



**REPORT ON INAUGURAL ICT INNOVATORS' FORUM**

**HELD ON 30<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2016**

**AT UCC CONFERENCE HALL, UCC HOUSE BUGOLOBI**

**CONVENOR: THE HONORABLE MINISTER OF ICT AND NATIONAL  
GUIDANCE, FRANK TUMWEBAZE**

**HOST & SECRETARIAT: UGANDA COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

## **1. Background**

Uganda's innovation eco-system comprises a number of players, each playing a very important roles in the promotion of innovation. However, there is limited knowledge and awareness of who these players are, what they are doing and what kind of support or contribution they are making towards innovation. The Ministry of ICT and National Guidance, in conjunction with Uganda Communications Commission, thus convened the ICT Innovators forum as an avenue for formalizing networking between various stakeholders involved in ICT innovation as well as creating a platform through which these stakeholders can interact with government in the development of an enabling environment for ICT innovation.

## **2. Welcome Remarks by Mr. Fred Otunnu (Director, Corporate Affairs-UCC)**

The Director, Corporate Affairs, UCC welcomed the innovators and thanked them for responding positively to the call to attend the forum. He mentioned that this forum will go a long way in building networks of stakeholders in the innovation ecosystem in Uganda. He called on them to participate actively in creating an environment that will promote innovation in Uganda.

## **3. Highlights from remarks by ED-UCC**

The Executive Director, UCC, Mr. Godfrey Mutabazi welcomed the Minister of ICT and National Guidance, Hon. Frank Tumwebaze to UCC and to the ICT Innovators forum. He reiterated UCC's role in promoting research and innovation in line with the Commission's mandate. He mentioned initiatives undertaken in this regard and singled out the ACIA Awards initiative that has enabled identification, and recognition of innovations countrywide and in the process groomed young Ugandans towards entrepreneurship in ICTs.

He reminded the forum of the increasingly prominent and pivotal role of ICTs as a key enabler of renewed and sustainable growth. He called for quality and dynamism of innovation in ICT to enable Uganda to compete regionally and globally. He announced that Mr. Ronald Katamba, a participant from ACIA 2015, had won a prize at the Commonwealth Telecommunication Organization contest held this year and that UCC will sponsor him to travel and receive his prize of £1000 at CTO Council meeting Fiji in September 2016.

He highlighted the challenges that are affecting innovators. These include; low up-take of innovation, as a key business driver; high mortality rate of

innovation activities, resulting in incomplete projects, and; lack of adequate finances to acquire machinery and other R&D requirements. He noted that these challenges, were however, not insurmountable. He reiterated that as industry, our different roles as regulator, policy maker, and innovators are complimentary.

#### **4. Highlights from the Hon. Minister of ICT and National Guidance Key note address**

The Minister pointed out that the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance has the mandate to promote ICTs in Uganda. In implementing this mandate, it seeks to collaborate with various stakeholders like individuals, firms, in line with government policy to promote the private sector play a leading role. He went further to explain that the purpose of the forum is three fold as below;

Objective:

1. Get to know all the players in the innovation space i.e.
  - 1) Who you are (who we are dealing with.),
  - 2) Where you are (i.e. location) and
  - 3) What you are doing.
2. Establish whether or not to create an ICT innovations stakeholder's forum to engage the Ministry of ICT in the formulation of workable policies that support innovation.
3. Discuss a framework through which government can support innovators in the growth of innovations in Uganda.

In terms of ICT Innovation support, the minister said that government pledged up UGX. 500Bn innovation fund for science and technology over the next 5 years. That currently the fund has about UGX.170 Billion for all spectrum of events in the science fund. Further that cabinet approved the request to have the ICT sector tap into this fund. That in order to realize the above, there is need to address the following key issues;

1. What innovations should government support? Is anything being tried that is worth being supported?
2. How does government identify and support the initiatives/innovators?
3. How do we grow the innovations from concept to commercialization and have them patented
4. How do we attract other partners (development partners) in the fund and specifically for ICT innovations?

#### **5. Presentations from stakeholders**

A number of presentations were made by stakeholders in the innovation space. These included,

- a) **Regulator:** Christine Mugimba; Head Strategy and Research, UCC
- b) **Innovators:** Gerald Abila -Barefoot law-, Ronald Katamba -Jaguza livestock App and Henry Damulira - Airsave
- c) **Incubation hubs-** represented by Outbox,
- d) **Statutory entity:** Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB)
- e) **Industry Player:** Huawei Technologies

Copies of the presentations are uploaded on the UCC website.

