REPUBLIC OF KENYA

REMARKS BY H.E HON WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO, PhD., C.G.H. PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE ID4AFRICA

MAY 24TH, 2023

EDGE CONFERENCE CENTER, NAIROBI.

The Executive Chairman of ID4 Africa, Dr. Joseph Atick
Cabinet Secretaries
Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Delegates and Development partners
Industry Experts
Distinguished Guests,

1. On behalf of the government and people of Kenya, I wish to acknowledge the privilege it is for us to host the 7th ID4Africa General Meeting.

2. A conference with tremendous implications for effective and inclusive governance, efficient provision of public services based on accurate population, citizen data and the advancement of fundamental rights and social justice.

3. A gathering of eminent experts in the field of identity management, drawn from African governments, international development and humanitarian agencies as well as global leaders in digital identity solutions. This is an event of monumental significance by all accounts.

4. **3**.I am immensely delighted to be here, and on behalf of the people of Kenya, I extend a warm welcome to all our visitors from Africa and the rest of the world. Do feel at home and endeavour to find the time to experience our magnificent country and its delightful attractions that will make for a memorable stay.

5. This conference offers a unique forum for productive interactions among African national identity management agencies, as well as potentially transformative exchange between these agencies and global experts from the identity and biometrics industries. I have been impressed by the latest identity management innovations on display

and I believe that they constitute a significant indicator of this exposition's transformative potential.

6. We consider sound identity management to be essential to the integrity of the state, because we recognize its immediate implications for the effective management of our democracy, society and economy. Good governance entails effective administration and efficient management of the economy by a legitimate government authorized through democratic elections.

7. Accurate information about the population resident within our territory is absolutely indispensable. To validly constitute government, we need an accurate idea how many voters exist, how many of them voted and how many votes each candidate attracted. The Government also needs accurate information on essential attributes of citizens and other residents of a country in order to provide them with services and otherwise allocate resources for their benefit with a measure of efficiency and accuracy.

8. Moreover, the provision of public service also depends on the deployment of personnel and associated resources throughout the country in such a manner that the purposes and objectives of government are realized to the utmost. Finally, transactional efficiency in the provision of public as well as private goods and services depends on a capacity to establish the identity of agents quickly and accurately.

9. In recognition of these imperatives, Kenya has established a strong track record of sound identity management practices anchored on a **National Population Register** that is underpinned by the maintenance of a shared fingerprint biometric system. The register captures the data of adult citizens, resident foreign nationals, refugees as well as other protected persons.

10. Aside from this, Kenya also maintains a robust civil and vital statistics registration system. The government has instituted measures to ensure 100% registration of births and deaths by 2026.

11. Aside from the overarching purposes of a national identity management system, Kenya has specific objectives for pursuing this critical undertaking.

12. **Article 12** of the **Constitution** sets out the entitlement of every citizen to the rights, privileges and benefits of citizenship and to a Kenyan passport and any document of registration or identification issued by the state to citizens. The state is therefore committed by implication to the full implementation of these clear constitutional provisions without any question or delay.

13. In addition, this constitutional imperative is aligned with the United Nations' **Sustainable Development Goals** and, more specifically, **SDG 16-9 Under Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions**, to provide legal identity for all, including free birth registration.

14. I am proud of the progress we have made towards the achievement of this ambition, including, notably, granting of Kenyan citizenship to members of various communities which have lived in the country as stateless persons since independence.

15. Our identity management system is the bedrock on which Kenya's financial, revenue collection, telco, social security, universal health and voter registration systems are built.

16. Consider the country's celebrated leadership in both mobile phone penetration and **mobile money** penetration. These

achievements, including the globally acclaimed **Mpesa** stand upon the robust foundation of our national identity management system.

17. We have embarked on a national programme to **digitize** government records and information and **automate** public service provision to enable Kenyans access government services from their devices. The aim is to significantly cut down transaction costs and minimise opportunities for**corruption** by eliminating unnecessary **bureaucracy**, and also increase **transparency** in government. Over the past year, we have increased the number of services available in this manner from **320 to 5000**, and intend to cover all services by the end of 2023.

18. Because of this ambition, Kenya is among the earliest of its continental peers to establish a policy framework for data protection, which includes comprehensive legislation and regulations to safeguard privacy and personal data.

19. With a sound policy ecosystem in place, we are ready to execute our leap into a brave new world and become a fully-fledged **digital economy**.

20. Our identity registration and management journey, together with all the experiences and achievements along the way, demonstrate that properly considered and rationally executed identity management solutions can and do catalyse a country's sociopolitical and economic transformation, thereby empowering people to exercise their rights, access services, participate in the affairs of their nation, perform their obligations and pursue opportunities. This is how sustainable development happens in real life.

21. Our path into a **digital economy** will require us to proceed beyond our considerable achievements in identity management, in order to transition from unique identity registration into a fully functional and secure national digital identity management system. A trusted, all-inclusive digital ID system is indispensable to **digital governance**.

22. This conference therefore, is quite timely insofar as it takes place while the government is deliberating the implementation of a civil registration and vital statistics system that meets the imperatives of a new digital era. The new system must be able to assign unique personal identification numbers at birth to all persons born in Kenya, upgrade the current national identity card into a national digital identity management system and adopt the most sophisticated advance passenger information solution to address entry and exit at our borders and ports.

23. I challenge all participants, especially identity management practitioners from Africa to collaborate with Kenyan colleagues in sharing their experiences, strengthening thought leadership and exploring possible innovations to achieve greater integrity and efficiency in the sector.

24. I also encourage industry experts to generously share their insights and apply their unique expertise in digital public infrastructures in order to generate solutions that will enhance the entrenchment of **data sovereignty**, both in Kenya and throughout Africa. **Data privacy** for registered persons is an essential component of our public mandate, and we must take every possible measure to safeguard it at all times.

25. We operate in an environment of escalating resource constraint and yet, at the same time, we cannot postpone or downgrade our identity management endeavours. Our

development partners therefore have an opportunity to explore possible areas of collaboration with our **State Department for Immigration and Citizen Services** to support our identity management programmes.

26. Once more, I affirm my profound delight at being able to participate in this timely, appropriate and fundamentally transformational conference. I wish you fruitful deliberations and look forward to the outcomes of your deliberations in due course.

The 7th Annual ID4Africa General Meeting is now officially opened.
Thank you very much
God bless you.