



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. WILLIAM
SAMOEI RUTO, C.G.H. PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND THE COMMANDER-
IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES DURING
THE IBM RESEARCH-AFRICA LABS 10TH
ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS**

SEPTEMBER 28TH, 2023

**CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN AFRICA,
KAREN**

- **H.E. Meg Whitman, U.S. Ambassador to Kenya**
- **Dr. Dario Gil, Senior Vice President & Director, IBM Research**
- **Dr. Allesandro Curioni, Vice President, IBM Research**
- **Dr. Solomon Assefa, Vice President, IBM Research-Africa**
- **Ms. Julia Carvalho, General Manager, IBM-Africa Growth Markets**

Distinguished Guests;

1. A few days ago, I held very productive engagements with the IBM leadership team in San Francisco, California, in which we reviewed the decade of collaboration between the Government of Kenya and IBM. It became clear that a broader conversation shall be necessary in order to build upon the legacy of this partnership in terms of innovative achievements and pioneering developments.
2. Consequently, it became clear that a broader conversation is needed, one that extends the scope of our joint endeavour to include initiatives enhancing our capacity to deliver transformative solutions in the delivery of public services across various sectors.
3. I committed to officiate over this event on the understanding that the commemoration of 10 years of the IBM Research Lab would provide us with another opportunity to extend our conversation, appraise our achievements, evaluate our present needs and envision a bold disruptive path to the future built from our complementary contributions.



4. It is the work of leadership to imagine a future of opportunities and solutions, and it is the work of innovators to design it, while it is the function of technology to reconcile the two to deliver a vision of the future that is safe, secure and sustainable. This event brings together all the necessary parties in one place, and it is only appropriate that technology, research, development and innovation be at the heart of our quest for a prosperous, resilient and dynamic Kenya.
5. Over the past year, I have used numerous occasions to make a strong case for investors, multinational corporations and technology companies to shift their strategic focus to Africa, the young, green continent of the future, and in so doing, capitalize on Kenya's geostrategic advantage as the gateway to the region and continent.
6. A landscape of opportunity is unfolding on our continent. A vast market of 1.4 billion people has emerged under the Africa Continental Free Trade Area and the various interlocking regional economic blocs. Africa's population is famously young, educated, skilled and motivated. The continent is abundantly endowed with natural resources, including critical minerals required by the global transition into clean, green industrialization. Our continent also has tremendous renewable energy potential.
7. In a world imperiled by impending climate disaster, occasioned by emissions from past industrialization, the greening imperative is at hand, a matter of existential necessity. This makes Africa the global hub of the next industrial revolution. Kenya is the gateway to Africa. The future is here and we shall imagine, design and build it here.
8. We are seriously committed to securing this country's future by deploying technology to deliver solutions that enrich human experience and well-being, keep the economy



competitive, diverse and robust and enhance the resilience and security of communities and the nation, against all threats.

9. We recognize technology as the catalyst, which facilitates the highest actualisation of our potential, efficient use of resources and optimal exploitation of opportunities and therefore, a means of ensuring that we make the best use of limited resources to maximize value for Kenya as citizens and consumers.
10. The government's Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda promotes science, technology and innovation as an enabler of excellence in all sectors. We also recognize information and communication technology as a competitive economic sector by itself and as a powerful enabler of transformation in other sectors of the national economy.
11. It is our aim, therefore, to turn this country into a hub of productivity and competitiveness by providing ICT infrastructures that enable Kenyans pursue employment opportunities and enjoy market goods and government services conveniently. Under the Digital Superhighway strategic pillar of our agenda, we are optimizing our position as the gateway of 6 submarine fibre-optic cables, and the existing potential of 9,000 kilometres of terrestrial fibre-optic networks with 100,000 kilometres of last-mile connectivity to serve every part of the country.
12. Additionally, the construction of a digital hub for every constituency and installation of free Wi-Fi connectivity at every urban centre is underway throughout Kenya.
13. We have enhanced the digitization of government services to cover 10,000 services accessible to anyone with a smartphone. This is why the local assembly of affordable



smartphones is critical. More services shall be brought online shortly, with the aim of digitizing every service by the end of the year and employing a unique digital identifier to promote security efficiency and inclusivity in digital service delivery.

