

# **An Effective E-Governance Framework: The Key to Enhanced E-Government Services**

**Authored by**



**Central Information Technology Office**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Jamaica has recorded successes in the deployment of e-government services. We are the leader in the Caribbean, in this area. Our operationalised e-government initiatives span several entities: Customs, NLA, ORC, RGD, MIND, and Inland Revenue. The GoJ is nevertheless committed to advanced service delivery by establishing multi-agency transactions that will be seamlessly delivered to the citizen via a single touch-point.

This goal can only be achieved by building “joined-up” government within the context of a clear and effective ICT governance framework. The technology requirements cut across all government organizations, businesses and civil society, therefore, it is necessary to ensure a shared vision, and a well coordinated national agenda, to fully exploit the potential of ICT.

CITO is working with the Government of Canada, to develop this e-governance framework. The strategic objective of the project is to simplify e-governance for all stakeholders, resulting in a truly modernized public sector, and enhanced service delivery for the citizenry.

# **An Effective E-Governance Framework: The Key to Enhanced E-Government Services**

## **Background**

The increasing pressure and demand from the citizens of Jamaica who have been exposed to e-government services, both locally and overseas is creating an environment for new and exciting developments, as the supply side of the value-chain—the government of the land—has been, and is continuing to make significant strides to improve service delivery to its stakeholders. Though the Government of Jamaica has been successful in deploying e-government and e-payment systems that have radically changed the landscape of government service offerings, a paradigm shift is occurring. All the e-government services that have been deployed thus far, are essentially silo-based services—built within a particular agency and offered to its customers and stakeholders. However, expectations have risen. The new paradigm is demanding new levels of connectivity between government entities, that have hitherto, not been available. Citizens are asking for “ME” oriented services (not “YOU” Convenient). These are services that will be focused on the customer, being citizen-centric in nature. They will offer a truly single touch-point experience, in which the behind-the-scenes operations are fully integrated and online, and must be highly secure and robust. Such services can only be built on a platform of joined-up government that is enabled through an effective e-governance framework—the main subject of this paper. Let us first review what Jamaica has accomplished in the arena of e-government services. Then we shall look to the fast approaching horizon and seek to articulate what the near future holds.

## **E-Government Services**

Jamaica is the envy of the English speaking Caribbean in terms of its leadership position in the deployment of successful e-government services. Our operationalised e-government initiatives include:

- Jamaica Customs
- Inland Revenue Tax Payment
- Office of the Registrar of Companies (ORC)
- National Land Agency e-Land (NLA)
- Registrar General's Department (RGD)
- Management Institute for National Development (MIND)
- Trade Facilitation Services

**The Jamaica Customs e-Payment** system launched July 2003, facilitates online import duty payments by brokers and importers, and checking of entry status; speeding up processing time for import transactions and improving the efficiency of tax administration and ease of compliance with tax requirements. The Jamaica Customs system is processing online import transactions at the rate of over 5,000 per week and e-payment of import duties up to J\$5 million per transaction. The deployment of this e-government service has resulted in radical efficiency gains. Turnaround time for processing a C-78 entry used to be seven to eight days before Jamaica Customs went online. Now, they can do it in two hours! Ease of compliance due to a vastly improved service, and increased detection of under-valued goods or contra-band through an electronic cargo tracking intelligence system (embedded in the Customs e-government implementation) have resulted in increased revenue for the Customs Department. Revenues have increased from US\$200 to \$400 million since the e-payment system was launched two years ago.

**The Inland Revenue Tax Payment Portal** launched December 2004, makes possible the payment of twelve (12) simple taxes online that effectively need only the TRN (Tax Payer Registration Number) and

payment amount in order to successfully process the transaction. The tax types available for e-payment include land tax, traffic tickets, and vehicle fitness certificate fee. The demand for the service is steadily growing. Over 2,000 registrations have occurred in the first six months of deployment.

**The Office of the Registrar of Companies'** e-government service offers subscriber based online access to forms for registration of company related information and payment of fees. Online transactions are being conducted at a rate of 1000 per month. The types of activities that can now be handled online include registration or reservation of business names, particulars of directors, searches for registered addresses and images of all company related documents. To date some 1300 subscribers have signed on to the system. As a direct result of the deployment of this e-government service the ORC has also realized significant gains in turnaround time of its services.

