

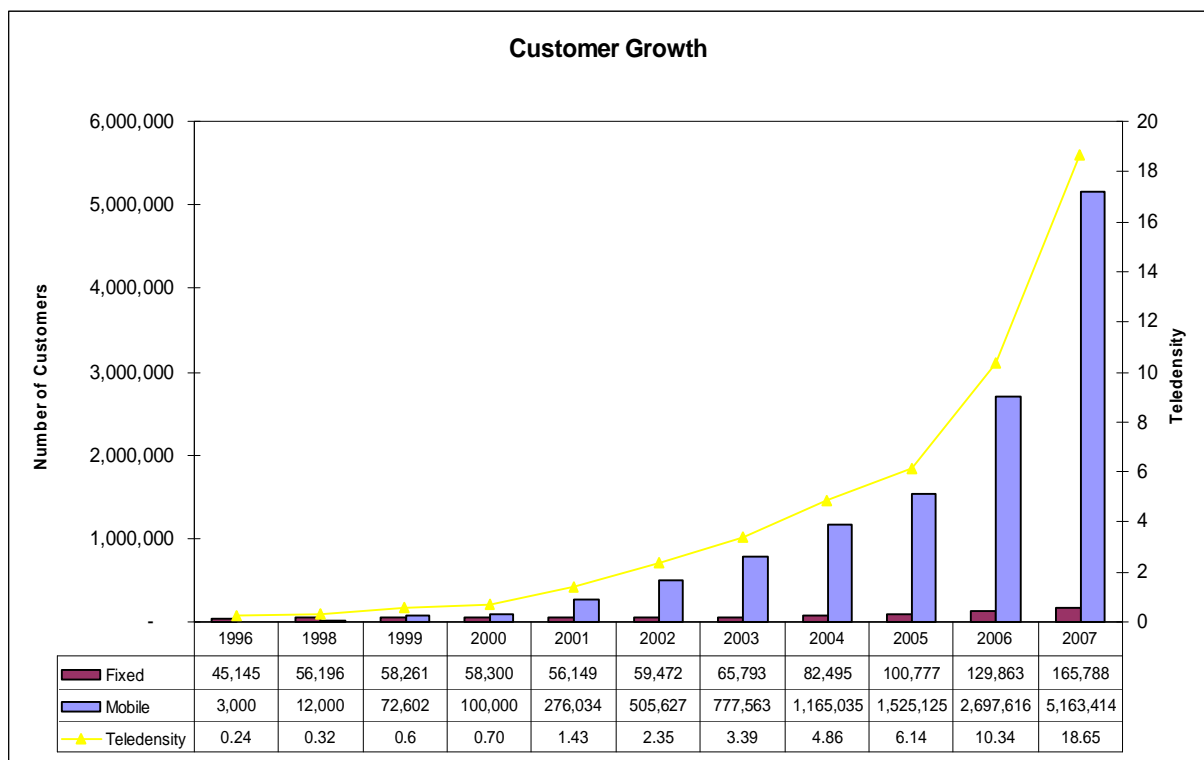
MESSAGE OF THE MINISTER FOR INFORMATION
AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY, RD HAM-
MUKASA MULIRA

As we celebrate the 143rd World Telecommunications and Information Society Day (WTISD), we would like to express my sincere thanks to all those who have tirelessly contributed to the steady development of the Ugandan Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Sector, especially the private sector, the general public and of course the Government of Uganda. The theme of this year is **“Connecting Persons with Disabilities: ICT Opportunities for All”**. The theme serves as a reminder of the noble causes and as a benchmark of the activities that we must do to facilitate more and more citizens of Uganda to communicate especially those with disabilities.

As we celebrate, I would like to remind you of the communication sector reforms which we embarked in 1996. It is these reforms that make today's celebrations meaningful in that they enabled us among other things to put in place the communications programmes and infrastructure we have to-day. We restructured and liberalised the telecommunication sector by licensing several operators. We have gone further and opened the sector entirely in terms of infrastructure and service provision. The results so far have been overwhelming, especially in the provision of basic communication services as shown in Table 1. The total number of telephone lines has tremendously increased in the country, the regional distribution of communication services has improved and their charges have drastically reduced. Several value-added services have also been licensed and introduced, including the Internet service provision.

However, we still face a challenge of introducing in the country the Internet-based services, especially in the rural areas where the majority of our people live including the disabled ones. In this regard, government through the Uganda Communication Commission has embarked on a very ambitious Rural Communication Development programme, which will provide basic telephony, internet cafes, Internet Points of Presence, ICT training and content creation in various rural parts of the country.

Table 1: Market Response to Liberalization



To support these efforts, Government has embarked on a National Transmission Backbone and E-Government Infrastructure (NGI/EGI) project, whose scope is shown in Table 2. This Backbone is to ensure that high bandwidth data connection is available in all major towns of Uganda at a reasonable rate. The E-government Network Infrastructure shall reduce the cost of doing business in government improving communications between government agencies, and reducing the need for officials to commute for meeting and, thus, increasing efficiency.

implementation of the National ICT policy objectives and strategies namely through promotion of:

- On-going infrastructure network rollout by both Government and Service Providers;
- Regulatory initiatives to reduce cost of access to ICT facilities;
- ICT capacities through training, management and maintenance;
- ICT awareness and content creation;
- ICT use in e-government, e-education and e-health services at national and local levels;
- Efficiently make use of a domestic Internet Exchange Point for Uganda to:
reduce congestion on international traffic routes, which should result in better utilisation of the international internet capacity and improved quality of service; and
- Optional utilisation of ICT infrastructure, which should help leverage faster

development of ICTs in Uganda.

Finally, we wish all Ugandans a successful World Telecommunications and Information Society Day and we look forward to a day when the majority of Ugandans, including the disabled ones, will get connected with both a telephone line and an Internet link.