the agreement, and request that the interconnection agreement be modified in the manner specified by the Authority, in writing.

(4) Upon receipt of a request by the Authority to modify an interconnection agreement the parties shall negotiate and submit a revised interconnection agreement to the Authority within ten days of receipt of the request by Authority.

(5) Where the parties are unable to agree on the requested modification, the Authority may, if it determines that a negotiated agreement is not feasible, the Authority shall provide an interconnection agreement to the parties that includes the terms and conditions and with the charges payable for the interconnection.

(6) Where the licensees are in the process of negotiating an interconnection agreement or have entered into an agreement but the agreement is pending before the Authority for approval, the parties may agree to exchange traffic based on interim conditions and notify the Authority.

(7) Notwithstanding sub-regulation (6), the conditions stipulated in the interconnection agreement once approved by the Authority shall

apply in respect of the period for which the agreement is negotiated.

(8) A party who is aggrieved by the decision of the Authority may, within fifteen days from the date of the Authority's decision, appeal to the Tribunal.

### **PART III: PRINCIPLES OF INTERCONNECTION**

Non-discrimination and transparency.

11. Where there are similar conditions and similar circumstances, an interconnection licensee shall provide interconnection on a non-discriminatory basis and the interconnection licensee shall ensure that—

- (a) the rates it charges do not vary on the basis of the class of customers to be served;
- (b) it provides interconnecting licensees with interconnection facilities or systems and information under the same conditions and in the same quality that it affords to its subsidiaries, affiliates, or other similarly situated interconnecting licensees;
- (c) it avails to interconnecting licensees all necessary information and specifications related to interconnection; and
- (d) customers of interconnecting licensees receive treatment that is the same with its own customers or the customers of its subsidiaries, affiliates, or other similarly situated interconnecting licensees.

Interconnection charges structure.

12. (1) All charges for interconnection services shall:

- (a) be objective, independently verifiable and fair;
- (b) be charged for each type of telecommunications service related to interconnection;
- (c) not be designed to facilitate cross-subsidies by an interconnect provider of its network; be below the retail charges levied by the interconnect licensee for the provision of any retail service that makes similar use of those network elements that are required by both the retail and interconnection service; and

(d) be sufficiently below retail service charges to allow for recovery of the incremental retail costs associated with provision of the retail service supported by the interconnection service that the interconnect licensee has to incur in order to compete effectively with the interconnect licensee at the retail level.

(2) All charges for interconnection shall be structured to distinguish and separately price:

- (a) fixed charges for the establishment and implementation of physical interconnection;
- (b) periodic rental charges for use of facilities, equipment and resources including interconnect and switching capacity; and
- (c) variable charges for telecommunications services and supplementary services.

(3) An interconnecting licensee shall be free to acquire services from an interconnect licensee at any retail price offered by the interconnect licensee without prejudice to any rights to acquire the same or similar services under an interconnection agreement.

(4) The Authority shall publish guidelines on interconnection charging methodology from time to time.

Interconnection.

13. (1) Any transmission of telecommunication services across and within telecommunications systems shall be seamless to both the sending party and the party receiving the information.

(2) All procedures for forecasting, ordering and provisioning interconnection shall be efficient and shall occur within reasonable time frames.

(3) All facilities or systems used for interconnection shall be provided in sufficient capacity to enable the efficient transfer of information between interconnected telecommunication systems.

(4) A service acquired as part of interconnection may be used for any

lawful purpose.

Quality of service.

14. (1) The parties to an interconnection agreement shall comply with all relevant service standards of the International Telecommunications Union and other technical standards that the Authority may publish from time to time.

(2) A licensee shall ensure that the prescribed quality of service is not impaired on interconnection.

Confidentiality.

15. (1) A party who receives information relating to interconnection from another party which is designated as confidential, that party shall keep the information confidential and may disclose it:

- (a) to employees, agents or advisers who need to know that information for the purpose of the provision of interconnection, or giving advice;
- (b) to persons to whom the disclosure is authorised by that other party;
- (c) where the disclosure is authorized or required by law; and
- (d) to the Authority.

(2) Any confidential information relating to interconnection of a party received by another party, or business information generated by the telecommunications system of a party as a result of interconnection, shall be used solely for the purpose of providing interconnection, and shall not be disclosed to any person involved in the development or provision of retail services of the other party, its subsidiaries or affiliates.

(3) The provisions relating to confidentiality of any matter in an interconnection agreement shall not prevent the disclosure by the Authority of any provisions in that matter due to public interest or pursuant to a legal process.

