REPUBLIC OF UGANDA   REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

VISIT TO UGANDA BY THE HON. IGNACE GATARE, MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE IN CHARGE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY, REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

17th November, 2011

1.0   INTRODUCTION

As a follow up to the visit by H.E the President of the Republic of Uganda to Rwanda in July, 2011, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on July 29th 2011, under the umbrella of the 7th session of Joint Permanent Commission on

cooperation between the two countries with regard to the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector.

Subsequently, a delegation from the Republic of Rwanda led by the Minister in the President's Office in Charge of Information and Communications Technology Hon. Ignace Gatare made a follow up visit to Uganda on 16th – 17th November, 2011, at the invitation of the Minister of ICT, Hon. Ruhakana Rugunda. The objective of the visit was to discuss and share experiences with regard to areas of cooperation as elaborated in the MoU on ICT sector, and lay ground for implementation.

During the discussion, the following areas were covered: Telecommunications, Information Technology, Broadcasting, Postal Services and Human Resource. The details are hereunder elaborated.

2.0   TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The two Ministers identified the actionable areas as follows:

2.1   Cross border connectivity

It was recognized that some of the Telecommunication operators already have cross border fiber links. However, the quality of services of these links is inadequate. Therefore, there is need for the two countries to have a more reliable connectivity.

  i.   In the short term, a task force shall be established to monitor availability of current links that are provided by the private operators between Kampala and Katuna, as a measure of improving the reliability of this route.
  ii. As a long term measure, it has been agreed that connectivity between the two National backbones be established by December 2012.
  iii. In order to ensure adequate redundancy on international connectivity, the two countries will work together to secure satellite bandwidth.

2.2   International connectivity

In order to increase reliability of international connectivity for the region, there is need to have access to other international submarine cables, using the alternative route through South Sudan, Ethiopia and Djibouti. The two countries will work with Egypt, South Sudan and other countries in the region to fast track this through the Nile Basin initiative.

2.3   Cross border internet traffic

The internet traffic between the two countries currently is routed through various international hubs. Considering that the two countries already have existing national Internet Exchange Points (IXPs), measures shall be put in place to ensure that the regional internet traffic between the two countries is routed through the most efficient route, preferably through the fiber linkage, by June 2012.

2.4   Color code harmonization

To adopt best practice for mobile communication along national borders, it is necessary to distinguish between Base Transceiver Stations (BTSs) to which a mobile handset is registered on either side of the border. Therefore, the two countries agree to fast track color code harmonization.

2.5   Information sharing

The two parties agree to share information and experiences on:

2.5.1   Establishment of a conducive legal environment to promote ICT by developing their respective ICT policies and regulations, putting particular emphasis on broadband policies, cyber laws and fighting child pornography.

2.5.2   Monitoring and enforcement of quality of service standards for mobile and internet services.

3.0   INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The two parties identified the following actionable areas:

3.1   Information security

It was agreed that the two countries shall cooperate and share experience and expertise in the establishment of their respective Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs), and will also ensure that the CERTs share information.

3.2   National Identification (ID) project

It was noted that Rwanda successfully implemented the National ID project. Considering that Uganda has started implementing a similar project, the parties agree to work together and share experience and expertise to ensure successful completion. This will eventually ease management of cross border movement of people and security.

3.3   Promoting ICT public access points

The two countries shall cooperate in promoting universal access to ICT services by the population by, among other initiatives, establishing ICT public access points. Uganda shall share the experience of Rwanda in using mobile tele-centers to deliver ICT services and training especially in the rural areas. This shall be in addition to other initiatives already in place, such as District Business Information Centers (DBICs).

3.4   Business Process Outsourcing (BPO)
The parties recognize the potential of BPO in creating jobs and income for especially the youth. Uganda and Rwanda shall cooperate in BPO implementation, especially with regard to branding and marketing initiatives for positioning the region as preferred BPO destination.

3.5   Information sharing
The two parties agree to share information and experiences on:
  i.   Formulation and Implementation of National ICT policies, laws and plans
 ii.   National data centre implementation
iii.   One laptop per child programme
 iv.   Curbing online child pornography

4.0   BROADCASTING

The two parties agreed to implement the following actionable areas with regard to Broadcasting:

4.1   Analogue to digital broadcasting migration
Considering that the two countries aim at completing analogue to digital broadcasting migration by 2012, the parties shall cooperate in optimizing available resources (skills, experience, infrastructure) to meet the deadline, and also optimize the utilization of the freed spectrum (Digital Dividend).

4.2   Content development
The two countries shall share information and experiences with regard to strategies for content development and distribution. Special attention shall be given to development of local content.

5.0   POSTAL SERVICES
The two parties recognize the continued importance and relevancy of Postal services in enhancing communication locally and internationally. Therefore, cooperation will be fostered in the implementation of strategies and programs to

revitalize the postal sector, particularly development of the Postal Code and Addressing System. This provides a last mile solution of service delivery in the implementation of e-commerce.

6.0 HUMAN RESOURCE

The two parties recognize the importance of human resource in implementing the ICT programs. Therefore, cooperation shall be fostered with special emphasize on the following:

6.1 Capacity aggregation

Successful implementation of ICT programmes in both countries require availability of large pool of skilled manpower e.g. BPO. Therefore, the two parties agree to use human resource aggregation as a strategy in order to promote ICT programmes in the two countries, particularly as destinations of IT enabled services (ITES).

6.2 Capacity Building

The two parties shall promote the sharing and exchange of training programs and activities in both countries.

i. In light of the recent establishment of Carnegie Melon University campus in Rwanda, the parties agree to work on the framework to promote collaboration between the campus in Rwanda and the universities in Uganda in developing the ICT skills.

ii. With the availability of the broad band infrastructure in both countries, the parties agree to put mechanisms in place to promote e-learning programs as well as harnessing cooperation between the research and education networks (Research and Education Network for Uganda & Rwanda Research and Education Network) in the two countries

7.0 Implementation Mechanism

It has been agreed that a joint technical team be established by the respective Permanent Secretaries within two weeks from the date of signing the joint communique. This joint technical team will be responsible for the implementation and progress reporting.

Signed:

Ruhakana Rugunda (Dr.)

MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY, UGANDA

Signed:

Hon. Dr. Ignace Gatare
MINISTER IN THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE IN CHARGE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY, RWANDA

Date: 17th November, 2011