AFRICAN UNION		UNION AFRICAINE
الاتحاد الأفريقي		UNIÃO AFRICANA

SECOND ORDINARY SESSION OF
THE AFRICAN UNION CONFERENCE
OF MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF COMMUNICATION
AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES
CAIRO, EGYPT
11-14 MAY, 2008

DECLARATION

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PREAMBLE

WE, African Ministers in charge of Communication and Information Technologies meeting on 14 May 2008 in Cairo, the Arab Republic of Egypt; at the second ordinary session of the African Union Conference of Ministers in charge of Communication and Information Technologies from 11 to 14 May 2008.

Guided by Articles 3, 13, 14 and 15 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU) adopted in Lome, Togo, in 2000, on the Specialized Technical Committees and their roles and procedures to ensure the coordination and harmonization of projects and programmes of the Union;

Recalling the decisions of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union at the 2002 Assembly in Durban, Republic of South Africa, on the adoption of NEPAD as an AU programme;

Recalling Decision EX.CL/Dec.238 (VIII) of the 8th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council in Khartoum, Republic of Sudan, in January 2006, inviting all Member States and international organizations to support and contribute to the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF);

Recalling also Decision EX.CL/Dec.291 (IX) of the 10th ordinary session of the AU Executive Council in Banjul, the Republic of the Gambia, July 2006 calling on Member States to implement all the commitments made in the Declaration and in particular the African Regional Action Plan on Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE);

Considering the importance and role of Telecommunication infrastructures and services, ICTs and postal systems in Africa's political, economic and social development as well as its integration process, which role can secure for the Continent greater participation in globalization;

Realizing the need for Africa to develop policies and regulations in the areas of Telecommunications/ICTs and postal systems, capable of contributing to economic development and accelerating regional integration process;

Considering that building the Information and Knowledge Society is a lever for economic and social development, as has been recognized by the World Summit on Information Society, held in two phases (Geneva and Tunis in 2005);

Taking note of the report of the senior officials and experts' meeting held from 11-13 May 2008 in Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt.

ENDORSEMENT

We hereby endorse:

1. The reference framework for the harmonization of Telecommunications/ICT policies and regulations in Africa attached to this Declaration;

2. The strategic orientation and action plan for the development of postal services in Africa attached to this Declaration;

3. The eleven ARAPKE flagship projects.

COMMITMENTS

We hereby undertake to:

Establish mechanisms to accelerate and monitor the implementation of the African Regional Action Plan on Knowledge Economy;

Work together to make Telecommunication/ICT and postal services priority instruments for Africa's economic and social development so as to achieve sustainable development and reduce poverty;

Popularize the usage of ICTs and highlight their role in the transformation of the African society into a knowledge-base society;

Harmonize the Telecommunication/ICT and postal Policies at regional and continental levels to ensure the integration of African Union Member states.

Promote and facilitate greater appropriation of ICTs by women and youths through the development of national and regional strategies and other capacity building interventions;

DECIDE AS FOLLOWS:

i. GOVERNANCE

1. The African Union Conference of Ministers in charge of Communication and Information Technologies is the highest coordination body for all ICT issues/activities in the continent. Therefore all Decisions emanating from other fora in Africa which are to be submitted to the Conference of African Ministers in charge of Communication and Information Technologies shall be communicated to the Bureau of the Conference.

2. The African Union Conference of Ministers in charge of Communication and Information Technologies should be adapted, simplified, and rationalized according to the existing African Union rules of procedure and practice, which stipulate that:

   (a) The Bureau is composed of five members as representatives of the five African regions (a Chair, three Vice Chairs and a Rapporteur) and African Union Commissioner will be an ex-officio member;

   (b) The Steering Committee will consist of:

   - One representative of each Minister-member of the Bureau.

   - One additional representative, from each of the five African regions, who are not members of the Bureau.

- One representative from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and one representative from the African Development Bank (AfDB).

- One representative from the Department of infrastructure and Energy and one representative from the Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology, as ex-officio members.

(c) NEPAD and RECs to be invited to all meetings of the Steering Committee

3. The Bureau may act on behalf of the Communication and Information Technologies Ministerial Conference to implement its decisions and conduct the necessary consultations with Member States in the respective regions, various sectors of the civil society, RECs and relevant implementing agencies;

4. The Bureau of the Conference of Ministers of Communication and Information Technologies, in coordination with the African Union Commission, is charged with convening a stakeholder's meeting to establish a cluster of implementing agencies and to mainstream and harmonize the existing programmes and projects in the ICT sector in Africa with a view to eliminating duplicating and optimizing the use of resources.

ii. TELECOMMUNICATIONS /ICT POLICIES

1. Call upon Member States and RECs to improve their national Telecommunications/ICT policies and strategies, taking into account the reference framework proposed by the African Union Commission;

2. Request the African Union Commission, with the support of Member States of the African Union and RECs, to identify appropriate mechanisms for compiling and maintaining up-to-date reliable set of statistics with regard to the development of the ICT in Africa;

3. Invite Member States of the African Union, development partners and the African private sector to identify mechanisms that can facilitate sharing of experience and best practices.

iii. POLICIES AND REGULATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF POSTAL SERVICES

1. Request Member States and RECs to improve their national postal policies taking into account the strategic orientation and the action plan proposed in the study conducted by the African Union Commission and to establish an independant regulator for posts

2. Call upon Member States to review and Strengthen the Pan African Postal Union (PAPU) in terms of financial and human resources with the support of the African Union Commission.

3. Call upon Member States to adopt modern structures, regulations and to encourage private sector investments in the postal sector by promoting Public/Private Partnership.

iv. ARAPKE

1. Request the African Union Commission and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa to work closely in mobilizing resources to accelerate the implementation of the selected ARAPKE flagship projects, considering that priority should be given to infrastructure development and capacity building;

2. Commend the efforts made by the African Union Commission under the EU-Africa partnership with regard to the selection and implementation of the three ARAPKE flagship projects;

3. Request the African Union Commission to invite Member States to furnish the Commission with a list of new projects which will be submitted to the ARAPKE working group for the selection process of the 2nd phase of the ARAPKE flagship projects.

4. Call upon the AUC and ITU to identify the mechanisms that will lead to the implementation of ARAPKE flagship projects pursuant to the commitments made at the Connect Africa Summit, Kigali, October 2007.

5. Invite the African Union Commission to submit an official proposal to the African Development Bank (AfDB) seeking support to establish Communication and Information Technologies funds before 2010 to foster the implementation of the ARAPKE.

Appreciate the role of African institutions, the United Nations agencies, International and African development partners and the private sector in supporting the African Union efforts to develop the African knowledge base society.

Adhere to the institutionalization of the Pan African Forum for the sharing of best practices in ICTs in order to encourage the greater popularization on the continent.

Request the African Union Commission to submit this Declaration at the next Assembly of the Union to the Heads of State and Government for consideration.

Express our gratitude to **H.E. President HOSNI MUBARAK** and the People of the Arab Republic of Egypt for the warm hospitality and excellent organization of this conference.

Done in Cairo, this 14 day of May 2008