Opening Speech Delivered by the Chair AfICTA, Mr. Thabo Mashegoane
@ the 10th AfICTA Summit

Protocol

In the light of AfICTA's 10th Anniversary, I would like to welcome you all to the 10th AfICTA Summit. AfICTA - Africa ICT Alliance's dedication is to ensure that the digital promise is fulfilled to all, that is at the heart of our motto and it's at the heart of our vision, and we are 10 years into this particular vision and we need to emphasize the speed is only possible through intimate and mutual collaboration between multiple stakeholders, which is basically ourselves and you at large. The past 10 years, have been a shaping year. This was a small child that is being brought into in this space, and we highly appreciate the new sharing support and participation of all stakeholders in AfICTA programs of action in making sure that we actually move forward towards our vision of bringing a digital promise to all.

The next 10 Years and Beyond, are going to be very critical in that they will be about fostering the new paradigm and localizing interventions closer to the core of not only filling our mission, but also in addressing the imperative Sustainability Development Goals - SDGs of 2030 for all African nations. The next 10 years is the Decade of not only awakening this lion called Africa at making it to roar, it will be accomplished by creation of focused localized Afrocentric technology, content, and product. Development of our people on the digital front both skills and otherwise, whether people are young or old, whether they are women or men and also to create opportunities for productive and gainful employment.

I would like to extend AfICTA's hand of partnership to all well-meaning and purposeful organization to come join AfICTA in it's efforts towards ensuring everyone in Africa enjoys the dividend of the digital age.

One of the challenges of the 21st century is in building an equitable digital economy that not only competes globally but also empowers citizens with the necessary digital tools to do business in this new digital age. In the case of Africa, many countries have fallen behind in key areas such as digital infrastructure and digital skills with many lacking the necessary resources to effectively develop and implement the right digital policies and law reforms that are needed not only to protect our digital borders and core digital infrastructure, but to also protect government, business, and citizens from cyber abuse and data theft.

Whilst there is no one-fit solution, there is an ever-increasing need for cross-border collaboration and a collective as well as an indigenous approach to solving these digital challenges, whilst speeding up the process of digital enablement and fostering a new era of shared skills and knowledge.

AfICTA's 10th Summit seeks to understand this challenge and takes a look at the different approaches countries are taking in order to digitalize their economies. The idea of an indigenous digital revolution is explored; can Africa find its own solutions or will it remain dependent on the importation of foreign expertise and intellectual property? Can Africa unlock its true digital potential and grow its digital capacity through smart investment and cross-border collaboration, or will Africa remain locked in as a consumer of foreign digital solutions and services?

In conclusion, I would like to assure attendees of value for their time as the list of panelists on the schedule promises to bring in best perspectives and solution to difficult questions as our list of panelist are from all the stakeholder groups including (business, government, civil society, academia and technical community) and they would present their views and provide practical examples of how digital tools drive digitalization and economic prosperity.

Ladies and Gentle men, I thank you.