REMARKS BY DR JANE KERE IMBUNYA, PhD, PRINCIPAL SECRETARY, STATE DEPARTMENT FOR PUBLIC SERVICE, DURING THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE KENYA ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT (KAPAM) SYMPOSIUM HELD AT KSG, MOMBASA ON TUESDAY, 6TH MAY,2025.

- **The Chief Guest, Deputy Head of Public Service, Mr. Amos Gathecha**

- **Colleague Principal Secretary, State Department for ICT and the Digital Economy, Eng. John Tanui**

- **Director General Kenya School of Government Prof. Nura Mohamed**

- **Secretary General of the African Association for Public Administration and Management Prof. George Scott**

- **Distinguished Guests,**

- **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Today, we convene to highlight a transformative agenda: ***"Smart Governance – How Artificial Intelligence (AI) is reshaping public administration."*** This marks a paradigm shift toward leveraging technology, innovation and citizen-centric approaches to enhance service delivery across the public sector. As you are aware, one of the key pillars of the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA) is the Digital Superhighway and the Creative Economy. The theme of this symposium, therefore, resonates with the core priorities of the current administration and reinforces our commitment to building a digitally empowered and inclusive public service.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In an era of rapid digital transformation, citizens demand efficiency, transparency and accessibility in service delivery. The traditional bureaucratic models must evolve in view of the growing population needs, limited resources and accountability gaps that erode public trust in government institutions. By embracing **Smart Governance**, we align not only with **Kenya's Vision 2030** and the **Digital Economy Blueprint**, but also with global benchmarks such as the **United Nations E-Government**

Development Index (EGDI), the **OECD Digital Government Framework**, the **World Bank's GovTech Maturity Index**, and the **African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy (2020–2030)**. These frameworks emphasize digital innovation, data-driven decision-making and inclusive governance as essential components for modern public administration.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Smart Governance is anchored on digital transformation which revolves on automation of services to reduce bureaucracy, data-driven decision-making through AI and analytics for proactive policy interventions. It aims at strengthening citizen-centric services by ensuring services reach marginalized communities via mobile platforms, leveraging crowdsourcing and feedback mechanisms to involve citizens in governance, service delivery such as healthcare (diagnostics), agriculture (smart farming), and urban planning. Nevertheless, it is important that proper safeguards must be in place to establish an accountability framework to prevent bias and misuse.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is reshaping economies, societies and governance. As custodians of public service administration, we must

ask: How do we future-proof our institutions to harness this revolution for the benefit of all Kenyans? The public service must, therefore, remain relevant, agile and transformative in this era of AI, automation, and exponential technological change.

AI offers significant opportunities for advancing Smart Governance. Key among them include enhanced efficiency through the automation of repetitive tasks, improved decision-making via predictive analytics for proactive service delivery, and greater inclusivity by bridging access gaps through mobile platforms. Despite the benefits and opportunities, AI presents significant challenges in the context of Smart Governance. These include the disruption of traditional jobs thus necessitating the upskilling and reskilling of public servants, heightened citizen expectations for real-time, personalized services and increased cybersecurity threats and ethical concerns related to digital governance. Nevertheless, these challenges should not deter adoption instead, they call for strategic, responsible and inclusive approaches that enable governments to harness the full potential of AI while safeguarding public trust.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A future-ready public service must prioritize attracting tech-savvy talent and reskilling the existing workforce. This requires strategic partnerships with training institutions and the private sector to drive innovation within government. Central to this vision is a comprehensive approach to digital literacy, aiming to equip 100% of public servants with foundational knowledge in AI, data literacy, and cybersecurity by 2030. To realize this vision, the development of smart infrastructure is essential to achieving a paperless government through end-to-end digitization of workflows. Such infrastructure will enable seamless data sharing across government agencies, eliminate redundancies (e.g. single widow clearance, single citizen database) and ultimately support the effective implementation of the government's strategic agenda.

As I conclude, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to highlight one of the landmark initiatives undertaken by the Government to advance smart governance, the **e-Citizen platform**. Currently offering over 20,000 services and serving nearly 14 million clients online annually, the platform has significantly enhanced service accessibility while reducing opportunities

for corruption by minimizing human interface. The government's clarion call is to champion public service innovation, foster public-private partnerships for the prototyping of smart governance solutions and promote citizen co-creation ultimately building a public service that is not only adaptive but also anticipatory.

Allow me to conclude with the timeless words of **Abraham Lincoln: *"The best way to predict the future is to create it."*** These words serve as a powerful reminder of our collective responsibility to shape a forward-looking, innovative, and citizen-centered public service.

Thank you and God Bless You.