

**SPEECH BY H.E. HON. WILLIAM RUTO, EGH, DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF KENYA ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL FORUM ON
HARNESSING THE DATA REVOLUTION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.
LAICO REGENCY, 28TH AUGUST, 2015**

Hon. Wycliff Oparanya, Governor of the Kakamega County & Chair, Finance Committee, Council of Governors;

Hon. Evan Kidero, Governor of Nairobi County;

Mr. Sid Chatterjee, Acting Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System and Country Representative, United Nations Population Fund;

Mr. Maurice MakOloo, Regional Representative for Eastern Africa of the Ford Foundation;

Dr. Tade Aina, Executive Director, Partnership for African Social Research and Governance;

Representatives of Government Agencies;

Champions of the Global Partnership on Sustainable Development Data;

Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Representatives of Private Sector, Media, think tanks and not-for-profit organizations;

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the National Forum on harnessing the data revolution, for Sustainable Development. This gathering is being held only a month to the historic signing of the sustainable development goals (SDGs), a successor to the millennium development goals that has guided our development for the past fifteen years.

Indeed, H.E. President Uhuru Kenyatta and I committed a few months ago, to create an inclusive data ecosystem involving government, private sector, academia, nonprofit organizations, local communities and development partnerships that tackles the

informational aspects of development decision-making in a coordinated way. The National Forum, from its organization to its format, has been co-organized and managed by government in conjunction with private sector, innovators, non-profit entities and donors collectively in an open multi-stakeholder environment.

I am aware that this meeting seeks to develop a broad roadmap for the actualization of a data revolution in Kenya by establishing a multistakeholder alliance to improve the coordination, governance and transparency of data. This alliance will also help data-driven organizations prioritize accountability and privacy and identify emerging issues and articulate them in a way that frames strategic policy-making. For these credible objectives, I commend you.

The UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki Moon, last year, emphasized on the need for a data revolution as a critical aspect of the SDGs. This agenda is borne of the realization that unlike in 2000 when MDGs were ushered in, the world today is witnessing incredible increase in the scale and volume of data production. In 2010 (when much less data was being produced in comparison to 2015), the Head of Google argued that the globe was creating as much data every two-days as had been created between the dawn of civilization and 2003!

Citizens, businesses, public and private institutions are the engine of this process, providing data on just about anything imaginable. In parallel, sensors, satellites and other tools produce real-time data on the environment, people's movements and more. The way data can be leveraged to impact on the lives of the most vulnerable is only starting to emerge. Because of its timeliness and ability to be used in multiple ways to make large portions of low income people visible, the potential for data driven development is unprecedented.

Attractive as the volume, velocity and variety of data may be, concerns regarding the veracity, authenticity and accuracy of some of the data present challenge. Concerns also on data governance have been raised and particularly the impact of certain data mining practices upon the right to individual privacy so sacrosanct in our universal norms. That data in individual or malevolent hands will be used in a malicious manner is an ever present risk. It is the strong belief of this government however that with meaningful

regulatory controls in place, these challenges can be addressed and thereby enable a whole new set of digital insights to be applied to track the breakout of infectious diseases, strengthen resiliency during natural disasters, enhance access to financial services to the poor, such as with regard to our own MPESA and understand migration patterns to vulnerable populations.

Accurate, timely, disaggregated and accessible data are essential for governments to deliver services efficiently, fairly and transparently. Unfortunately, even in a country credited with so much progress in ICT such as ours, and even with our own Open Government Platform launched three years ago, basic data like births and deaths, the size of the labor force, and the number of children in school all fundamental to governments' ability to serve our people to the fullest are still not readily available.

To achieve the full potential of data-driven development, it will be necessary for all stakeholders – government, the private sector, development organizations, and the public – to work in coordination to bridge these gaps. A key concern of government is the cost of data in Kenya. The average mobile phone consumer in Kenya is spending 10% for airtime in order to simply communicate. While the cost of mobile handset has dramatically gone down over the years, the cost of data has increased, making it impossible for the power of data revolution to take place in the country. I challenge operators to work with government to bring down the cost of data to enable more Kenyans interact with. Conversely, legislators must also think about how legislation can enhance data reciprocity, enabling individuals to own and monetize their own information.

Government is also working on enhancing internet security to manage the risk to individuals transacting through the internet by strengthening our cybercrime law and institutional response. Equally, government is presently finalizing the Access to Information Law and Data Protection Law, both aimed at incentivizing the data revolution while safeguarding individual freedom, securing state responsibility and security.

We do believe also as government that the data revolution must not become a struggle between an ancient regime of traditional official statistics and a new Big Data Republic. A worthwhile revolution will provide a means for Big Data scientists and official statisticians to work together as partners and complement one another. Our National Statistics office,

the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, should continue playing its role. Additionally, in line with the Africa Data Consensus adopted early this year in Addis Ababa, KNBS should develop greater capacity for over-sight, audit, standard setting and coordination of the multiple players in the data production industry. In this environment, KNBS should foster integrated and harmonious relations with other data producers and exercise that role, independently.

Friends, Kenya is best placed to be one of the anchor states for data revolution. I urge the innovators in this room to come up with practical solutions that will elevate our agriculture practices beyond the subsistence, help government address the menace of cattle rustling through technology and ensure that our community policing becomes more participatory through innovative mobile solutions. In this regard, we are seeking partnerships with private sector and governments from both the global North and South. Such partnerships must be sustainable, coherent and futuristic.

Data for measurement, evidence, decision-making, reporting, planning, accountability, management, monitoring, good governance, resource allocation, and strategic intervention should be the corner-stone for the adoption and fulfillment of SDGs and the global data revolution agenda.

With those few remarks, I would like to formally launch the National Partnership on Harnessing the Data Revolution for Sustainable Development. Let me also declare the first ever National Data Forum on Sustainable Development official open. This is a milestone for Kenya and co-champions of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data, notably the Governments of United States of America and the Republic of Colombia who have sent their representatives to attend this gathering. It is my hope that the co-champions will support Kenya's request to host the World Data Forum next year.

I wish you well in your deliberations!