**COMMENTS ICT POLICY 2016**

***This note highlights the few areas of improvement required in the draft ICT Policy 2016.***

1. **The vision needs to capture a balanced approach in expanding consumption as well as production:**The policy is focused on increasing demand for ICTs in the country. While this is vital, focus on increased demand as opposed to supply of ICTs merely creates an ICT powerhouse in terms of consumption, not production which is not sustainable for national development. There is need to shift our focus to meet the demand locally as opposed to the current reliance placed in imports and expand regionally by developing locally made high-end technologies to meet the demand locally and also focus on expansion of ICT Exports particularly in hardware and the software sector. This has not been reflected in the policy in **E-Health Services, Agriculture, Health and Human Capital etc.**

**Vision: “**A Kenya that is an ICTConsumption and Production Powerhouse ”

1. **Creating demand and supply**

Initiate free Internet and computer literacy programs targeting at least 50% of the population with priority given to; primary and secondary schools, women, military personnel, rural areas, the disabled citizens and farmers.

Encourage consumption of locally made high-end technologies by offering tax incentives and subsidies to reduce production costs of local ICTs and maintain healthy competition with imports.

1. **Institutional arrangements**

Restructure government institutions responsible for the ICT policy implementation to reduce overlapping of functions for accountability purposes: i.e. Ministry of ICT and Information and Communications Technology Authority of Kenya (ICTA) functions.

**National Cyber Security Agency;** mandate should extend to private sector not just Protection of government communications and information systems as the cyber security threat is eminent in both sectors.

**Ministry of Education;** the education sector largely dictates the direction of local ICTs production by developing skills that encourage innovation through integration of ICTs in the education system. Therefore this is one of the key institutions in implementing the ICT policy.

1. **Financing mechanisms**

Create the system of letting the profits from ICT fields be reallocated into ICT sector to enable focused investment in ICT.

‘invest first, settle later’, policy to attract private sector investments.

1. **Inducing market competition**

Maintain minimal regulatory measures especially licensing and pricing in the broadband Internet service market to encourage investment and facility-based competition among existing and new service providers and further put downward pressure on tariffs.

Protect local innovations by maintaining minimum registration procedures and minimum registration fees for patents to encourage patent registration by local innovators to give them an edge both locally and globally as exporters of ICTs.

1. **Research and development**

The policy needs to focus on expanding ICT education in the early stages to shift the focus of ICT education from quantitative to qualitative improvement for practical application in research and development to spur innovation.

1. **Digital Divide**

Deliberate measures to close the connectivity gaps between and within counties in rural areas that have remained in digital exclusion with focus on women, children and persons with disabilities through:

* special programmes including: installation of public cyber cafes in remote rural areas;
* supplying free computers to students from low-income households;
* developing devices and software for the physically disabled; and
* strengthening ICT education for the physically disabled, women and other groups alienated from information services.
1. **E-Environment**

Enhance climate change adaption, mitigation and disaster management efforts through ICTs.