

**Directorate of Information and Communication****Press Release****ICT development offers great opportunities to advance Africa's digital economy, says African Union Commission Deputy Chairperson**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July 31st, 2017 - The African Union and China are seeking to deepen collaboration on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) development especially in the building of a secure, open and peaceful cyberspace. In discussions with China's Vice Minister of Cyberspace Administration, Mr. Ren Xianliang, who paid him a courtesy visit, the African Union Commission Deputy Chairperson Ambassador Kwesi Quartey underscored ICT development as a critical resource for education and socio-economic growth.

Bouyed by the growing digital penetration and technological development in Africa, the Deputy Chairperson observed that with more and deliberate investments in cyberspace, the continent is poised to leapfrog the digital divide and overcome the under-development by creating innovative solutions to drive its transformation agenda, as articulated in Agenda 2063. "We live in the era of digital economy with great opportunities but also immense security challenges. We need to adapt our policies to the situation and support more investments in the sector", Amb. Kwesi noted.

With China seeking to implement its One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative, where one of the key investment areas is in the information and communication technology, Vice Minister Xianliang highlighted the impact of the digital economy in China, which he stated has contributed greatly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country. Mr. Xianliang underscored the potential of ICT development opportunities in Africa, adding that deeper Africa-China cooperation would provide a platform for expanded cooperation and investments, not just with the governments but with the private sector. "Confidence in Cyberspace is a key pillar in digital economy and has a great impact in the daily lives of millions of people", the Vice Minister stated.

As a means of harnessing the demographic dividend of the youth, Africa is looking to leverage on expanded ICT infrastructure, to realize the continent's digital potential aimed at supporting emerging and existing digital enterprises, which are catalysts in job creation.

The Deputy Chairperson further called on China to partner with Africa to build capacity that enables it have “ every child in school by 2020” which he says would empower the African child to use the Cyberspace for socio-economic development”. He also underscored the need for skills development for the bulging youth population, particularly in Science, technology, engineering and mathematics, to enable them take advantage of the ICT development.

“With ICT, we can leapfrog the digital divide, have education for all and leverage the use of science and technology in the service of production, processing and industrialization whose socio-economic impact would be huge”, Amb. Kwesi noted.

China will be hosting the 4th Edition of the World Internet Conference in December 2017 where participants will share and exchange experiences on the impact on cyberspace on socio-economic growth. Africa is expected to be largely represented.

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