## **6. Challenges faced by Innovators and innovation hubs.**

The innovators and incubation hubs identified the following challenges;

- a) Limited access to seed funding for innovators and incubation hubs
- b) Infringement of Intellectual property rights
- c) Inadequate legal framework to support innovation
- d) Limited access to and high cost of internet
- e) High Cost of inputs that are critical to innovation e.g. USSD codes

Challenges faced by innovation hubs

- a) Limited financing to support Innovation hub operations
- b) Limited seed financing for startups
- c) Sustainability for ICT hubs

## **7. Lessons learnt**

The discussions presented a number of lessons for the participants, some of which have been highlighted below:-

- There are opportunities that exist that we are not utilizing e.g. the PSFU matching grant facility
- Many startups are collapsing due to ignorance of the law
- There is need to further partner with other stakeholders including innovation hubs in ensuring that innovations are protected.
- Innovators need to participate in as many innovation challenges as possible
- Innovators are encouraged to participate in social interactions.- you are only as valuable as your networks

- I) Innovators were advised to always follow their instincts. Passion starts first and procedure will follow along the way
- II) Innovation hubs need to position themselves in order to be known and have their services appreciated
- III) URSB informed the forum that methods of doing business can be protected only that they cannot be patented.
- IV) Presentations were made on the various benefits of IP protection and what can be protected under the various forms of IP protection.
- V) Innovators were advised that they may need to have more than one form of protection to have ensure their innovations are protected
- VI) The rights of a copy right owner and the requirements for patentability
- VII) The need for a good IP strategy to protect our innovations.
- VIII) Effective use of IP will reduce the risks faced by innovators, it enhances the competitiveness of technology based enterprises.
- IX) URSB has technology innovations support centres which provide up to date information on innovations.

### 8. Focus Group Discussion

Participants broke into 6 Focus groups and held discussions on the following issues:

<b>Thematic Area</b>	<b>Question</b>
ICT Innovation forum	a) Is it necessary for the innovators to have forum? b) If yes, Identify the representation of the forum/task force c) How often should the forum meet?
Government support to ICT Innovation in Uganda	a) What kind of support do you require from Government?

The presentations from the focus group discussions were summarized as follows:-

1. The necessity to form an ICT innovators forum, as a platform for networking; generation of new ideas, as well a link with government in the development of policies to support innovation.
2. Representation to the forum to include innovators clustered by sector, UCC, Ministry of ICT & National Guidance, NITA-U, URSB, PSFU, and Incubation hubs among others

3. The Forum shall meet regularly online and physically on a quarterly basis
4. The government should provide support in the following areas;
  - a) Capacity building that includes; mentorship, scholarships, training, certification, registration and licensing
  - b) Development of a framework to provide guidance in the innovation space
  - c) Infrastructure for incubation hubs i.e. - servers and affordable internet
  - d) An e-government platform to support the development of e-services
  - e) Timely funding for both incubation hubs and innovators,
  - f) Publicity- including sensitizations, advertising and publications of their innovations
  - g) Establishment of regional incubation hubs in areas like universities to support innovators upcountry
  - h) Decentralize decision making
  - i) Create an enabling environment that includes delayed tax payments especially VAT for ICT firms, like is done in other industries
  - j) Prioritize ICTs like has been done for infrastructure
  - k) Support the export successful innovations
  - l) Provide an Action Plan of support to the forum,
  - m) Establishment of local venture capital funds accessible by innovators

The detailed group presentations are attached as Annex II.

## **9. Remarks from Key stakeholders**

The Executive Director NFT Consultants and Board member of PSFU, Mr. Badru Ntege, advised innovators to position themselves as members of the private sector. He invited innovators to submit innovations for the matching grant facility under PSFU, where each firm can access up to 100,000 USD. He further emphasized the importance of innovators having their businesses registered and meet their taxes obligation.

Dr. Kitoogo, from NITA-U pointed out the need to focus on market for innovators. In doing this, he called for urgent need to deliberately create a market for ICT innovations, ensure that the innovations adhere to minimum standards and ensure that they are certified and accredited.

Mr. Giles Muhame, of Chimp reports spoke about the importance of marketing of the innovations. He mentioned that there is need to exploit the opportunity provided by local and international media platforms. He offered free publicity for innovators in the On-line Chimp reports publication and pledged to provide connection to their international media partners.

## **10. Conclusion and way forward**

It was noted that Uganda's future shall depend on harnessing ICTs. Uganda's Vision 2020 is achievable and that innovations shall be crucial in achieving the same. It was further noted that government through its agency NITA-U is mandated to spearhead the delivery of e-government services. Innovators are encouraged to support NITA-U, through the development of e- services.

The way forward was agreed that;

- 1) An ICT Innovation Forum based on clusters such as health, education, agriculture, transport, tourism be created
- 2) An interim committee of the Forum to comprise the following members;
  - a) Chairpersons of the six (6) Focus Group namely:-
    - Ms Nambogo Nuriat
    - Mr. Gerald Abila
    - Mr. Mugega Nassuru
    - Mr. William Owora
    - Mr. Edgar Napoleon
    - Ms Barbra Birungi
  - b) Media Representative
  - c) Representatives from all government agencies i.e. UCC, MoICT, NITA-U, URSB, PSFU and URA
  - d) UCC shall host the secretariat and coordinate the activities
- 3) In addition to its coordination role, UCC undertake the following roles;
  - a) Create a platform to mobilize resources from government and other partners e.g. PSFU, development partners etc
  - b) Coordinate the development of a framework in conjunction with the taskforce
  - c) Under the framework, create a multi-stakeholder technical committee to select/identify areas for support
  - d) To notify innovators and other stakeholders of the date of next forum
- 4) The Key roles of the interim committee should include among others;
  - a) Develop the governance structure of the innovation forum

