

DECLARATION OF AFRICAN MINISTERS
IN CHARGE OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND ICT
ON INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

4th JULY 2005, ABUJA, NIGERIA

The African ICT Ministerial Symposium held in Abuja, Nigeria on 4th July 2005, and preceded by the Meeting of Experts on 3rd July 2005, considered the Report on the ITU Preliminary assistance to NEPAD.

Considering the impact of the digital divide in most African countries especially in rural areas;

Considering the very high cost of basic infrastructure resulting from importation fees;

Considering the convergence of technologies which necessitate an all inclusive regulatory approach;

Welcoming the establishment of the African Ministerial Committee on ICT under the Specialized Technical Committee of the African Union,

Noting that pursuant to the decisions of the ITU World Telecommunications Development Conference (WTDC – 02 Istanbul), and the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (PP – 02 Marrakech,), embodied in the Resolution 35 (Istanbul) and Resolution 124 (Marrakech- 02);

- (i) That follow up actions have been initiated through the analysis carried out and contained in the report to determine the status of ICT development on the African continent.
- (ii) That the report presented constitute the preliminary assistance by ITU to the NEPAD programme.

Further noting that the report is additionally inspired by:

- (i) the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva, December 2003, which emphasized, cooperation and partnership among national, regional and international stakeholders in order to achieve the objectives, goals and targets for building an all inclusive information society,
- (ii) the Bamako Declaration on the World Information Society and the ATU Strategic Plan for 2002 – 2006;
- (iii) the Accra commitment (February 2005) on Information Society;

Further noting with interest the relevance of the report highlighting inter-alia, the continental ICT infrastructure, policy and regulatory environment, capacity building, partnerships and cooperation at the continental level;

Taking into account and appreciating the measures taken by African States to carry out reforms in the ICT sector which have given rise to an enhanced policy and regulatory environment conducive to the growth of networks especially mobile networks;

Cognizant of the urgent need to have continental cohesive mechanisms and structures to effectively address the above mentioned challenges which are fully set out in the report;

The Ministerial Symposium, under the auspices of the African Ministerial Committee on ICTs, recalling the Resolution 35 of the WTDC-02 Istanbul and Resolution 124 of the Plenipotentiary Conference of ITU, Marrakech 02,

Decides:

- i. To adopt the report entitled “Partnership framework for ICT infrastructure development in Africa” as a reference document for the implementation of the recommendations summed up below aimed at achieving rapid development of ICT in Africa;
- ii. To endorse the terms of reference of the African Ministerial Committee on ICTs to establish, among others an Inter-Agency Coordinating Forum (IACF) to coordinate and follow up ICT infrastructure projects and other ICT related programs in Africa. These agencies shall comprise of but not limited to the following structures:-the AU Commission, ATU Secretariat, ITU, ECA, NEPAD e-Africa Commission, RECs, URTNA, ADB, PAPU and RASCOM. Other institutions to be invited as appropriate:-
- iii. To congratulate ITU:
 - for its technical and financial support in the implementation of this study on the ICT infrastructure development within the framework of NEPAD;
 - for the fruitful cooperation with ATU, thus contributing to the development of capacities of the major regional entities and enhancement of synergies between institutions.
- iv. To request ITU to provide appropriate financial resources to support NEPAD activities under its ICT sector.

Urges:

- i. African States to maintain at national level and through sub regional, regional and other partnerships, the development impetus in the ICT sector with the view to promote the implementation of the Millennium Development goals (MDG);
- ii. African states to consider granting duty waiver on imported telecommunication and ICT equipment to accelerate development in the region. They are also encouraged to facilitate the local manufacturing of the same equipment.

Request the African Ministerial Committee on ICT of the AU :

- i. to undertake with the support of ITU preferably before the end of the year the necessary measures for the establishment of an Inter Agency Coordination Forum (IACF) with the mandate to:
 - *coordinate and monitor ICT infrastructure projects and other related programmes in Africa;
 - *monitor and evaluate the implementation of these projects.
- ii. to submit in collaboration with Member States a resolution to the forthcoming ITU World Telecommunications Development Conference (WTDC-06) and the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (PP-06) on continued ITU assistance to NEPAD.

Requests ITU:

- i. to give support to AU African Ministerial Committee for the establishment of the Inter-Agency Coordinating Forum;
- ii. to give the necessary support for the effective establishment of modalities addressing the following recommendations made in the report:

INFRASTRUCTURE

- i. Preparation of Master Plans for ICT infrastructure development;
- ii. Facilitation of the introduction of digital technologies especially for broadcasting;
- iii. Support for all projects which promote ICT development and subregional and

regional integration, for example, the East African Submarine Cable project (EASSy), the NEPAD e-school initiative, RASCOM, e-Post Africa, COMTEL, SRII, INTELCOM II, etc...

- iv. Establishment and interconnection of national internet exchange points;
- v. Evaluation of the impact and adoption of measures for strengthening functional capacities and the new missions of sub regional maintenance centres;
- vi. Encourage the establishment of technological alliances in order to promote research and development at a regional level.

ENVIRONMENT

Development and implementation of:

- i. an Africa-wide vision, strategy and Action Plan for ICT;
- ii. a national vision and strategies for the development of ICT with maximum linkage to other national development strategies, notably the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP);
- iii. Elaboration of a national policy framework and strategy for Universal Access;
- iv. Provision of support for the harmonization of policy and regulatory frameworks at sub regional level.

CAPACITY BUILDING COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

- i. Support for the elaboration of the planning and management of the frequency spectrum at national, sub regional and regional levels;
- ii. Support the strengthening of ICT training institutions and network of Centres of Excellence in the region.
- i. Establishment of a cooperation mechanism amongst regional institutions that provide development assistance to African countries in the ICT sector;
- ii. Regional or multi-national approach to provision of support;
- iii. Establishment of an ad hoc regional ICT Think Tank for Africa;
- iv. Strengthening of sub regional telecommunication regulatory associations;
- v. Strengthening of Public Private partnership;
- vi. Establishment of an African ICT database;
- vii. Strengthening the capacities of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) for better implementation of the ICT projects and initiatives.

Taking into account all of the above, the symposium mandates its `current Chairman (the Federal Minister of Communications of Nigeria) to write to the AU Commissioner responsible for ICTs to formalise the establishment of the African Ministerial Committee on ICTs.

Urges all stakeholders to circulate this declaration in all African forthcoming meetings and fora.

Invites the RPM of July 2005 to consider this declaration in their deliberations. Finally invites all countries and sub regional and regional organisations to implement the contents of this declaration.

Done in Abuja the 4th July 2005.