African ICT Week (AICTW) Concept Paper

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"ICT for Peace and Security in africa"

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I. INTRODUCTION

We live in this moment the numerical period. Indeed, the convergence of telecommunications, computer science and audio-visual gave us today new Information Communication Technologies (ICT). ICT today are present in our daily activities and facilitates all life aspects. The World Summit of the Information Society (WSIS) of Tunis, November 2005 adopted a final document (Tunis Commitment) which is presented in all frameworks of building the Information Society and harness it for development. The Tunis Summit, while reaffirming its commitment to best possible benefit from the capacities and the potential of the ICT, invites all the governments to adopt the ICT for a sustainable development while strengthening the national, regional and international co-operation. Following the 2005 Tunis Commitment, African Union, organization of economic integration seized this opportunity and launched for the first time the African ICT Week (AICTW).

The week meant to provide a constant reflection of the gains Africa has made in harnessing ICTs to realize a knowledge-based economy. Today, Knowledge and Information hold massive potential for propelling the African continent development process, building all inclusive knowledge economy and ultimately achieving the millennium goals by 2015. ICTs will pave the way for Africato reach the development world and thus to make a success of its transformation of an agricultural society into a knowledge society.

Indeed we need to multiply our efforts in integrating the use of ICTs in all our activities, our methods, working tools, our plans and programs of development. The AICTW should provide a platform for creating awareness about the opportunities, challenges and benefits derived by adoption of ICTs in Africa.

II. WHY AN AFRICAN ICT WEEK?

African Union is conscious of the obstacles that prevent the African society to develop and bridge the gap with other developed countries. Indeed, the defect of access to the infrastructures of telecommunications, affordability and electricity (in particular in rural areas) are the major problems, the cost still too high of the communications, the existence of social barriers (difficulties based on gender, languages, the lack of local contents and the cultural considerations) and the insufficiency of clear and engaged policies in favor of the ICT encourage us to react positively and to invite our government to take part and implement the activities suggested by the AICTW.

By organizing the AICTW, African Union wishes to implement the Tunis commitment on the Information Society and the ARAPKE in order to make life conditions in Africa better and integrated in the knowledge Society also to fulfill the Millennium Development Goals.
Thus, by celebrating African ICT week, African Union wishes to raise the awareness of each African to profit from the possibilities offered by ICTs. By inviting African governments, the private sector as well as the civil society the AU aims to work together to improve the access to the infrastructure and the ICT and creating information knowledge society. African Union would also like, by this occasion, to reinforce the capacities, to increase confidence and safety in the use of ICT, to support, make known and make respect the African cultures and cultural diversity.

The ICT week should draw the attention to the values of the ICTs and`specifically to promote the use of ICTs and to outline the vision of the Africa in building a knowledge economy.
The Week also aims at demonstrating the values and advantages of communicating digitally and in general how ICTs could improve our life quality.

III. HOW CAN ICT CONTRIBUTE to PEACE & SECURITY in AFRICA?

ICT in AFRICAN PEACE and SECURITY

Since the WSIS (WSIS 2003 & 2005) and the CONNECT AFRICA (2007) Summit, the AU Commission continued to reaffirm the importance of ICTs in the process of Africa's (economic, social and political) development to develop African conducive environment. Thus peace and security are a prerequisite for ensuring sustainable development. Peace, the friendly understanding of all individuals or groups of individuals composing a society, is the goal sought by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union. Hence, the year 2010 was declared Year of Peace and Security in Africa at the Tripoli Special Session (Tripoli Declaration on the Elimination of conflict and the promotion of sustainable peace in Africa SP / Assembly / PS / Decl (I) of 31 August 2009).
So, how can ICTs contribute to peace and security in Africa?

1. **CONFLICT PREVENTION**

   - **The Continental Early Warning System of the African Union Commission (AUC)**

To carry out its activities for peace and security in Africa, the Department of Peace and Security in the AU Commission harnessed the latest information and communications technology to facilitate their work and processes. A Continental Early Warning System (Continental Early warning system - CEWS) was deployed in a situation room to:

   ➢ To collect and provide timely information relating to potential, actual conflicts, and post-conflict activities;
   ➢ To provide reports on specific issues on request from the decision makers in the AUC

➢ To provide the AU headquartters with a 24/7 – mission – wide information gathering and dissemination capacity
➢ To serve as Point-of-contact and communication Room for the Peace and Security Department of the AU Commission.

2.   Peacekeeping and Peace-building

- **Radio and communication systems for Peace.**

Today, the international peacekeeping forces on the field endeavor to establish a communication system for peace by setting up their own radio. With the community systems of communication for Peace, the impact will be even greater and the effects on the restoration of a peaceful environment faster.

Indeed, the actors of development in Africa can facilitate the implementation of promising and innovative ways of making use of the ICTs and other means of disseminating, exchanging and using information conducive to peace and development. In post-conflict situation, a network of community radio can be set up to open the door to new opportunities for collaboration and support to peace effort.

Such a communication network is generally composed of local communication centers located throughout the country. The network's activity consists in documenting local peace-building practices so as to broadcast news intended for the public and dealing with issues related to the consolidation of peace as leverage for taking over, for development, for peace and equality between man and woman. Broadcasting is thus performed locally, regionally and nationally.

3.   KEEPING A SAFE AND SECURE ENVIRONMENT

- **Mobile phone and computing to ensure transparency of elections.**

Not mastering ICTs in the context of huge responsibility and political complexity involved in the electoral process may lead to failure in the organization of elections and to highly non-objective results.

Hence, to avoid fraud and disputes that may taint the election process, we can make use of ICTs in the preparation and organization of election polling particularly upstream in the development of voter registration and preparation of registration cards in line with technical and political requirements expected in order to make them more credible or undisputable. Downstream, at the counting of the votes obtained by the candidates, ICTs can be used by the representatives of the candidates in the polls to submit the results by SMS directly to their base via the mobile phone.

- **Internet and participatory and interactive networking to ensure the flow of information.**

Freedom of expression and the dissemination of truthful information are rights and means now widely used, through ICTs, by public opinion in order to help maintain public order, denounce abuses and atrocities. In short, participatory and interactive systems help and promote the keeping of a safe and healthy environment for all. ICTs then offer today as many open social networks like Twitter and Facebook as professional networks like "The Observers" in France 24 news channel, which allow dissemination and sharing of free information outside official communication channels owned or controlled by public authority, which affects, in some cases, accessibility and integrity of information.

Africa is not left behind as a producer of technology resource allowing for sharing true information and subsequently for back warding impunity loosing ground to a healthy and peaceful environment. Indeed, the software Ushahidi, created in 2008 from Kenya, allows following in real time crisis from the point of view of those who experience them. With this tool, people can use a mobile phone, SMS or e-mail, to describe the tragedies they are going through or that are being experienced around them. Such an ICT tool is now replicated in Ghana, South Africa, DRC and throughout Africa, wherever the need to communicate on a latent or actual crisis arises. This ICT program is used today by the news channel Al Jazeera to report on conflicts in the Middle East. (www.ushahidi.com)

Consequently, the DRHST, after the Chairperson of the AU Commission, who said: "[...] Here is our Year of Peace, let's take action for peace!" invites the peoples and leaders of Africa to act for peace using (also) the ICTs.

IV. OBJECTIVES WE WANT TO ACHIEVE WITH AICTW

The general objective of the organization of AICTW is to arouse the interest of the African populations to the use of the ICT for a successful transformation of Africa at this numerical era from an Agricultural Society to a Knowledge Society.

Specifically, the specific objectives to be reached are also those of the African action plan on knowledge Economy (ARAPKE), in particular:

a. Bridging the digital divide;
b. To promote the right of all to have equal access to ICT value added services and to experience the advantages of using technological services.
c. To develop, maintain and stimulate people's curiosity, interest and enjoyment in technologies
d. To promote the acquisition of appropriate technological skills, concepts, principles, methods and vocabulary.
e. Boosting security and trust in the sectors rely on the using of information networks;
f. To encourage people to develop informed opinions about their technological services and to be able to support them by reasonable arguments.
g. Leveraging ICTs as a tool for creating an informed-Africa society
h. Promoting greater ICTs awareness among African governments, community and stakeholders.
i. To use technologies in a variety of subject areas and contexts.
j. To attract more and new investments to the African technological market, especially the ICTs market.

V. IMPLEMENTATION OF ICT WEEK

a. **Theme of the AICTW**: Selecting a proper theme to the week which is inline with the most active events in the continent's ICTs sector. Accordingly and since this year 2010 is dedicated to Peace and Security, the theme of the AICTW will be **"ICT for Peace and Security in Africa"**

b. **The African paperless Day:** The day will be observed by promoting the use of electronic means for all correspondences within our private and public institutions and express our commitment to the digital revolution in Africa. We will observe the Paperless day on Monday 15th November 2010.

c. **Management of the Week:** The AU will set up a task force consisting of representatives of the relevant Departments of the AU, representatives of the international, regional and sub-regional partners and others to effectively coordinate the activities of the week and publicise the AICTW within the continent.

d. **Promotion of the AICTW:** The African Union will use all its instruments, including regional meetings and conferences to publicize the objectives and activities of the AICTW.

