

SPEECH BY HON. PROF. SAITOTI, EGH, M.P. THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, DURING THE CLOSING OF 2ND eLEARNING CONFERENCE HELD IN SAFARI PARK HOTEL, Nairobi, Kenya ON MAY 28, 2007

Director of Ceremonies
Honourable Ministers here present
Members of the Diplomatic Community
Government Representatives and Non- Government
Organization Represented
Representatives of International Development Agencies
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me a great pleasure to preside over the closing of this 1st African High- level Policy Maker and Industry Leader Round Table and Retreat “Accelerating the building of ICT Infrastructures and Capacities for African Educational Systems”. Indeed, this year’s event as evidently observed, has brought together various stakeholders from Africa and beyond with a view to sharing their knowledge and experiences in the use of ICT to propel quality education in teaching and learning processes.

The eLearning Africa conference being an annual event was first held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia May, 2006 and now the second one in Nairobi, Kenya. However, it is important to note that the annual “Round Table and Retreat” as an event has been initiated at this year’s e-learning Africa conference in Nairobi , because of the high relevance and urgent need for a Pan-African concertation mechanism, addressing the tremendous efforts and significant investments we all initiate and steer in our own countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This forum I believe has provided an excellent platform and opportunity for the invited guests to communicate and collaborate on a diversity of issues pertaining to improvement on the use of ICT as a mode of delivering information and knowledge.

This first annual “high-level policy maker and Industry Round Table and Retreat” being part of the “eLearning Africa” conference that is set to start, , has provided an efficient and effective mechanism for African executives and policy makers to exchange views, experiences and lessons learnt and enabled the participants to identify best practices and the way forward.

We all have endorsed today the “Nairobi Communiqué”. We confirmed the relevance of a Pan-African ministerial concertation initiative on national ICT enhanced education and training programmes. We shall convene again in Accra, Ghana, on the occasion of the 3rd “eLearning Africa” conference, hosted by the Ghanaian Ministry for Education, Science and Sports. Most importantly, we recommended to start a new initiative with donors and agencies to strengthen R&D on the up-take and further development of educational technologies in an African context. Such an action would accompany and strengthen our national educational and ICT programmes significantly.

Ladies and gentlemen, all that we have witnessed in today’s’ proceedings demonstrates how ambitious various African governments are striving and are making considerable efforts towards achieving education for all by 2015 in line with International Commitments.

This “Round Table” therefore has given us a chance to reflect and re-examine on the issues that will make us succeed and those that are more likely to become obstacles to our progress in achieving E.F.A. Our shared experience today has enabled us to analyse and adopt what works best.

Ladies and gentleman, it was evidently clear from the presentations that African governments have made significant steps towards bridging the digital divide between the North and South and are making use of ICTs to accelerate the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Similarly, it was observed that a number of Countries through their national ICT for Education Strategy and programme, have in accordance with the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) action plan held in Geneva (2003) improved connectivity and access of ICTs to more Educational Learning Institutions.

As observed, many challenges that Africa as a Continent faces in terms of implementing ICT and particularly in addressing the impediments to effective delivery of education programmes through ICTs, can be overcome by encouraging and tapping Private Sector Support that will lead to adopting and developing in-house Solutions. It is along these lines I believe the theme for this year “Building Infrastructures and Capacities to reach out to the whole of Africa” was envisaged.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it has been noted from the day's proceedings that efforts have been made towards various initiatives for the achievement of promotion and integration of ICTs in education in various countries - despite the challenges and problems in various countries of the third world. Last but not least, I am happy to note that the "Round Table" has identified two initiatives as the African "Educational ICT Landmark projects" that have relevance across the continent and could be used for the promotion of ICT integration into education and training. The two initiatives will be presented at the closing plenary of the eLearning Africa conference, 2007. Finally, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Kenya, I once again welcome you to Kenya and wish you a happy stay during the next two days of the eLearning Africa Conference paper presentations and demonstrations.

Thank you.