- b) Contribute to development of framework for support i.e. physical and financial including the criteria on accessibility of this forum
  - c) Discuss the issue of infrastructure for public Incubation hubs e.g. UICT, land in Entebbe and UBC land among others
- 5) Policy to include;
- a) Identification of common areas of support such as public Incubation hubs to begin with a pilot in Kampala and with the goal of replication countrywide.
  - b) Promotion of the forum to key stakeholders in government and development partners among others.
  - c) Adherence with the Preference and Reservation schemes under PPDA law to ring fence procurement of local content for ICT supplies and products.

Further comments on focus group discussions can be sent to [research@ucc.co.ug](mailto:research@ucc.co.ug)

**Secretariat**



**Annex 1: PROPOSED PROGRAM FOR INNOVATION FORUM AT UCC  
CONFERENCE HALL, UCC HOUSE BUGOLOBI**

**DATE: 30<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2016**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>FACILITATOR</b>
10.00am - 10.30am	Arrival and Registration of Participants	UCC Team
10.30am-11.00am	Networking	All Participants
11.00am-11.15am	Arrival of Hon. Minister of ICT and National Guidance	UCC
11.15am -11.20am	Opening remarks	DCA
11.20am- 11.25am	Welcome Remarks	ED-UCC
11.25PM-11.30PM	Remarks by Hon. Minister	Hon. Minister of ICT & National Guidance
11.30am-11.45am	Presentation on Innovation Support by ICT sector <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UCC</li> </ul>	Head Strategy and Research/UCC
11.45am – 12.15pm	Sharing of experiences by innovators; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barefoot law</li> <li>• Jaguza Livestock App</li> <li>• Airsave Uganda</li> </ul>	Gerald Abila Ronald Katamba Henry Damulira
12.15am- 12.30am	Presentation by Incubation Hubs	Outbox
12.30pm-12.40pm	Presentation by URSB	URSB Team
12.40pm-1.00pm	Presentation by Huawei Technologies	Huawei Technologies
<b>1.00PM – 2.30pm</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	
2.30pm – 3.30pm	Focus Group Discussion	DCA
3.30pm -3.45pm	Way Forward	Secretariat/ DCA
4.00pm	Departure	

**Annex II (a) : Summary of Group Presentations (Group 1 to 3)**

	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>
ICT Innovation forum	<p>a) Is it necessary for the innovators to have forum?</p> <p>b) If yes, Identify the representation of the forum/task force</p> <p>c) How often should the forum meet?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Cluster innovators by sectors e.g. health, agriculture, finance, etc. have representation from Ministry, UCC, etc</p> <p>Appoint leadership</p> <p>Quarterly (physical) but more frequently online</p>	<p>Yes- a lobby tool, advocacy, networking, identifying new ideas and a mentorship platform</p> <p>Chair, Vice Chairperson, Coordinator agency- both sectoral and UCC, a treasure</p> <p>Quarterly (physical) but more frequently online</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Monthly</p>
Government support to ICT Innovation in Uganda	<p>b) What kind of support do you require from Government?</p>	<p>Mentorship, affordable internet, capacity building (due to teams drawn from different areas)</p>	<p>Framework for guiding innovators, Funding- timely, Infrastructure, Sensitization, e-government platform, infrastructure- server and internet, Publicity- advertising and publications</p> <p>Regional incubation hubs</p>	<p>Innovation space free to innovators</p> <p>Equipment for innovators e.g. GPS based systems</p> <p>Dedicated funding to innovations</p> <p>Regional incubation hubs</p>

			Decentralize decision making Scholarships Enabling environment Prioritizing ICTs like has been done for infrastructure	
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**Annex II (b) : Summary of Group Presentations (Group 4 to 6)**

Thematic Area	Question	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6
ICT Innovation forum	<p>a) Is it necessary for the innovators to have forum?</p> <p>b) If yes, Identify the representation of the forum/task force</p> <p>c) How often should the forum meet?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Sector based, innovation hubs, academia, MNCs, Devt Partners, Media</p> <p>Monthly but more regularly online</p>	<p>Yes- already existing forum but need to investigate the roles of these existing forum</p> <p>Sector clusters, create a taskforce to govern the forum.</p> <p>Establish a digital forum which can be active. But physical meetings every 6 months</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>PSFU, Innovators, UCC, NITA, Telcos, Academia</p> <p>Meet monthly but themed</p>
Government support to ICT Innovation in Uganda	<p>c) What kind of support do you require from Government?</p>	<p>Infrastructure, licensing, financing, support to hubs, support to export successful innovations, e-services, tax holidays especially for VAT</p>	<p>Need for a government action plan to support the forum,</p> <p>Training, Certification, mentorship,</p>	<p>Phased funding support based on results</p>

