UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

REMARKS MADE BY PROF. PETER M. F. MBITHI, DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (A&F) DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE KENET/ IBM SERVICE CORPS WORK PLAN, AT THE KENET TRAINING ROOM, JKML ON JULY 4, 2011

BACKGROUND OF KENET

The Kenya Education Network (KENET) is a membership (not-for-profit) organization that currently provides Internet services to 42 higher education institutions in Kenya. The institutions include all the 13 private and 6 public Universities in Kenya as well as national and international research bodies. The 42 member institutions in Kenya represent a student population of about 100,000 and over 5,000 faculty members and staff members.

KENET is a member of UbuntuNet Alliance , which is a regional association of National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) in Africa.

The objectives of the Alliance are as follows:

- To develop and improve the interconnectivity between Research and Education Networking (REN) Participants in Africa and their connectivity with research and education networks worldwide and with the Internet generally;

- To develop the knowledge and skills of ICT practitioners in these institutions; and

- To provide related auxiliary services to Research and Education Networking (REN) Participants.

ICT in Kenya Universities

Kenya promulgated a National ICT Policy in January 2006 that aims to "improve the livelihoods of Kenyans by ensuring the availability of accessible, efficient, reliable and affordable ICT services". Government has also undertaken to encourage "…the use of ICT in schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions in the country so as to improve the quality of teaching and learning." However, the fact is that universal implementation is challenging given the lack of resources, national ICT infrastructure.

According to a World Bank Institute survey, the state of ICT infrastructure in African universities can be summed up as "too little, too expensive, and poorly managed." The survey report goes on to say that "the average African university has bandwidth capacity equivalent to a broadband residential connection available in Europe, [and] pays 50 times more for their bandwidth than their educational counterparts in the rest of the world." While most of the partner

institutions either have an ICT policy in place or are developing one, they lack the resources to implement it.

Inter-institutional connectivity in higher education in Kenya is because of KENET. However, the lack of bandwidth access seriously constrains ICT use by faculty and students and, currently, the cost of bandwidth precludes a solution. A "Gap Analysis" study concludes, "the real problem is not the absence of programs in African universities but the inability of students to gain access to these programs."

Digital content development is therefore underway for the school curricula and, in a collaborative manner, among some of the universities through the Avoir Project. Currently there is not much available and there is a lack of access to that which is available. There is a need to develop content in local languages as well as English.

There is a strong belief that the incorporation of ICTs is essential at all education levels. This is shared from the national to the student level. However, there is still a perception that distance education is "second best."

Key Objectives

The objective of the Work Plan being launched will be to support the KENET's efforts to review the status, operation and collaboration mode of KENET and

linked institutions to address the root causes of the low traffic rate of research and education (REN) and isolation of communities. I am informed that 5 key objectives have been identified, which have been broken down into short-term and long-term goals.

Short-term objectives:

1. Study and understand the intrinsic reasons that cause Research, Education and Network (REN) traffic at low level and suggest improvement approaches on aspects like infrastructure, content and human capacity.

2. Interview with connected institutes to find the factors that keep them isolated from each other although they are physically linked, and give suggestions on actions that can be taken immediately to eliminate pain points and motivate future collaboration.

3. Setup indicators for measuring ROI (Return on Investment) on KENET network infrastructure.

Long-term objective:

4. Promote and facilitate open educational content development/search by member institutions

5. Establish sustainable management structures that benefits member institutions in long term.

IBM Kenya is the regional hub of IBM East Africa, which is a subsidiary of IBM Corporation and constitutes Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Burundi. IBM conducts its operations in Kenya (and the rest of East Arica) through Business Partners (3 tier 1 and 14 tier 2 partners). The East African team has about 100 people across a number of business units.

IBM has a strong Change Management methodology called Better Change and the intention is to use that as means of supporting KENETs transformation. *Better Change* approach defines the steps that can help transformation initiatives succeed.

These Are:

1. Clearly **describe the change vision** and goals.

2. Actively **involve leaders** in owning the change.

3. **Assess change impact and plan** how change will be managed.

4. **Engage and prepare employees** to adopt the new way of working.

5. **Align the organization** to enable and reinforce desired behaviors.

 Monitor adoption of the change to ensure desired outcomes are realized

Planned Deliverables

The work plan proposes to include the following deliverables within the scope of the project.

- A description of KENET's current state (based on SWOT analysis)

- A description of international best practices for NREN activities and global networking

- Gap analysis and identification of Quick wins

- Description of major change management enablers and barriers to support the change in the ways of utilising the network in the future

- A high level strategy and actionable recommendations for KENET to support globalisation of this NREN

In collaboration with IBM, KENET hopes to develop a strategy for increasing participation in the global research and innovation networks by Kenya Universities and research institutions.

We at the University of Nairobi are proud to host KENET in our premises, and more importantly, to be associated with its aspirations and objectives.

On behalf of the University Management, I wish you all the best as you launch this Work Plan, and in achieving its key objectives.

Thank you very much.