

INNOVATION IS NOT ONLY ABOUT IT AND TECHNOLOGY

The 2017 Nairobi innovation week has attracted various stakeholders among them Ambassadors from Finland, Israel and South Korea. In a panel discussion held at UON Towers on Thursday 9th March 2017, Finland Ambassador H.E Ambassador Tarja Fernandez noted that innovation is not only about IT, IT solutions and technology; but it's about how we do things. It is also how we organize our society. "in Kenya you know the problems in your community and you can look for ways on how best to solve this solutions" she said. The Ambassador gave an example of Finland which a decade ago was experiencing a high rate of Infant death mortality but the government was able to come up with measures of taking care of pregnant and nursing mothers and this drastically reduced the numbers of infant mortality. In fact Finland's infant mortality is one of the lowest in the world. Tarja also noted that the governments need invest heavily on people, resources and technology; the innovation week is a way of creating partnerships and the role of entrepreneurship and startups is important because they are the driving force in economies and also new jobs.

On his part Israel Ambassador Yahel Vilan noted that innovation is a good way to look for solutions and bridge the gap. 'Every country has enough people with innovative minds and ideas and the government just needs to turn these ideas into economic good'. Israel is a country of immigrants and this aspect has contributed to its innovative experiences. He also noted that there is no one solution to problems it's not cut and paste-what worked for Israel may not necessarily work for Kenya. He urged the Kenyan government to create an environment for others to come and invest and to create a friendly environment for investors. Israel has a tax waiver policy for all new investors for a certain period of time.

South Korea Ambassador, Kwon Yound-Dae emphasized on the importance of technological agriculture. He noted that most countries that rely heavily on agriculture are usually nervous about technological agriculture in the aspect of loss of jobs; in actual sense, it will not lender people jobless instead farmers will get more yields hence more work which translates to hiring more people. He also noted that e-Government was the driving force behind Korea's rapid development. Korea invested 1% of its national budget in e-government and through this it was able to realize a convenient, transparent and efficient government faster than any other country around the world.

The 2017 Nairobi Innovation Week runs from 6th March – 10th March. The theme for this year is "Innovating to solve pressing local and global Challenges"