OPENING SPEECH FOR HON DR. MAUA DAFTARI (M.P.), DEPUTY MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT WHEN OPENING THE CONFERENCE ON WOMEN AND ICT; HELD AT NGURDOTO, ARUSHA, ON OCTOBER 20TH , 2004

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Today, it is an honour and indeed a great privilege to be with you my sisters and brothers from every corner of Africa, Canada and Netherlands. So allow me to take this very rare opportunity to welcome you all to Tanzania and especially Arusha – the world of wild life and exotic places.

Not very far from here is a the highest mountain of Africa Mount Kilimanjaro. Mount Kilimanjaro is in Moshi District, the region of Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and not anywhere else. You can climb this mount only in Tanzania.

I believe, you will find a chance to visit Ngorongoro Crater and other national parks and game reserves. Hope you will enjoy seeing the climbing lions at Manyara; for this is the only place to see with your own eyes this wonder which has never been registered as among the wonders of the world.

Do please feel at home this is the land of peace and tranquility. Should you prefer to be with us for few more days after the session, we would love to let you cross to the island of spices – Zanzibar. You can fly or cruise by speedboat; I bet you will never be disappointed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered today to discuss and share amongst ourselves, the opportunities and challenges on issues concerning women and ICT. But let me first take this opportunity to explain to you what Tanzania has so far achieved and the way forward with regard to ICT before coming back to the Conference theme.

The Tanzania's National Information and Communications Technologies Policy was endorsed in March 2003. In nutshell, the aspiration of the Policy is to enhance nationwide growth and social progress by encouraging beneficial ICT activities in all sectors though providing a conducive framework for investment in capacity building and in promoting multi-layered co-operation and knowledge sharing locally as well as globally. Strategies to implement the Policy are about to be endorsed by the Government.

Despite the National ICT Policy being endorsed only recently, great strides have been achieved in terms of ICT services provision. Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have grown from 7 in 1999 to 23 in December 2003. Fixed telephone exchange capacity have grown from 11,300 during independence to about 230,000 in 2003. Mobile subscribers have grown from less than 50,000 in 1999 to about 1,280,000 subscribers in 2003. Internet services are now a common place all over Tanzania, especially in urban areas. In rural areas, Telecentres have been established to facilitate communications and especially marketing of agricultural goods.

In view of the National ICT Policy aspiration and the Millennium Development Goals, Tanzania is now planning to have ICT as an engine for development by ensuring among other things, access to ICT services to all especially women, children and the disabled.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At global level, one of the issues that are currently being critically discussed is the need of having a global Information Society that makes informed decisions. Everything will be done after having information, for example, if there is a need to do marketing of

agricultural goods, decision will be made after having information on the condition of the global market.

In view of this fact, the World Summit on the information Society (WSIS) phase 1 focused on two documents; the Plan of Action and the Declaration of Principles that would facilitate the world to attain the envisaged Information Society. These documents were endorsed in December 2003. The latter document exhorts concerted effort to make the information Society an inclusive one for all classes, types and colours of humans.

Researches suggested that despite the emerging ICT and its usage, yet a lot are at disadvantaged namely women, old, the poor and unconnected people. A lot of our telecommunications infrastructures in African countries are yet to be developed, a lot of our rural areas are not well connected, there is a lot to be desired. So there is a need to strengthen the basic telecommunication infrastructure in order to make use of ICT advantage.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As the on going World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process moves to the next stage, various interest groups are converging to strategies and come up with collective positive interventions and contributions to the final phase. It is from this background that the WSIS Gender Causes, Africa Region, my Ministry of Communications and Transport and AITEC Tanzania have organized this international conference on Women and ICT: The Road to Tunis Challenges and Opportunities here in Arusha.

The task before us is to come up with collective positive discussions interventions and recommendations, which will help us, we women to take this advantage and develop and us ICT for our benefits and for the benefit of the community at large. Our main goal is to bridge the digital divide between urban and rural and particularly women. The challenge before this Conference is how to capitalize on the fact that African women are the ones who contribute most of economic activities being carried out in this Continent and as Such, interventions should be formulated to take on board this fact. By looking through the list of participants I have no doubt we shall live up

to the task. My assurance is derived from the fact that here we have more Women than Men!

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In Tanzania we have in place the national Information and Communications Technologies Policy and we are finalizing the strategies for its implementation. We regard ICT – Policy as cross – sectoral and covers a various angles, eg. Commerce, governments, educations, tourism, health etc.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Looking at the time for this 2 day's workshop, we will have opportunity to hear from different key not speakers, the various topics on ICT eg.

(1)   Gender and ICT – a global views

(2)   Gender and ICT – an Africa perspective

(3)   Policy and Governance

(4)   Net working and Knowledge Sharing

(5)   Applications, Access and Technolodgy

(6)   ICTs Improvement of Human Rights and Democratic process

(7)   How to improve the poor through ICT access

-      The e-leaning: effective distance learning

-      Can the internet improve Woman?

-      Information Access and participation in higher education:

Opportunities and Challenges.

(8)   For the entrepreneurship in Africa. Lets hear we women entrepreneurship in Africa, in relation with information telecommunications management.

(9)   The use of information Kiosks to empower rural poor. How about Telecentres? We will have insights on strengthening gender studies for Africa's transformation.

(10) Connect and learn – A case for ICT in Health. I wish one day our Rural Heath Centres and District Hospital will be able to utilize this facilities (what they call medicine for online consulting in health for the benefit of our patients and improvement of health care services).

Though I mentioned very few topics for discussion and sharing of information: a lot are still on the list. Each of the topic has its importance in today's life. Kindly be open, have critical and constructive analysis of the topics, share your views for the benefit of us all.

Lastly, let me say some delighted to have opportunity to be with you and learn on ICT and share with you some information. I am accessible should you need me in future. You can reach me through daftarior@yahoo.com.

With those few remarks, I now declare the conference open.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and a nice stay in Arusha.

I thank you all.