

**Your Excellency Ato Debretsion G/Mikael**  
**Minister of Communication and Information technology,**

**Invited guests,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the launch of ICT Association - Ethiopia (ICT-ET).

I would like to extend my thanks to you all for joining us to officially launch this exciting initiative today.

We at the association are also excited that this event is held along side our first “*Technology Innovation Series*” in collaboration with Google.

I am sure many of you would agree with me that Google not only have the world’s best search engine but also the world’s largest and most scalable platform for developing huge web-based applications.

As some of you may be aware, Google held a BarCamp here in Addis back in September 2010, we are pleased to have them here once again and this time collaborating with the ICT-ET and for also sponsoring this important and timely event.

The outline of Google’s programme today indicates that your deliberations will cover a number of major themes including:

- Google's Tools for Business & Government
- The power of Search & Trends
- Mobile Development            Etcetera....

Your deliberations, I am sure, will encourage the acquisition of new skills, a heightened awareness of ICT as an enabler of national and regional development, and the strengthening of approaches to using ICT to enable economic ventures.

**Your Excellency, Invited Guests and Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This is indeed an historic occasion for us, as a newly formed association and for many who have shared this vision that finally is being realized at this very moment, and particularly those that have applied their shoulders to wheel of this exciting initiative since its inception.

Today, we acknowledge your efforts and thank you for your tireless work and unflinching commitment.

This important event comes at a crucial time, where Ethiopia has been actively engaged in using ICT as an enabler for development, good governance and trying to integrate technology into every sector.

It has been abundantly clear that information and communication technologies have drastically changed the way individuals, organizations, and enterprises think and do business. That why, the Private Sector considers ICT as a tool in its efforts to transform our society.

One of the ideas that unites the ICT industry is the fundamental belief that the tools and the services that we develop and produce can significantly improve the competitiveness of Ethiopian companies; but, also enhance the quality of life in our communities, and by extension our country.

Our newly formed association will be focusing on business issues that not only impact our industry, but by extension the wider Ethiopian economy. We plan to use our association to improve policy, focus attention on productivity and to work with private and public organizations to stimulate dialogue on ICT's future in our country.

**Your Excellency, Invited Guests & Ladies and Gentlemen,**

During an earlier stage of the social development of several countries, a transition was made from an agricultural economy to an industrial one.

But if have to wait for all countries to pass through the same process of development, we in Ethiopia as a developing country, would never close the gap. However, ICT will help us jump the development process, by moving directly to a globally-connected, information-driven, knowledge-based society.

It provides us with the opportunity to build a more just and equitable information society, in which our country, even with disadvantages such as the lack of industrialization, for the first time have a real chance to catch up with the developed world.

The Government and the Private Sector in the Ethiopia have begun recognizing the above fact and true value of ICT as a central theme in national development policies. Government measures aimed at improving the ICT infrastructure, encouraging the establishment of a computer assembly, reducing tax/duty rates, and issuing effective laws and regulations to protect the industry from sub-standard services could be considered to improve access and foster a sustainable growth of the industry.

ICT-ET considers the role of the private sector in promoting Ethiopian information society and the role of the government in facilitating efforts of the private sector by creating enabling policy and regulatory frameworks.

In recognition of the role of ICT in expediting development and transforming the society, the Ethiopian government has recently established the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology to expand on the already existing and embark upon new, large and exciting projects.

The establishment of the new Ministry is expected to promote the growth of the ICT Sector.

It is widely believed that, for developing countries like Ethiopia to emerge strong and competitive in the international arena and the way out of the present poverty in the shortest possible time is by using ICT as a tool.

This by itself should be sufficient enough to motivate us to contribute to the national vision for ICT development in Ethiopia so that every aspect of Ethiopian life is ICT assisted.

Nevertheless, using ICT also raises a number of issues, especially in light of the pressing problems faced by developing countries.

Lack of access to ICT has exacerbated the problem by adding yet another layer of inequality to the already existing gaps. ICT should be used as a tool, rather than an end in itself. Its wider introduction could result in a change from traditional methods and thoughts to completely new thoughts and methods, hence transforming the society into a future-oriented one.

Establishing an informed society and a knowledge-based economy is the only way to address the present challenges. In a context, where extensive needs must be addressed with very limited resource, ICTs have to be used in a strategic manner, as it saves a lot of time and all other resources.

We in the private sector, particularly in the ICT industry also recognize ICT as a powerful weapon that can effectively accelerate development initiatives and make them sustainable in many ways.

And as an association:

- We will **promote** a policy environment that will enable our industry to grow, make Ethiopia more competitive and help Ethiopians become world-leading users of technology.
- We will **promote** better use of ICT by business, government and public services to achieve world-leading performance.
- We will **offer** a wide range of networking opportunities that foster business and professional development for our members.
- We will **provide** an effective two-way channel of communication between policy makers and the ICT industry.

**Your Excellency, Invited Guests & Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Indeed, ICT-ET, in collaboration with others has already commenced an ambitious programme to explore the potential that ICT's possess for dramatically transforming and significantly improving the lives of all in our nation. We are entirely focused on ICT and represent a broad range of ICT enterprises.

As we work hard to be the trusted and authoritative voice of our industry, our mission is to promote and enhance the unique contribution ICT can make to Ethiopia's economy and society.

If your business is providing telecommunications, computing or software products or services, electronic content or broadcasting, consider adding your company's name to the growing list of ICT-ET members. We also welcome other firms with professional practices aimed at the IT industry to participate as associate members.

**In closing, I wish you a fruitful and productive day. I thank you!**

I now call upon Ato Debretsion G/Mikael Minister of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology