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Innovation is the essence of science and a key driver to economic development. We have all seen what we as a country have achieved in the time we have allowed our people to be creative and innovative. There have emerged products and services that are in high demand not just locally but also globally. Our innovative minds are getting critical acclaim not just in the region but also the world.

The Government is keen on further nurturing innovation and this is seen clearly in the National ICT Masterplan 2017. From the onset, the Masterplan was aimed at getting the country close to achieving a better standard of living in line with aspirations of the Vision 2030. This is to be achieved through creating an enabling environment for the industry to develop a dynamic and robust sector, support sectors critical to the economy through ICT innovation and provision of e-government services that are simple to use and convenient for citizens

We are almost completing the implementation phase for the Masterplan and I am happy to report that we have achieved quite a lot. I believe that the Kenyan ICT industry is more robust than it has ever been. The country has been ranked tops by many credible surveys, including the Internet Community that ranked our capital Nairobi as the most intelligent city in Africa last year.

We have been able to launch online services that are making life a lot easier for our people.

The Masterplan is up for review next year and we will be aiming at coming up with a better plan for the next review period. I also believe that this having been the first of ICT Masterplan, we have learned lessons that we will be seeking to draw from and make a much better plan and one that both Government and private sector players can buy for smoother implementation and far much better results.

On the innovation front, we have seen many brilliant ideas that have metamorphosed into businesses but many of these have been unable to exceed a certain level of growth. Just as with the traditional businesses that have in the past had access to startup capital but failed to transit from micro and small to medium and large enterprises due to diverse factors including growth capital, startups in our industry have also been unable to achieve this transition due to a number of factors.

It was with this thinking that we have come up with Enterprise Kenya, an initiative that is aimed at supporting and building technology entrepreneurship in the country. The Government is setting up a Ksh.1 billion kitty to establish Enterprise Kenya with a call for matching funds from the private sector and partners. Currently, the department is domiciled at the ICT Authority as we work through the legal process, and draw advice from the private sector players.

The whole idea is to extend business advisory services to entrepreneurs in the form of facilities, legal and intellectual property services, investment and general management services including facilitating them to go to market.

We are very excited and are sure that it will give our startups a much needed hand in their transition to medium and large businesses. At the moment, there are a few tech companies that are selling software internationally. With Enterprise Kenya, we are sure that we will push up the number of multinationals that are of Kenyan origin to the hundreds if not thousands.

While we might want to pat ourselves on the back, we cannot presume to have reached the apex of innovation or dominance in our fields. There is need for the private sector to continuously innovate and to inject the necessary investments to drive the industry and keep it competitive.

Innovation and technological development is not going to be an event, it is a process. We must continually seek to improve what we have done in the past. Sessions such as these where we take time to look at what is happening globally and what we can learn for ourselves are necessary for the growth of the industry.

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