VI. ACTIVITIES SUGGESTED for the AICTW 2010?

The activities suggested here would emphasize on the role of ICT, for the growth and development of the continent.

Thus, African Union invites the Member States to observe the paperless day in public administrations and private. In the same way, invites them to organize and coordinate the activities of information and sensitizing such as conferences, workshops, free trainings on ICT for students and general public.

African Union encourage the governments of the Member States to invite the Service Providers of telecommunication and the mobile telephony operators to take an active share at the African ICT Week by organizing Open Days on their activities just as by providing points of free Internet access (cables and wireless) in order to make discover technological opportunities offered by ICT to student and general public.

In order to accustom the African people to the new methods of communications, the governments will invite the mobile telephony operators to make it possible to the general public to send free SMS/MMS during a given period of the day at the time of the AICTW. This will create a passion for this new interpersonal communication technology. Since 2010 is devoted to Peace in Africa, We suggest a short text on Peace and Security.

The table hereafter recapitulates the various activities suggested during the ICT week.

Proposed Activities For The AICTW 2009:

	Activities	Pattern	Organizers	Targeted Groups
1	Paperless Day	The public authorities and the private sector are invited to use this day the electronic communications in their daily activities and their relations with their partners	• Governments • Private Sectors	• Governments • Private Sectors • Universities • Schools • Institutions • General public
2	Quiz : My ICTWords	Technological words, initials and terms will be proposed via outlook to STAFF MEMBERS during the AICTW. Winners will get prices like Tshirt and a usb flashdisk.	• AUC	• AU Staff Members
3	Free Access Point to Internet (Free APNET)	ICTs service providers to offer discounted services for the Week or for a few hours a day during the ICT week e.g. provide free Internet access and offer free hosting services for the schools and universities. We need some place would be create in their companies and/or in some specified Schools and Universities.	• Governments • Private Sectors • Universities • schools	• Governments • Private Sectors • Universities • Schools • Institutions • General public

	Activities	Pattern	Organizers	Targeted Groups
5	Video conference, ICT courses & training	Advantages of using the Open-source Software The Member States are encourage to organize the various following activities: • Presentation of technology VSAT • Presentation of the use of ICT in the public governorship • Presentation of all the Websites of E-government of their country (the Presidential office, Ministries, and main NGO of Human and Citizen rights) • Course on How to make an effective and targeted research by Internet • Course on ICT and MEDIA • Free formation on the use of Internet (Chat room, forum of discussion, sign up a free mail) • Advantages off using the Software Open-source	• Governments • NGOs	• Private Sectors • Universities • Schools • Institutions • General public

	Activities	Pattern	Organizers	Targeted Groups
6	Media Blitz	Partnership with the Media to promote ICT's by means of bulletins, newspaper articles etc to familiarize people with the advantages of technology and its applications (e.g. E-Learning, E-Commerce, E-Health, E-Government).	• Governments • Private Sectors	• Schools • Universities • Institutions • General Public
7	ICT Tours & Computer Show	Governments and service providers can offer an Open Days for sightseeing tours to ICTs and technology centers and operators to stimulate the curiosity of the new generations for the technologies in early age stages. They can also Organise ICTs and technology exhibition and fairs. Which will work as an opportunity to explore new ICT horizons and as an occasion to attract more investments	• Governments • Private Sectors • Institutions	• Schools • Universities • Governments • Private Sectors • General Public

	Activities	Pattern	Organizers	Targeted Groups
8	ICT Week Billboard	Prepare and publish special leaflets, sites, magazines and press releases on the occasion of the AICTW. Thus, it will assist in project promotion.	• Governments • Private Sectors • Schools • Universities • Institutions	• General Public
9	Free SMS & MMS	During this AICTW, the Mobile telephony operators are encouraged to allow a free hour for everyone to communicate by SMS and MMS (Multi Media Service). Thus, they will promote the use of this way of electronic communication.	• Mobile Telephony Operators	• Private Sectors • Universities • Schools • Institutions • General Public

VII. FACTORS OF SUCCESS

The following factors are necessary for the success of the AICTW:

- ✓ Leadership and visibility of the process by high government officials - Minister or Head of State – from mobilization of participants, publicity and the conducting the week itself
- ✓ Involve as many stakeholders and interests groups as possible
- ✓ Develop a strong brand – e.g. through a Poster (AU to produce) to be distributed to all schools, badges, caps, T-shirts and other branding materials as resources allow, possibly in collaboration with private sector and/or development partners.
- ✓ Extensive media coverage to spread the message widely and to raise awareness and enthusiasm for ICT.
- ✓ Ministers to report to themselves and share experiences to African Union in order to evaluate the AICTW impact and to share the experiments.

VIII. CONTACTS SECRETARIAT

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