Calling  
identity.

line

16. (1) The parties to an interconnecting agreement shall pass calling line identity and all necessary signaling data between interconnecting parties in accordance with standards prescribed and published from time to time by the Authority.

(2) Where a party to an interconnection agreement suspects the other party (suspected party) of intentionally and without right changing, altering, modifying or tampering with a calling line identity, that party may invite the Authority to investigate the matter.

(3) The Authority shall undertake a preliminary assessment of the matter referred under sub-regulation (2) within 7 days from the date of the request, if there are reasonable grounds to suspect a likelihood of tampering with the calling line identity, the Authority shall conduct an investigation and make a determination within 14 days.

Quality of inter-  
operability.

17.(1) A licensee shall notify the Authority and all other licensees interconnecting in the network, of any planned change in the network capacity, technology, structure and configuration, at least seven days prior to the planned change; and

(2) An interconnect licensee shall provide six months notice to interconnecting licensees of planned changes to its telecommunications system that may materially impact the telecommunications services of the Interconnecting licensee.

Modification,  
suspension and  
termination.

18. (1) The parties to an interconnection agreement shall ensure that any modification, suspension or termination of the interconnection agreement does not adversely affect customers.

(2) An interconnect licensee shall not terminate an interconnection agreement unless—

(a) the termination is as a result of a fundamental breach of the interconnection agreement and the interconnecting licensee after having been given an opportunity to remedy the breach, has failed to do so;

(b) the interconnect licensee gives reasonable written notice of its

intention to terminate and—

- i. specifies the grounds for termination; or
- ii. gives, in the case of breach, a notice of one month, for the licensee to remedy the breach;
- iii. the Authority has been notified of the intended termination and it has given consent, in writing.

(3) A party to an interconnection agreement may suspend interconnection in exceptional circumstances and where such suspension is intended to address a material degradation of telecommunications systems or services and the Authority is notified of the intended suspension and it has given its consent.

#### **PART IV—ROLE OF AUTHORITY**

Facilitate, and  
intervene where  
necessary in  
negotiations.

19. The Authority may on its own initiative or upon the request of a party—

- (a) intervene in negotiations on agreements for interconnection where no agreement is reached between the negotiating parties within six weeks of the commencement of the negotiations; or
- (b) set time limits within which negotiations on interconnection are to be completed, which time limits shall not exceed six weeks unless the Authority considers that a longer period is necessary.

Publish  
guidelines.

20. Every licensee shall comply with technical, costing and other relevant guidelines to guide licensees in negotiating interconnection agreements as may be published from time to time by the Authority.

Review of  
interconnection  
agreements.

21. (1) Where a telecommunications licensee—

- (a) enters into an interconnection agreement with another telecommunications licensee, the Authority may review the agreement to ensure that it conforms with the Act, regulations and any guidelines on interconnection of telecommunications networks

issued by the Authority; or

- (b) has not interconnected its systems upon request by another licensee, the Authority shall investigate the matter and may require the licensee concerned to interconnect its systems and may set the terms and conditions of the interconnection.

(2) The Authority in exercising its duties under this regulation, shall take into account—

- (a) the interest of users;
- (b) regulatory obligations or constraints imposed on any of the parties;
- (c) the desirability of stimulating innovative market offerings, and of providing users with a wide range of telecommunications services both at national and community level
- (d) the availability of technically and commercially viable alternatives to the interconnection requested;
- (e) the desirability of ensuring equal access arrangements;
- (f) the need to maintain the integrity of the public telecommunications network and the interoperability of services;
- (g) the nature of the request in relation to the resources available to meet the request;
- (h) the relative market positions of the parties;
- (i) the public interest;
- (j) the promotion of competition; and
- (k) the need to maintain a universal service.

Investigations of contravention of laws, guidelines or interconnection agreements.

22. Where a party or any other person alleges that there has been a contravention or failure to comply with the provisions of the Act, Regulations and any guidelines on interconnection or an interconnection agreement, the Authority shall investigate that matter and make a determination.

**PART V–DOMINANT TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICE LICENSEE**

Obligations of a dominant telecommunications licensee.

