



**MINISTRY OF LABOUR
OFFICE OF THE CABINET SECRETARY**

SPEECH BY

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CABINET SECRETARY FOR LABOUR

**DURING THE CISCO BRIDGE IT ACADEMY GRADUATION
HELD ON 11TH MARCH 2022**

AT NITA HEADQUARTERS

- Hon. Jackson Kalla, Chief Administrative Secretary, Ministry of Labour,
- Eng. Peter Tum, Principal Secretary, State Department for Labour,
- Norad-Edle Hamre, Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Department for Health, Education and Vulnerable Groups,
- Giz- Katja Röckel, Programme Director – Employment and Skills for Development in Africa (E4d),
- Anthony Njage Team Leader - Resilience, Equity and Inclusion at Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, (FCDO)
- Sally Nduta, C.E.O United Disabled Persons of Kenya Udpk,
- Regina Mweru Mukiri, Corporate Affairs, Standard Chartered Bank,
- Tabie Kioko, Director Diversity and Inclusion; Safaricom,
- Dr. Kamau Gachigi, The National Industrial Training Board Chairman,
- Members of The National Industrial Training Board Present;
- Eng. Stephen Ogenga, Director General, The National Industrial Training Authority,
- All Development and Social Partners Present;
- Members of Nita Management Present;
- Graduands
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

It gives me pleasure to be with you this morning as we witness this graduation of COHORT1 of the CISCO- BRIDGE IT academy, a programme that is being implemented in collaboration with NITA.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The use of mobile wireless communication to access internet and for social media interactions has become entrenched in every corner of the globe. Similarly, we are also witnessing increased use of ICT systems in conducting of various business transactions and payments, marketing, sharing information, learning, and obtaining of new services.

In our country, the ICT sector has been, positioned as an enabler to Kenya's socio-economic development blue print, the Vision 2030 and the BIG 4 agenda. This has led to increased use of Internet to disseminate information, market, communicate, and deliver services by governments and businesses alike. It is therefore important that people with disability are not left behind.

Since ICT is an enabler to Kenya's socio-economic development, we need to ensure there is a large pool of ICT skills and talent to match our national requirement and where workers do not have the requisite digital skills, employers should be encouraged to re-train their workforce to ensure they advance their digital skills and competencies. This is why programmes like this being offered here by NITA and CISCO is important, especially because it targets a segment of our society that is already marginalized.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Right now, our country is not generating enough jobs to meet the growing number of youths graduating from various training institutions, as a result youths are looking for Jobs abroad. We are cognizance of this fact and as a government we have targeted to create a pool of professional who will not only move physically to foreign countries to take up professional jobs, but also those who will work for foreign countries from right here in our country especially as we continue to embrace digital skills & strategies such as working from home and virtual offices. As the Ministry responsible for labour, having more and more digital skills is one sure strategy of promoting decent work agenda and inclusive economic growth.

To demonstrate the importance of having digital skills in promoting decent work, a survey, on the awareness of the Ajira Digital Programme and the incidence on online workers in Kenya by TIFA Kenya revealed that in year 2020, there were 677, 9613 digital/online workers while many more were engaged in digitally-enabled work, such as ride hiring taxi drivers, and bodaboda delivery drivers, among others.

These numbers will continue to increase as we continue to embrace digital technology and economy in our country. In the long term, embracing digital economy will lead to increase in the number of formal jobs in our country, and a gradual reduction in the number of jobs that are purely informal in nature. We must therefore continue to encourage as many youths as possible to enrol and acquire relevant ICT skills.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Government of Kenya recognizes disability inclusion as a prerequisite to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It is for this reason that last year we launched the CISCO Bridge IT academy, which is meant to contribute significantly in disability mainstreaming.

Today as we witness graduation of this first COHORT of CISCO Bridge IT academy class of 2021, we need to remember that Persons with disability (PWDs) are disproportionately affected by digital transformation of the economy. Like other marginalized groups, Person with disability suffer from digital exclusion, in the form of; lack of skills and mismatch; insufficient connectivity coverage; information gaps and limited mobility; limited ownership and control of assets; among others. I therefore appreciate NITA and CISCO for this initiative, that has now made it possible for these graduates to overcome some of these challenges.

According to The United Nation Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which Kenya as a respected member of the United Nations has ratified, governments are expected to make sure that there is accessibility of ICT to persons with disabilities. Our government has taken steps towards implementation of this United Nations Convection.

In our country, the rights of persons with disabilities have been safeguarded under Article 54 of our Constitution which guarantees that; persons with disabilities are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect and to be addressed and referred to in a manner that is not demeaning; are given reasonable access to all places, public transport and information; are given access to educational institutions and facilities for persons with disabilities that are integrated into society to the extent compatible with the interests of the person; are given access to materials and devices to overcome constraints arising from the person's disability ; are entitled to use Sign language, Braille or other appropriate means of communication; and to access materials and devices to overcome constraints arising from the person's disability.

In an effort to implement this article, our government through the Ministry of ICT, Innovation and Youth Affairs has developed a Digital Economy Strategy which targets digital inclusion by transforming marginalised groups into a digitally adaptive, skilled, and innovative workforce that will not only comprehend, adopt, and move with global trends but chart their own digital pathways towards inclusive growth and development. This programme by NITA and CISCO, is a response to this Digital Economy Strategy.

Similarly, through the National ICT Policy, our government has undertaken to provide an ICT environment fully accessible to persons with disabilities. It also commits to provide equal treatment to people with disabilities with respect to the use and benefit of ICT services, programs, goods and facilities in a manner that respects their dignity and that is equitable in relation to the broader public. In this respect, the government has extended broadband access to reach all the 47 counties, and in the process ensured that communication services reach PWDs in every corner of this country.

While we appreciate that Kenya has taken great strides to implement article 54 of our constitution, much still needs to be done, especially on the representation of PWDs which requires at least five percent placements in employment. Initiatives like these spearheaded by NITA and CISCO will go a long way in addressing some of these challenges that have hindered access to jobs by people with disabilities.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

As I conclude, let me commend all the learners who are graduating here today, for putting enough time and effort to complete this course. I also want to appreciate all the partners involved in this programme, for your commitment in ensuring that disability inclusion is integrated into Government policies, plans and programmes. I also appreciate your commitment to ensure that needs, aspirations and interests of people with Disabilities are addressed.

To the grandaunts, there are many opportunities out there including in the creative economy that awaits you, take advantage of the skills you have gained in this course to challenged the world because Disability is not Inability.

To all employers out there, these are highly qualified Kenyans, kindly offer them an opportunity to offer services to your organizations. Let me also challenge employers who have not met the minimum threshold of at least 5 percent employment of persons with disability in their organization to take deliberate steps to implement this requirement because like mentioned earlier “disability is not inability”.

**IT IS NOW MY HUMBLE DUTY TO OFFICIALLY DECLARE THE
COHORT ONE AS HAVING GRADUATED**

AND TO ALSO LAUNCH THE START OF COHORT TWO

Thank you