

## **CEOrt Launches the “Think Equal, Lead Smart” Initiative**

**Dar es Salaam:** The CEO Roundtable of Tanzania (CEOrt) has launched the Think Equal Lead Smart (TELS) Initiative, an initial three-year project with the potential to reshape the landscape of gender equality in Tanzanian society. The initiative is designed to foster the full and effective participation of women by creating equal opportunities for leadership across all decision-making platforms.

Supported by Vodacom Tanzania, the CEOrt, through the first phase of the Think Equal Lead Smart (TELS), aims to positively impact women by promoting gender-responsive norms, behaviours, and practices, enhancing leadership capacity, facilitating economic empowerment through financial and digital inclusion, and advocating for policy awareness and development.

The launch event was graced by Hon. Mwanaidi Ali Hamisi, Deputy Minister of Community Development Gender, Women, and Special Needs. During her address, the Minister commended CEOrt and private sector leaders for their efforts in advancing gender inclusivity in the country.

"Led by H.E. President Samia Suluhu Hassan's directive, the 6th Phase government of the United Republic of Tanzania has consistently demonstrated a commitment to eliminating gender inequalities and disparities and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Through the Ministry, we have implemented policies and programs to enable women to contribute meaningfully to society. However, to further strengthen these initiatives and achieve sustainable impact, it is important for all stakeholders, including the Private Sector, to contribute and support gender-inclusive efforts actively," added Hon. Hamisi.

"We recognize the critical role of women in driving sustainable development and inclusive growth," said Ms. Santina Benson, CEOrt Executive Director. "Through the Think Equal Lead Smart (TELS) Initiative, we aim to bring together stakeholders with the right technical knowledge to deepen an understanding of the gender inequality challenges within the key focus areas and develop solutions to enhance gender inclusion. Our goal extends beyond addressing existing disparities; empowering women is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic move, as women in leadership positions are instrumental in driving competitive advantage and transformative change."

The Think Equal Lead Smart (TELS) Initiative aims to address challenges for women in MSMEs, Mid-Level Managers, and Community Development. The first phase aims to conduct a baseline study to identify the main reasons for underrepresentation and attrition and effective methods and interventions at various stages of the leadership journey. It also focuses on enhancing awareness, reviewing and recommending policies necessary for driving change, and promoting economic empowerment through financial and digital inclusion.

Speaking on behalf of the Vodacom Tanzania Managing Director, Customer Operations Director Ms. Harriet Lwakatare added, "Despite strides in expanding access to financial services and the transformative potential of mobile-based services, societal norms and limited access impede women's participation. But today, we embark on a journey of change. Through Think Equal, Lead

Smart, Vodacom commits to policy advocacy, socio-economic empowerment, and behavioural transformation that will, all together, bring the change we want to see in our society and the people we serve. We proudly unite with the CEO Roundtable on this initiative, affirming our dedication to dismantling barriers and amplifying women's voices in decision-making. Together, we can unlock the untapped potential of Tanzanian women, driving innovation, economic growth, and societal inclusivity.”

Although significant progress has been made towards promoting gender equality and empowering women in the country, much work still needs to be done to provide women with equal leadership opportunities. “We acknowledge that, to date, several programs are aimed at increasing women’s participation in leadership. However, the unique goal of this initiative is to drive systemic change. The final desired result is a shift in the organisational structures, policies, and actions of institutions, and directly seeing the shift across all levels of society.” concluded Ms. Benson.