23. Where the Authority has declared a licensee a dominant telecommunication service licensee pursuant to fair competition and equal treatment laws, the Authority may impose any or all of the following remedies:

- (a) meet all reasonable requests for access to its public telecommunications network, in particular access at any technically feasible point on its telecommunications network;
- (b) adhere to the principle of non-discrimination with regard to interconnection offered to other interconnecting licensees, particularly:
  - i. apply similar conditions in similar circumstances to interconnecting licensees providing similar services, and
  - ii. provide interconnection facilities and information to other telecommunications licensees under the same conditions and of the same quality as it provides for its own services or those of its affiliates or subsidiaries.
- (c) make available, on request, to other interconnecting licensees considering interconnection with its public telecommunications network, all information and specifications reasonably necessary, in order to facilitate conclusion of an agreement for interconnection, including information on changes planned for implementation within the next six months, unless provided otherwise by the Authority;
- (d) submit to the Authority for approval and publish an interconnection offer, sufficiently unbundled, giving the description of the interconnection offerings broken down into components according to the market needs and the associated terms and conditions including tariffs; and
- (e) provide access to the technical standards and specifications of its telecommunications network with which

another interconnecting licensee shall be interconnected.

Order to publish  
an interconnection  
offer.

24. Where the Authority issues an order requiring a dominant telecommunications service licensee to publish an interconnection offer, the licensee shall, unless otherwise determined by the Authority

- (a) submit a proposed interconnection offer, as the case may be, to the Authority for review and approval within three months after the issuance of the order by the Authority; and
- (b) be subject to the terms and conditions of the approved interconnection offer approved by the Authority, subject to any amendments considered appropriate by the Authority, within three months after the issuance of the order by the Authority.

Interconnection  
offer or its  
modification.

25. (1) Before approving any interconnection offer or any amendments to it, the Authority may:

- (a) request for additional information or clarification from the dominant telecommunications service licensee with regard to the proposed interconnection offer; or
- (b) consult with the industry and public on the proposed interconnection offer.

(2) The Authority may publish guidelines or models for the uniform sector-wide application of interconnection offers, which shall be used by all dominant telecommunications service licensees.

Unbundling.

26. All interconnection offers shall be sufficiently unbundled to ensure that the interconnecting licensees do not pay for network elements or facilities or systems which are not necessary and shall contain a description of the components of the offer, associated terms and conditions, including the structure and level of prices.

Abuse of  
dominance.

27. (1) Where a dominant telecommunications service licensee abuses its position when negotiating interconnection agreements, the

Authority shall—

- (a) require the dominant telecommunications service licensee to desist, change its conduct or adopt a particular conduct; or
- (b) declare the interconnection agreement wholly or partially invalid.

(2) The Authority shall, before taking the action in sub-regulation (1), request the dominant telecommunications service licensee to refrain from conduct that is inconsistent with these regulations.

Cost-based charges  
for interconnection.

28. (1) A dominant telecommunications licensee shall adopt the cost-based charges for interconnection as set out by the Authority from time to time.

(2) A dominant telecommunications service licensee shall set charges for interconnection based on objective criterion, observe the principles of transparency and cost orientation.

(3) In case the interconnection charges are unregulated and subject to commercial agreements, the Authority may request the dominant telecommunications service licensee to prove that its interconnection charges are cost-based.

(4) The Authority may request the dominant telecommunications service licensee to prove that its interconnection charges are based on actual cost and, where necessary, request an adjustment of the charges or impose default interconnection charges in the event the proposed adjustment is not implemented by the dominant telecommunications service licensee.

(4) Where necessary, the Authority can request the dominant licensee to adjust the charges, failure to which it can impose default interconnection charges.

(5) A dominant telecommunications service licensee shall—

- (a) notify the Authority in writing of any proposal to change interconnection charges in the form and manner as prescribed by the Authority from time to time;
- (b) sufficiently unbundle charges for interconnection, so that the

telecommunications licensee requesting the interconnection is not required to pay for any item that is not related to the service requested;

- (c) maintain a cost accounting system that—
- i. complies with the cost accounting guidelines that may be published by the Authority from time to time;
  - ii. demonstrates that its charges for interconnection have been fairly and properly calculated;

(d) avail to the Authority, on request, a description of its cost accounting system showing the main categories under which costs are grouped and the guidelines for allocation of costs to interconnection and the Authority's, or any other competent body; regulations or guidelines have been adhered to.

#### **PART VI—GENERAL PROVISIONS**

Dispute resolution.

29. Unless otherwise provided in these regulations, any dispute arising out of the application of these Regulations shall be resolved in accordance with the Kenya Information and Communications (Dispute Resolution) Regulations.

General penalty or sanction.

30. Subject to section 27 (4) and 83A of the Act, a licensee who contravenes any provision of these Regulations shall be notified in writing of the contravention and the Authority shall determine the penalty or regulatory sanction to impose.

Revocation.

30. The Kenya Information and Communications (Interconnection and Provision of Fixed Links, Access and Facilities) Regulations, 2010 hereby revoked.

Made on the.....day of.....2022

**JOE MUCHERU,**  
*Cabinet Secretary*  
*Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs*