

**OPENING REMARKS BY MR. RAPHAEL MOLLEL, SENIOR PERMANENT
SECRETARY, VICE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, TO THE MKUKUTA
COMMUNICATION STRATEGY STAKEHOLDERS' MEETING, 1 JUNE 2005,
DAR ES SALAAM INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CENTRE**

The Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP

Members of the PRS Technical Committee,

Members of the PRS Secretariat,

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me at the outset to thank you for giving me the opportunity to officiate the opening of this one-day meeting at which you intend to explore how communication can be used as a tool of supporting and scaling up poverty reduction efforts in Tanzania. It therefore gives me great pleasure to observe that the crux of your discussions today will centre on the implementation of the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP), also known in Kiswahili as Mkakati wa Kukuza Uchumi na Kuondoa Umaskini Tanzania (MKUKUTA).

As you may be aware, the MKUKUTA was approved by cabinet in February this year as a second national organizing framework for putting the focus on poverty reduction, high on the country's development agenda. It represents a new, more

comprehensive approach to poverty reduction and builds on the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) of 2000, which was linked to debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative (HIPC).

The MKUKUTA seeks to deepen ownership and inclusion in policy formulation by recognizing the need to make participation more institutionalized rather than a one-off event. In implementing the strategy, every stakeholder is seen as active agent in fighting poverty in their own life, family, community or village.

At the heart of the strategy is the principle of ownership. As the government has repeatedly demonstrated, unless there is a genuine process of ownership and real participation and dialogue with all sections of society, development strategies will not meet their desired objectives.

It was for this reason the consultation process for the MKUKUTA which ended with the Poverty Policy Week of 2004 sought to deepen participation and ownership by actors at levels of Government, the citizenry – poor and non-poor, the civil society, community entities and development partners. Through workshops, seminars, radio programmes, TV broadcasts, fliers, interviews and music, strong effort was made to incorporate the views of all the public including the aged, children, youth, women, persons with disabilities, persons living with HIV/AIDS, widows, orphans, private sector, trade unions and informal sector.

Building on these successes requires as the MKUKUTA postulates a major focus on communication. We all know that communication is a two-way process. In this regard, the Government together with stakeholders prepared a Communication Strategy to provide a framework for communicating key messages around the MKUKUTA. **The strategy intends to ensure that there is a two way communication on the MKUKUTA to promote public dialogue, leading to a better understanding, and effective participation in all phases of its implementation.** As it was noted by the President of the United Republic of Tanzania, His Excellency Benjamin Mkapa, in his key note address on improving public communication, and I quote *“Good governance is participatory, not only indirectly through elected representatives, but also directly, on a regular basis, giving voice to even the most vulnerable and excluded segments of society. But effective participation is informed participation, which is not possible without improved government communication on the one hand and free but responsible, accountable and professional media on the other hand”.*

The communication strategy will be operationalised through an annual work plan, which will chart out the direction for the development and pre-testing materials, liaison with mass media organizations to develop a media plan, liaison with organizations with large scale outreach networks, and developing a capacity building component.

The Government will consider outsourcing some of the communication activities to well-placed institutions, as it will be determined from time to time. While the

Vice President's Office will work through communication and information officers of all sector ministries and from other key actors in operationalising the communication strategy, there will be a menu of thematic windows from which stakeholders proposing innovative communication programmes can access small support grants. These grants will aim at empowering stakeholders to undertake innovative communication approaches that best apply to their contexts.

Chairperson, the government is committed to opening up and maintaining channels of communication with stakeholders. Indeed, dialogue with the citizens and development partners has been an important catalyst in Tanzania's economic reform process. The dialogue has continued to inform debates on economic issues, indirectly contributing to the evolution of homegrown programmes.

Certainly, we all remember the communication campaigns, which were launched in this country during the 70's. **The 1973 health campaign, Man is Health, and the 1975 nutrition campaign, Food Is Life both used a blend of mass communication techniques to enlist participation and urge for action.** Basic elements included radio broadcasts, songs written especially for the campaigns and speeches calling for full participation. Additional promotion materials included posters, press releases, and T-shirts and dresses bearing the campaign logos.

While taking vital lessons from these useful past experiences, there are several challenges facing our mission as stakeholders in poverty reduction. We need:

- To create an atmosphere and develop mechanisms for a two way flow of information
- To understand Government provides leadership, but it has no monopoly of thought, and must be open to new ideas. Only a truly open and accountable government can command the people's support for economic and political reforms and the people's confidence in the institutions and processes of governance
- To provide time and personnel in communication initiatives including participatory research, monitoring and evaluation
- To train communication professionals at all levels, with a focus on participatory approaches

Chairperson, the preparation of any Communication Strategy is an involving process that requires adequate consultation with the 'communication community' including owners of different media channels, analysis of the audience, their location, their interaction with media and development of key messages.

As we consider these matters, we need to place emphasis on implementation rather than merely debating on general principles. I would therefore expect that stakeholders take full ownership of this strategy.

In conclusion, I am very aware of the enormity of the tasks and the importance of the challenges confronting this meeting.

With those few remarks I would like to declare this meeting now officially open.

Thank you for your attention.