**The National Land Agency** has also deployed a subscriber based e-government service called **e-Land Jamaica**. This facility allows users to view and print documents such as certificates of title, and strata and deposit plans. Other e-government services that have been deployed in Jamaica include those of the Registrar General's Department and the Management Institute for National Development. **RGD's e-government service** allows online applications for various certificates. **MIND's online offerings**, which were launched November 2003, deliver e-learning solutions. MIND offers a fully online degree programme containing 18 course modules, with over 60 students enrolled. Through this facility, MIND can offer the same course to a student half across the Caribbean or the world, as easily it can offer it to a student sitting in a classroom at its Kingston headquarters.

Trade Facilitation Services, though not yet fully integrated (in terms of the connectivity between all the agencies that may be involved in a particular trade transaction) is poised to burgeon, once an effective e-governance framework is in place. Components of trade facilitation services that have already been deployed include jExporter, JAMPRO's online exporter registration system, and the Trade Board Information System (TBIS) which handles licensing and certification for specific import or export products.

Other areas under development involve online GCT (General Consumption Tax) and income tax filing which require new legislation to support e-transactions and electronic signatures. An e-learning programme for high schools was recently launched through the formation of E-Learning Jamaica Ltd., a joint initiative of the Ministries of Commerce, Science and Technology, and Education, Youth and Culture. This project aims to deliver grades 7-11 curriculum material and tutorial sessions to students across the island via various electronic media, such as the Internet and cable television network. The project will begin with a pilot of 20 schools over the first few years, before, being expanded to cover all secondary schools in Jamaica (which currently number 150).

Another major area under development lies within the health sector. The Regional Health Authorities are building high bandwidth, high speed networks and systems to support island-wide access to a Health Information System (HIS) which would include, among other things, online immunization registration and tracking, health lab results information management, integrated data and voice communications and wide-area video conferencing.

### **What's Missing?**

In light of these initiatives, the missing link is exactly that—the linkages between the agencies and ministries of the public sector that will provide a platform for a common e-government portal with access for all internal and external stakeholders. The context of such a platform is joined-up government application services (true government-to-government--G2G) built up a principle of citizen-centric application design (as against a silo-based design). Other key links would involve the establishment of

standards for websites, records management and ICT procurement. The adoption of such standards would create a common look and feel across Government of Jamaica website, a common, streamlined workflow and management practice for data and records information, as well as procurement issues. A significant hurdle is still found in the lack of legislation to support e-transactions, e-payment and electronic signatures for electronically filed documents.

### **The Road to Gold**

International best practices derived from experiences of other territories across the globe has revealed a series of steps (or a pathway) that should lead to a world class ICT sector, if they are successfully navigated. These steps are listed below.

1. Shared Vision, Buy-in & Political Leadership
2. National ICT Policy
3. E-Readiness Assessment
4. National ICT Strategic Plan
5. E-Governance Framework
6. Developed ICT Sector Attracting Investments

Jamaica has transitioned through most of these six stages in developing our national ICT sector. The Government began to articulate a vision to develop a knowledge society with the new millennium. The National ICT Policy document, though in draft state, has not curtailed ICT champions like Minister Phillip Paulwell in his continual drive to articulate the government's vision and policy toward national ICT excellence and regional leadership in this sector. In 2001, the Cabinet gave approval for the formation of the Central Information Technology Office (CITO), charging it primarily with the responsibilities of assessing the nation's e-readiness status and formulating the National ICT Strategy and its associated plans. The first e-readiness assessment was completed in 2002. The latest has been, and future assessments will be done by the Economist Intelligence Unit. The first National ICT Strategy was developed in 2001 and updated in 2002. A new update is underway.

At this point, the big question is: How do we get to the place where we all really want to be? The place where ICT has truly become a key lever for major economic development and opportunities for the country. We must cross the hurdle of implementing an effective e-governance framework.

### **E-GOVERNANCE**

E-Governance is distinct from e-government. E-government involves the use of ICTs to support government operations and service delivery. We have seen several examples of e-government described above. Therefore, let us now focus on the subject of e-governance by first describing what it is not. E-governance is *not* simply an ICT project with techno-centric objectives. In other words, e-governance is not about which systems, software or networking protocols to use in building out an ICT project. E-governance is *not* a silo-oriented plan to computerise a ministry or agency. As stated earlier, all the e-government services built to date operate within a silo. E-governance seeks to go beyond that. E-governance is *not* just a one-off project, with limited lifespan, and impact, nor is it only focused on outputs or activities of a project.

