



Republic of Rwanda
Rwandan High Commission
London

Digital Readiness for Public Sector Leaders, Marlborough House, 24/03/23

Secretary General Patricia Scotland,

Your Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning,

First, I wish to thank the Commonwealth Secretariat for convening today's session and inviting me to speak with you.

Marlborough House is becoming like a second home to me, I know the Secretariat want member countries to feel that way, and truly, I do.

A few weeks ago, to mark International Women's Day I had the privilege of moderating an inspiring discussion in this room, between the Secretary General and the Prime Minister of Samoa on women's leadership.

The international Women's Day theme for 2023 was DigitAll, where we rightfully focused on the need for safety and equitable access to the digital world to close the gender gap.

As we look towards delivery on the outcomes of CHOGM2022 in Kigali, digital readiness is one of the key focus areas. As a Commonwealth family we must leverage new technologies to create high-quality jobs. Developing a skilled workforce through education and capacity building for our youth is essential throughout this process, and as mentioned ensuring women's participation is key. Prioritizing digital infrastructure and efficient systems will also support our collective efforts to boost intra-Commonwealth trade.

Dear friends,

In Rwanda, our leadership swiftly identified that digital transformation was essential to rapidly develop our society, which had been reduced to ashes after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

Our National Information and Communication Infrastructure strategy started in 2000, and has been implemented through four different phases over the last 20 years.

Initiatives were put in place to ensure public sector leaders are digitally ready to lead the country towards a more innovative future. Our Justification for digital compliant Public Servants is common sense. We have always been Public Servants because we serve the Public. Because digitalization is serving the Public. Public officials have to be digitally compliant.

One of the key initiatives was the "Smart Rwanda" program, launched in 2013. The program seeks to leverage technology to improve the delivery of government services and drive economic growth.

Through Smart Rwanda, the government has invested in infrastructure, such as high-speed broadband networks, 7000kms of fibre-optic cabling, data centers, and the introduction of e-government services to improve citizen engagement and service delivery.

The program included the development of a national portal known as Irembo, where citizens can easily access, government services, documents and records electronically. For citizens services such as Irembo, as well as access to smart phones and mobile money have enabled financial inclusion. Sensitization campaigns have gone on to encourage women to access these services, and we

are now moving towards greater parity in terms of women's land ownership and financial inclusion.

For external investors, they find one of the easiest places to do business in Africa, in large part thanks to this digital infrastructure and records system.

Rwanda has also prioritized e-health. To give you one example, the digital recording of the HPV vaccine rollout amongst young girls has meant Rwanda could well be the first country in the world to eliminate cervical cancer. Our integrated case management system enables our citizens to file cases, pursue their cases sometimes to the end virtually. Incarcerated inmates are, since COVID-19, defending their cases virtually. Our social security board allows us to track our pensions from anywhere in the world.

The National Digital Talent Policy seeks to ensure the country has a skilled and competent workforce, the policy focuses on training and capacity building in the ICT sector, including the public sector.

So, the partnership between the secretariat and INTEL, to launch a cutting-edge digital Training Platform designed to help Public Sector officials, first well with our national policies and programmes. The Commonwealth family should gladly

welcome this initiative that will help young public officials to understand and harness the power of Artificial Intelligence to achieve Sustainable Development Goals and unlock the benefits of digitalization across the Commonwealth. Members should therefore make good use of it.

In Rwanda, the Digital Ambassadors Program, aims to build a critical mass of digital ambassadors who can promote digital literacy and skills development across the country. Perhaps the idea of Ambassadors can assume this extra layer of diplomacy.

In the third world there is another problem of high levels of illiteracy. We have faced this by showing our citizens that some of the things they need don't need a lot of literacy. As a result they have picked the courage to use their devices for financial transactions, exchange of documents, pictures, capturing moments. Now they keep and transmit X-ray images from their doctors.

In conclusion,

The Commonwealth family should be characterized by a strong commitment to leveraging technology to drive development, as well as a willingness to invest in digital infrastructure and build capacity amongst public sector leaders. In Rwanda we are always humbled by our modest achievements to date because we know

where we came from, however there is still much work to be done to ensure that all Rwandans can benefit from more digital transformation.

I once again want to thank and commend the Secretariat, and colleagues in the room today for driving the digital readiness agenda forward, for a smarter Commonwealth for all.

Thank you for your kind attention.