

**KEY NOTE ADDRESS BY THE HON. MINISTER OF WORKS AND
TRANSPORT AT THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
MEETING HOSTED BY COST UGANDA AT GOLF COURSE HOTEL,
KAMPALA ON 26 JULY 2017**

Hon. Ministers

Permanent Secretaries

Engineer-in-Chief, MoWT

Ambassadors and Heads of Delegations

Heads of Government Departments and Agencies

Senior Government Officials

Members of CoST MSG Uganda

Members from the Private Sector and Civil Society

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to officiate at the dissemination of the Scoping Study findings on public infrastructure projects based on the CoST Infrastructure Data Standard (IDS) and the presentation of preliminary findings from the 1st Assurance Process conducted on five projects from three Procurement Entities – UNRA, KCCA and Wakiso District.

Uganda is one of the countries that embraced CoST – an Infrastructure Transparency Initiative and has since 2014 been implementing activities to promote the same. In February 2017, I committed my Ministry to champion the implementation of CoST core features of “Disclosure, Assurance and Multi-Stakeholder working”. I am glad to be here once again to officiate at the launch of the first of its kind – the Scoping Study Report, as well as the

preliminary findings from the First Assurance Process conducted on five projects.

CoST increases transparency by disclosing, validating and interpreting infrastructure data to empower stakeholders to hold decision-makers to account. This is realized by disclosing to the public, 'Project Information' at all stages of the construction project cycle, from the initial identification of the project to its final completion.

Transparency and accountability are central issues in public procurement and project implementation, and should be cherished by all. Transparency is the relationship between three rights; the right to access to information, the right to participate in decision making and the right to making appropriate recommendations. Accountability on the other hand calls for enhanced value for money of publicly contracted projects for the benefit of the Government and citizens. Information on publicly contracted projects, and a space to engage should be available to all members of the society for them to understand the consequences and benefits of infrastructure projects operations and get involved in decision making.

Uganda's Vision 2040 puts emphasis on expanding and improving the quantity and quality of infrastructure in the areas of transport, energy, tourism, health, education and agriculture, among others. There is no doubt that over the past few years, my Ministry and other agencies have through upgrading of roads, new hydroelectric power dams and other investments laid a strong foundation to pursue this goal. This success, however, is not reason for us to sit on our laurels. H.E. the President has many times complained that citizens do not know the work Government is doing despite

the tremendous efforts. This has led many people to believe Government is not working.

I am delighted that the Scoping Study reveals that Uganda has an enabling environment for implementation of CoST approaches through various efforts to enhance information dissemination at various levels, but the study points out key issues such as need for policy enhancement on data capacity, lack of judicial appeal mechanisms, negative attitude of public officials towards information seekers, ignorance about the law, poor information storage and retrieval systems, limited civic engagement and inadequate financing to the sector especially the Local Governments.

The Assurance Process reveals that the level of disclosure on public projects is growing but there is limited compliance to policy provisions. However, the studies give us a recipe for change, the use of IDS to counter challenges of information disclosure, validation, simplification and engagement. The Scoping Study findings indicate that KCCA disclosed 47% of the total items, followed by PPDA (45%) and only 18% was disclosed by Ministry of Education and 26% by Ministry of Health. Of the 12 data items legally required to be disclosed, findings indicated that PPDA disclosed 67%, KCCA (58%) and UNRA (50%). The least legal disclosure came from Ministry of Education (33%), Ministry of Local Government (33%) and Ministry of Health (42%).

I am optimistic that the Procurement Entities, technocrats and policy makers will take with keen interest in the recommendations of the Study, including committing to disclosure of construction and infrastructure data at all stages, and creating awareness among public officers, citizens, and private sector,

as well as the media on the benefits of harmonized approach for disclosure of infrastructure information. It is important that CoST and other NGOs are recognized in the legal framework to enable its full implementation and adoption of the IDS.

Though we have registered great achievements, we have to look continuously for a way to improve our work. We cannot deny that there are challenges that undermine our otherwise positive results. Problems like low absorption of funds, delayed payments and overspending budgets are common. Public entities also have to face citizens' opinions regarding regular scandals of public funds mismanagement. At some point, these challenges become the bigger part of the information medialized regarding our work.

I therefore commit the Ministry of Works and Transport to champion the adoption of the Infrastructure Data Standard and hereby implore all Ministries, Agencies, Departments, policy makers present, the Private Sector, Media, Civil Society and Development Partners to embrace CoST and popularise the use of the IDS in implementing infrastructure projects.

Our neighboring countries already embraced the initiative. In Ethiopia, the CoST initiative persuaded their Government to revise the country public procurement regulations to include the majority of the CoST disclosure requirements in a procurement proclamation and directives. The procuring entities all publicly stated that valuable lessons were learnt from the process, which they aim to integrate into reformed governance procurement practice. A concrete impact of the collaboration between Government and CoST was the re-design of a rural road in Southern Ethiopia saving \$3.7 million. The

Ethiopian Government has also committed to CoST with its inclusion in the National Growth and Transformation Plan and the Roads Sector Development Plan.

In Tanzania, lessons learnt from this initiative have been incorporated in the 2011 amendments to the Public Procurement Act 2004 on recommendations from the CoST. In Malawi, CoST Chapter has also been working with Government representatives to aid the incorporation of CoST principles and standards into public legislation. On 16 November 2015, Parliament discussed reforming the Public Procurement Act, including approval for a Formal Disclosure Requirement (FDR).

We have all seen the value of CoST in the construction sector especially in enhancing disclosure, validation, quality assurance, monitoring and encouraging citizens' participation in public infrastructure projects using an internationally acceptable data standard – the IDS. We recognise the fact that most of our projects are externally funded and the need to comply with international standards is very key. But we also acknowledge that lack of public awareness and participation in Government programmes is of concern and needs to be addressed. Our Constitution in Articles 41 and 38 respectively, guarantee the right of citizens to information and to participate in Government programmes. In 2005, Parliament passed the Access to Information Act to empower peoples' ability to access information held by Government agencies to empower their participation in public policy.

I thank the Procurement Entities that have embraced CoST by availing information to inform the Scoping Study and Assurance Process. There is still a lot to achieve regarding public infrastructure in our country, and we

need every good will to reach a satisfactory level. Also, I understand that this initiative is a multi-stakeholder platform, including Government bodies – Directorate of Ethics and Integrity, Office of the Prime Minister and UNRA. This means that this initiative is as much for the Government as it is for the private sector and the civil society. Then let the public institutions involved in the construction sector occupy our rightful place and participate in CoST.

I further re-assure the Multi-Stakeholder Group of CoST and appreciate the CoST International Secretariat that my Ministry shall support this initiative across all Procurement Entities as well as ensure that a Formal Disclosure Requirement for Uganda to enable implementation of CoST is achieved.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for attending this meeting and for listening to me. I have no doubt that the information shared at the meeting will go along way to improve the planning, design and implementation of public infrastructure projects in Uganda.

It is now my honor to launch the Scoping Study Findings and receive the recommendations to inform our policy framework.

I thank you all, once again.

PRESENTED ON BEHALF OF
THE HON. MINISTER OF WORKS AND TRANSPORT

[Signature]
26/07/2012