Let us now look at what **e-governance is**. E-Governance is an initiative to establish a framework for harnessing the full potential of ICT at all levels of the public sector and beyond, for the purpose of enhancing:

- Governmental relationships, both internal and external
- Democratic expression, human dignity and autonomy
- Delivery of citizen-centric services and information
- Public sector Performance and Risk Management
- Economic development

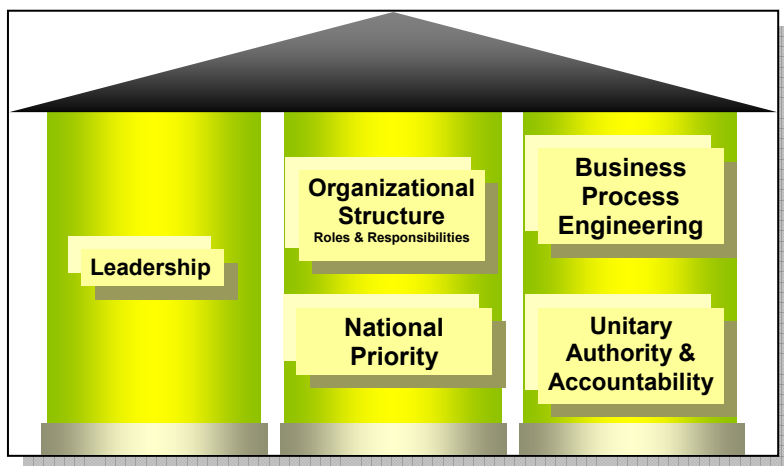
E-Governance involves initiating cross-cutting reforms that aim to leverage ICT as an enabler to perforate the silos across the public sector in order to create:

- Central Coordination and Priority Setting
- Joined-up government
- The processes and structures to facilitate multi-agency transactions
- Rules bridging the silos that will deliver more responsive, single-touch point services to citizens
- *Significant Reductions in Operating and Capital Expenses*

An encapsulating view would be that e-governance is a systemic transformation throughout the public sector that will mushroom into the private sector and lives of individuals across Jamaica, and thus will contribute to the on-going development of an information society in which citizens are empowered and enriched by access to information and services; and the social and economic opportunities available. This view is the reason why e-governance is rapidly becoming a key national priority for all countries--developed and developing. The essential focus of e-governance is on *outcomes*, or the effects produced by initiatives.

### **E-Governance Framework**

The following diagram summarizes the building blocks of an e-governance framework



Leadership describes the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders (politicians and government officials) that shape the government's strategic vision for ICT. The leadership has two main components: voice and action. Voice refers to internal and external communication of the shared vision and buy-in by senior ICT champions. Min. Paulwell has been effectively fulfilling this aspect of e-governance. Action refers to demonstrable commitment through allocation of adequate funding and human resources

Organizational structure defines organizational relationships and mechanics to support decision making, foster appropriate culture and build skills in order to marshal resources to make things happen, including government-wide performance and risk management. Organizational structure sets the roles and responsibilities of the various entities involved in designing, developing and deploying a cross-cutting initiative. This block therefore, also considers the issue of central coordination and national priority setting for government-wide e-spending. It seeks to answer questions such as, how are best practices shared among departments to cut costs and eliminate redundancies?

Business process engineering looks at how organizations serve their customers and measure success or failure, including leadership and decision-making processes. Of key importance in process management

is the analysis (both initial and periodic review) of current operational processes, with a view to effecting any required change to support new e-government capabilities. This e-governance building block aims to create an integrated change management process that will result in a portfolio-wide approach incorporating the following best practice components of e-governance:

- Project management
- Enterprise risk management
- Performance measurement
- Management of cross-cutting initiatives
- Procurement procedures and standards
- Sharing and incorporating lessons learnt

Therefore, the essence of e-governance is one of change management; from the highest to the lowest rungs of the organization we call the Government of Jamaica.

