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**For IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**NRF Hosts Inaugural Hackathon to Address Kenya's Cybersecurity Challenges with Leading Experts and Innovators**

**NAIROBI, KENYA – June 6th, 2024** – The National Research Fund (NRF) holds the 1<sup>st</sup> Cybersecurity Hackathon 2024, a landmark event held at The Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi. This exciting initiative aims to harness the collective talent and innovation within Kenya's research community, including young professionals, university students, and college students, to bolster cybersecurity capacity and contribute to the socio-economic impact of the digital economy.

Through this hackathon, NRF has created a platform for young, talented Kenyans to develop and showcase their skills in cybersecurity, a critical area for national security and economic growth. This initiative not only enhances the country's technological capabilities but also supports NRF's goal of accelerating technological advancement and socio-economic transformation through research and innovation. The hackathon promotes collaboration between academia, industry, and government, which is essential for addressing complex challenges and achieving sustainable development.

Speakers highlighted the essential role of innovation, collaboration, and advanced technology in tackling Kenya's complex cybersecurity challenges, emphasizing the hackathon's significance in driving progress.

In his welcome address, Prof Andala highlighted the unique opportunity this hackathon presents, bringing together some of the most talented individuals in technology, innovation, and security. "Today, we face unprecedented cyber challenges that threaten our national security. Hackathons have proven to be powerful tools for fostering innovation, and I am confident that this event will yield groundbreaking solutions to the complex challenges we face," he stated. He also underscored the importance of leveraging advancements in blockchain, machine learning, and artificial intelligence to create solutions tailored to Kenya's unique challenges.

Representing the Ministry of ICT, Emmanuel Kata, the Secretary of ICT emphasized the significance of cultivating ICT skills within Kenya's youth. "The future of our digital economy relies on the creative and competitive spirit of the youth teams participating in this hackathon," he said. He highlighted the theme of the event, "Harnessing Cybersecurity and Emerging Tech Innovations for Development, Security, and Empowerment," aligning with Kenya's Vision 2030.

Professor Ratemo Michieka expressed his deep appreciation to the Ministry of Education and other esteemed sponsors and partners for their support. He highlighted Kenya's position as one of Africa's innovation giants and the crucial role young innovators play in addressing national challenges through technology-based solutions. "Hackathons like this provide us with opportunities to discover and adapt new technologies, enabling us to cope with changes

in our environment and overcome current and future challenges both in our country and beyond," he stated.

This 1<sup>st</sup> cybersecurity hackathon has attracted over 200 participants from both public and private universities including young professionals in the cybersecurity space.

"This hackathon is an incredible opportunity for us to push the boundaries of what's possible in cybersecurity. We're not just competing; we're learning, collaborating, and developing solutions that could have a real impact on Kenya's digital future. The experience and insights we're gaining here are invaluable." Eric Karimi, participating hackathoner, Egerton University

### **Event Highlights:**

- **24-Hour Hackathon:** Participants will engage in a non-stop, high-intensity cybersecurity challenge, testing their skills, creativity, and problem-solving abilities.
- **Mentorship:** Renowned experts from different fields will guide and mentor participants, offering valuable insights and guidance.
- **Networking:** Attendees will connect with fellow cybersecurity enthusiasts, professionals, and potential future collaborators.
- **Prizes:** Exciting prizes and recognition await the top-performing teams.
- **Industry Insights:** Participants will gain a deeper understanding of the current cybersecurity landscape and emerging trends.

The 1<sup>st</sup> NRF Cybersecurity Hackathon 2024 aims to facilitate quicker solutions to pressing national and societal issues, creating an ecosystem to test new technologies and approaches, delivering better results and innovation for development. NRF, in collaboration with esteemed partners, remains committed to supporting the competitiveness of Kenyan youth in the tech sector, promoting national economic growth, and increased per capita productivity.

### **For More Information Contact:**

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### **About the National Research Fund (NRF)**

The National Research Fund is a statutory body established under the Science Technology and Innovation Act 2013, mandated to facilitate research in science, technology, and innovation, support scientific research and innovation, and compile and maintain a national database of research and innovation in Kenya. NRF is dedicated to fostering research and innovation in Kenya. Through various initiatives and collaborations, NRF aims to enhance the nation's scientific and technological capacity, driving sustainable development and economic growth [www.nrf.go.ke](http://www.nrf.go.ke)