

Opening Remarks by H.E. Mr. Erasrus Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, on the Occasion of the 10th Annual eLearning Africa Conference, 20- 22 May 2015, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Theme: “ENRICHING TOMORROW”

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, HONOURABLE MINISTERS, Your Excellencies, LADIES, GENTLEMEN, COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS,

It is a great honour for me to welcome you to the Headquarters of the African Union Commission, and to wish you a fruitful stay in the hospitable city of Addis Ababa. **I AM DEEPLY IMPRESSED THAT SO MANY OF YOU HAVE TRAVELLED SO FAR - FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD, IN FACT - TO ATTEND THIS CONFERENCE. YOUR PRESENCE HERE IS A TESTIMONY TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS SUBJECT FOR THE FUTURE OF AFRICA AND I AM DELIGHTED THAT THE AFRICAN UNION HAS BEEN ABLE TO SUPPORT IT.**

The overall theme for the conference; “Enriching tomorrow” is most **APPROPRIATE BECAUSE IT REFERS TO THE OPPORTUNITY AFRICA NOW HAS. IT REFLECTS** the AU’s Agenda 2063, which is the continent's collective vision and roadmap for the next 50 years. This agenda rededicates its commitment to the enduring Pan African vision of “*an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.*”

It is also gratifying to note that the 10th eLearning Africa conference will be seeking answers **ABOUT** how the fast-evolving Information and communication (ICT) revolution can be leveraged to enhance knowledge, expertise and abilities relevant for the future.

This question perfectly resonates with one of the critical areas to be addressed by Agenda 2063, which seeks to *catalyze an Education and Skills revolution and actively promote science, technology, research and innovation, with the ultimate aim of building knowledge, human resources, capabilities and skills for Africa’s future.* But these lofty dreams are not going to be easily realized, unless we harness our current creative and innovative capacities.

It is therefore **RE**-assuring that this conference is about the use of ICTs, with their vast opportunities and potential, in the generation and dissemination of knowledge that is almost limitless. ICTs remain a central stimulus of socio-economic development, and the future of our society is going to be determined significantly by the definitive strides and inroads we are able to make in harnessing new, creative technologies and innovation. The theme for this conference “Enriching Tomorrow”, is also pragmatic, as the question of ICT is **AS MUCH** one about the future, as it is about the present.

For Africa, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are crucial for growth. They drive the dynamics of effective communications across the globe, and influence the trends of market development in the global economy. The ICT industry itself is at the centre of international commerce and production, engendering value for productivity, profits and income. ICTs are critical for skills acquisition, technological depth and diversification of economies – from construction to modern services, agriculture, education and finance. This doubled-edged appeal of ICT – as a driver of economic success and as a bona fide sector of its own – makes it fundamental for holistic growth in any nation.

YOUR Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen:

There is an abiding imperative for Africa to foster innovation and creative technologies as the basis for advancements in ICT and sustainable economic development. It is the duty of our governments, the private sector and all segments of our society, to participate actively in maximizing the use and application of ICTs to create competitive, knowledge economies, as well as economies of impetus. Such is the foundation of gainful capital in human resource development.

I must also make reference to the practical efforts being undertaken by the African Union through the Commission, to facilitate and implement Africa’s collective aspiration for meaningful development underpinned by rapid transformations in science, innovation, research and technology-driven education.

The Pan African University is a splendid example of the African Union’s resolve to revitalize technology and innovation, and position science education at the centre of the continent’s development agenda. This network of academic institutions **IN** a continent-wide program is already operational, with thematic hubs steering excellence in higher education across the continent.

Again, realizing the infinite value of ICTs in education, the Commission has initiated the Pan African Virtual University, to expand the opportunities in higher education for the younger generation and maximize the expedient utility of modern ICTs.

In addition, the African Union is looking at ICT's in education holistically and, together with the Ethiopian Ministries of ICT, and Education, UNECA and other International Research and academic Institutes, **IT** has undertaken research to deliver technology based education at an early age. Technology based education and innovation, are the main drivers **THAT WILL ENABLE US TO** realize Agenda 2063 and **SO** transform our continent.

These initiatives, firmly anchored on the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA), represent hope and potential for the future generation of Africans. Under the STISA, the Commission will continue to pursue the elevation of Africa's role in global research, technology development and transfer, innovation and knowledge production.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen; I implore you to use the following hours and days to consult, debate and deliberate on the pertinent question of how to tap Africa's existing potential and mobilize its population towards an ICT revolution that will underlie our continent's socio-economic development. Africa's future lies in collective endeavor, and in what we have decided to make of ICTs – to usher in an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa.

Thank you **ALL** for your attention! **PLEASE HAVE A WONDERFUL AND INSPIRING CONFERENCE!**