“When senior managers recognise, collectively, that IT is embedded in business and organizational processes, that they are no longer managing the technology but rather the context of the technology, they can begin to design business through e-government” –*adapted from Harvard Business School Press*

The e-governance paradigm will force us to look at e-government through new lens, by which we must apprehend a broader picture. It is commonly said that 80% of ICT projects fail, whether they include e-government initiatives or not. These failures occur because such projects are often not seen as part of larger business change; just in isolation as an end in itself. An effective e-governance framework forces the e-initiatives to be considered in the larger business context. This involves aligning the initiative with government’s ICT strategies, analysing business and technical options, and assessing their impact on the entity’s (Ministry or Agency) business processes, structures and staffing needs.

This brings into focus the last building block of the e-governance framework illustrated above. E-governance best practices around the world, indicate that a centralized coordinating body with the requisite authority, must be established in such a manner that it can be held to account for the effective governing of the ICT sector by fulfilling the principles expounded earlier.

### **Pressures Driving the need for E-Governance**

Globalization is happening whether we like it or not, and will not stop to wait for us. With various free trade or free movement areas being formed, including the anticipated Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME), the Government has no choice but to position itself to compete as efficiently as possible. The streamlining of the ICT sector that will result from the implementation of an effective e-governance framework will deliver significant improvements in operational efficiencies. Continued fiscal constraint is also a driving force to pursue a path that will deliver greater economies of scale and efficiencies.

International donors are looking at the governance structures that exist within beneficiary countries. These bodies are increasingly requiring evidence of a robust governance structure before any funds are agreed to be disbursed.

Additional sources of pressure are based on increased demands from the public, for the government to demonstrate value for money. Establishment of new laws such as the Access to Information Act is indicative of the increased desire for more transparent, participatory, inclusive, responsive and accountable government.

## **E-Governance Project**

The Government of Jamaica, through the initiative of the Central Information Technology Office (CITO) is receiving assistance from Consulting and Audit Canada (CAC), part of the Government of Canada, to develop this framework. The current engagement is being funded by CIDA through its Caribbean Cooperation Fund (CCF) which targets public sector modernization initiatives. The strategic objective of the e-governance project is to review the existing e-governance framework, analyze and make recommendations for a revised framework that will support and simplify governance for all parties, resulting in a truly modernized public sector, and an enhanced quality of life for the citizenry through radically improved service levels.

The e-governance project is being managed by CITO via the following structure:

- Project Steering Committee – comprising senior leaders in the public and private sectors
- Joint Project Execution Team – between CITO and CAC
- Project Secretariat – seated in CITO

The Scope of Work and Deliverables by CAC as contained in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreed between CITO and CAC, describes the following phases of the e-governance project:

1. Planning Phase – Scoping and Definition of Client Needs
2. Analysis Phase & Mentoring Phase
3. Reporting Phase - Framework Recommendations

The first phase of the project started in May 2005 with a series of initial stakeholder meetings. Those interviews involved a broad spectrum of stakeholders. In total, 34 meetings were held, covering 25 organizations, comprising 4 ministries, 18 agencies, and 3 private sector entities. The project team found enthusiastic support and traction for e-governance in those meetings. Across the spectrum of government organizations, in terms of their e-government readiness status (from those who have operational e-government services, to those who are just planning to start internal office computerization), the participants in the meetings indicated great interest in development of an effective e-governance framework, as they see this as the key to unlocking their many plans to develop and deploy on-demand citizen-centric e-government services.

The key points from the Initial Findings Report delivered by CAC are listed below.

- CITO needs more ‘teeth’ or authority and resources to fulfill its mandate.
- Need to break down the silos across the public sector to foster greater sharing and linkages that will lead to leveraging of economies of scale.
- Unclear roles and responsibilities of entities and individuals involved in ICT strategic decisions and execution or implementation of e-initiatives.
- E-Government maturity gap: Revenue collecting arms are relatively advanced (e.g. Jamaica Customs) compared to the rest of the public sector
- Capacity building across government entities is needed
- Great need for legislative Support for e-transactions, payment and e-document signatures
- Resounding need for sustainable funding

The next phase of the project will involve mentoring and training workshops for both the senior administrators (such as the permanent secretaries) and project management level personnel. This is a key resource exchange and best practices sharing phase to ensure maximum impact of the change management initiative.