14. The Konza Technopolis, an emerging science, technology and innovation cluster and the flagship of our national project to actualise Africa's Silicon Savannah here in Kenya, is already up and running, and the response from the local, regional and global technology community is highly promising.
15. We have also embarked on sector-wide ICT institutional reforms covering formal policy and legislation to establish an enabling environment for digital business, research and innovation.
16. As I have said before, we have our eye firmly on the horizon, scanning the possibilities that lie in the future. It is well-established that economies where research and development are a policy priority tend to stay competitive over time, because the future is full of possibilities for them. Our Digital Master Plan is intended to fulfil this role by enhancing our ability to confront an uncertain future with confidence.
17. Because of our commitment to create an enabling environment for digital competitiveness, Kenya has attracted many technology companies, including the global Big Tech, which have found a promising ecosystem from which to launch transformational endeavours.
18. IBM Research-Africa's presence here, as IBM's 12th research lab and the first of its kind on our continent, is therefore not accidental. By the time the Kenya Lab opened in 2013, IBM's footprint in Kenya was 55 years old, comprising collaborations with both the government and numerous local businesses.



19. The agreement which established the framework for collaboration between the government, through the Ministry of ICT, and IBM set the stage for a new era with the setting up of Africa's pioneering industrial research facility and paved the way for IBM to introduce its suite of transformative solutions, which are the products of relentless innovation.
20. They include cloud computing and hybrid cloud platforms that support businesses and government agencies as well as other organisations, enabling them modernize and secure their data by migrating to the cloud.
21. Data analytics and artificial intelligence-driven solutions, on the other hand confer the competitive advantage and significant benefits of data-driven decisions on a broad range of critical strategic areas like healthcare diagnostics, financial fraud detection and the optimization of agricultural productivity, besides powering economic growth and innovation.
22. In addition, blockchain technology solutions offer transparency, security and efficiency in the management of supply chains, land and financial transactions, with the promise of transformative applications in areas like agricultural value chains and land registry management. You will remember that according to the Plan, our delivery model for the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda is the value-chain framework to rationalize resource allocation and facilitate coordination.
23. We recognize IBM's leadership in cybersecurity, which has now emerged as a critical strategic priority for all actors on our digital landscape and for government especially, as we prepare to digitize all government services.



24. These services have benefitted the banking industry, financial and revenue administration institutions with robust cyber security and seamless digital transformation.
25. I especially commend the Research Lab which provided a platform for Kenyan researchers, in collaboration with the Ministry of Industrialisation to implement a program which initiated improvements to Kenya's Ease of Doing Business profile. After taking informed decisions on the basis of insights supported by robust analytics, the country's ranking in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Report improved by over 80 positions to the third place in our part of the continent.
26. 26. Without a doubt IBM has a solid track record in using technology to facilitate innovation, transformation of productivity and improvements in competitiveness. I commend IBM for their confidence in Kenyan talent, including researchers and analysts, who play leading roles in various projects.
27. This is why on this tenth anniversary of a highly fruitful collaboration, I look to IBM for further progress, especially in training Kenyans in high-end technology skills, including, but not limited to facilitating access by more Kenyans to pathways leading to PhD-level qualifications in high-tech sciences, at no cost.
28. I also encourage IBM to do its part in scaling up our current collaboration and open up the Research Lab for the benefit of Kenyan universities as well as government ministries, departments and agencies in need of research.
29. The government will set in motion appropriate mechanisms, to expeditiously facilitate the extension of the MoU on collaboration with respect to the IBM Research Lab based here. My presence here, together with all our previous



engagements should give you comfort that our commitments shall be honoured in full; in due course.

30. Looking back, there is so much achievement to celebrate and appreciate about the 10 years of collaboration between the Government and IBM. Looking into the future, there is reason to be confident that uncertainty will be met with a high capacity for technological innovation and commitment to collaborate in designing a future consistent with our highest aspirations.

31. The future of our dreams will unfold in Africa's Silicon Savannah, right here in Kenya, the digital and geostrategic gateway to East Africa and Africa at large. Thanks to collaborative initiatives like the IBM Research-Africa, that future will be imagined, designed, developed and implemented here.

God bless you.