This project's scope and deliverables will be completed with the submission of the final recommendations by CAC to CITO and the Government of Jamaica. Thereafter begins the really BIG job of implementing the recommendations.

### **Dovetailing with Existing ICT Initiatives**

As stated earlier, the e-governance initiative directly supports public sector modernization. As such, it is a natural complement to the Public Sector Modernization Vision and Strategy 2012 (Ministry Paper No.56) borne out of the Public Sector Modernization Unit (PSRU). In fact, achievement of at least 25% of the stated objectives of that plan, require an effective e-governance framework to be in place.

Many of the current e-government services have been built out of the IDB ICT Project, which began in 2003. The realization of the full potential of these services will only happen through the e-governance reform.

### **ICT Benchmarking**

How do we as a country, continually measure our progress in our ICT developments, in a way that allows us to readily compare or be compared with other countries?

CITO chose the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) E-Readiness Rankings. This decision was based on the fact that the EIU is the world's leading provider of country intelligence. More than ½ -million customers across the globe rely on the EIU's intelligence information in their strategic decision making processes. Additionally, this new approach would embrace the landscape of global competitiveness by engaging with an organization that has an established and reputable international capacity in conducting e-readiness surveys. The EIU has published an annual e-readiness ranking of the world's largest economies since 2000. These rankings utilize a cadre of comprehensive and standardized quantitative and qualitative criteria to evaluate ICT development.

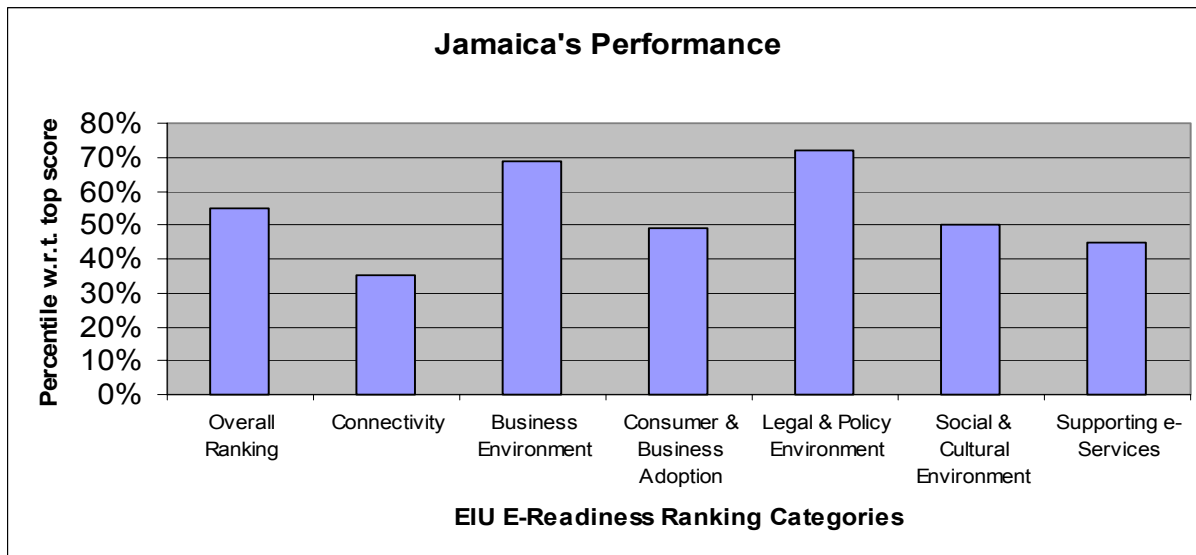
An important characteristic of the EIU report is that there is no direct cost to the country. The EIU works in co-operation with the IBM Institute for Business Value, the think tank of IBM Business Consulting Services, to create the E-Readiness Rankings as a value-added product for their global customers.

CITO made the request to the EIU for Jamaica to be included in the EIU's E-Readiness Rankings white paper, from 2005 onward. Therefore, the newest update on Jamaica's e-readiness status was released on April 20, 2005 with the latest edition of the EIU report.

In our first showing, Jamaica ranked 41<sup>st</sup> out of 65 countries. Although Jamaica is the only English speaking Caribbean country currently included in the EIU's e-readiness rankings, our 41<sup>st</sup> position on the list, places us in the middle of Latin American countries in the region. Four countries placed ahead of Jamaica: Chile (31<sup>st</sup>), Mexico (36<sup>th</sup>), Brazil (38<sup>th</sup>), and Argentina (39<sup>th</sup>). Four countries placed behind us: Venezuela (45<sup>th</sup>), Colombia (48<sup>th</sup>), Peru (53<sup>rd</sup>), and Ecuador (55<sup>th</sup>). Jamaica's overall score of 4.82 out of 10.0 placed us at the 55<sup>th</sup> percentile with respect to the top scoring country in the world, Denmark, who logged an 8.74 overall score.

The report breaks out the overall score into six major categories:

1. Connectivity and Technology Infrastructure
2. Business Environment
3. Consumer and Business Adoption
4. Legal and Policy Environment
5. Social and Cultural Environment
6. Supporting e-services



The report confirms that Jamaica is paving the way for growth in its e-business sector and hence e-government sector because of good rankings in the areas of Business Environment, and Legal & Policy Environment. In fact, Jamaica scored higher than the global average in the Legal & Policy Environment category. Our weakest performance was recorded in the category, Connectivity and Technology Infrastructure.

Jamaica's data access infrastructure will soon be significantly boosted because of the Government's decision to award two new undersea fibre-optic cable systems licenses to Fibralink Jamaica Limited and Trans Caribbean Cable Company Limited, earlier this year. The provision of these new access channels promises to significantly lower prices in high speed Internet access and other data services, in the next several months.

The ripple effect of this boosting of our connectivity infrastructure, by having these two new data highways into the country, will improve our performance in the areas of:

- Consumer & Business Adoption of technology and e-business/e-government services
- Social and Cultural Environment, where e-literacy and entrepreneurship are key measures
- and Supporting e-services, which describes the availability of e-business consulting and technical support services

These areas will be boosted because of the anticipated proliferation of choices in Internet and data services providers, competing at internationally competitive rates. The high penetration of mobile technology also presents an underpinning for providing universal information access to a rich set of e-services to Jamaicans of all walks of life.

The recent removal of GCT from computer hardware and software products will certainly also foster an advance in these areas. Additionally, the high cost of technology is also being addressed through upcoming low priced computing platforms to be offered by leading private sector companies.

All these initiatives are expected to yield great benefits for consumers and the national economy as a whole, such as lower costs, increased competition, increased adoption of broadband Internet access, and greater access to PCs by Jamaican households; thereby leading to an overall upsurge in e-government activity.

## **CLOSING**

Implementing an effective e-governance framework will lead to the future we all speak of. One that will see the creation of a knowledge society, with citizens being empowered to function at unprecedented levels of productivity. One where ICT truly becomes an undeniably important lever for national economic development.

E-governance will set and enforce rules and standards across the silos that will allow new multi-agency, citizen-centric services to be developed and deployed. E-governance will transform the public sector, creating a modern, streamlined, efficient, world-class joined-up government. E-governance will establish central coordination and setting of priorities for government ICT projects and e-spending. E-governance will ensure portfolio-wide performance measurement and accountability, and risk management for the ICT sector. E-governance will foster a boom in sophisticated (from an integration perspective), yet simple to access and use (from a customer perspective) in e-government services once all the required pieces of legislation are in place to support e-transactions and protect citizens against cyber crimes.

## **Indicative Best Practices**

International lessons learnt have shown that for e-governance to work, the following principles must be operational.

- Overall responsibility must be vested in a single, senior leader or entity.
- Risk-management needs to be integrate into all stages of decision-making.
- An enterprise-wide (government-wide) view and portfolio approach must be taken in evaluating ICT investments.
- Formal processes to determine benefits of projects, and periodic progress reviews must be incorporated into project management mechanisms.
- Continuous testing and measurement is required for success.
- Old paradigms of technology-centric designs must be abandoned in favour of a customer-centric focus throughout every stage of an ICT initiative.

The forward movements described in this paper, paint a promising picture for the future of national ICT development. We can anticipate an e-enabled Jamaica where enhanced e-services will become the order of the day. Once the e-governance reform has begun to take hold in the mindsets and operations of the stakeholders, it will only be a matter of time before we realize the full sustainable economic potential of a developed national ICT sector attracting major investments (both foreign and local).