

AFRICAN UNION

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UNION AFRICAINE

UNIÃO AFRICANA

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

AU/CIT/EXP/Rpt. (II)

REPORT OF EXPERTS

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The meeting of experts on Communication and Information Technologies of the Member States of the African Union was held from 11 to 13 May 2008, in the conference Centre of the Fairmont Towers Hotel, Cairo (the Arab Republic of Egypt). It was the preparatory meeting for the Second Conference of the African Union Ministers in charge of Communication and Information Technologies. Its theme was "bridging the digital divide".

II. PARTICIPATION

2. The following Member States took part in the meeting: Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Guinea Bissau.

3. The following Regional Economic Communities (RECs) also participated in the meeting: CEEAC, COMESA, and SADC.

4. The following continental and international Organizations also took part: International Telecommunications Union (ITU), Pan African Postal Union (PAPU), African Telecommunication Union (ATU), NEPAD Secretariat, African Development Bank (ADB), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), Regional African Satellite Communication Organization (RASCOM), Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF).

5. The following professional organizations and associations took part: ICANN, AfRINIC, GSMA, AfNOG, AfTLD, AFRISPA, SAPOA and Internet Society (ISOC).

6. The list of participants is annexed.

III. OPENING CEREMONY

7. At the opening ceremony the following speeches were made :

Speech of Mr. Makane Faye, Regional Adviser on the ICT at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)

8. Mr. Makane expressed and conveyed the warm greetings of the United Nations Under Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, Mr. Abdoulaye Janneh.

9. He commended the initiative of the AUC to conduct the study on harmonization of policies and regulatory frameworks on ICT in Africa and how the study could also be seen part of the implementation of AISI framework and raising to

continental level, on-going activities which are being carried out under the auspices of ECA on harmonization of regulatory frameworks at the ECOWA and CEMAC sub-regions.

10. In conclusion, Mr. Makane reassured the meeting that ECA would continue to support Member States and would accompany the AU in implementing the outcomes of the 2nd African Ministerial Conference on Communication and Information Technologies.

Speech of Mr. Brahima Sanou, Regional Representative of International Telecommunications Union (ITU) for Africa

11. In his speech, Mr. Brahima Sanou, Regional Representative of International Telecommunications Union (ITU) for Africa, noted that this meeting of experts being held six months after the "Connect Africa" Summit, held in Kigali in October 2007, and that the Summit had resulted in obtaining pledges for the contribution of \$55 billion (US dollars). He added that the ITU Bureau for the Development of Telecommunications (Geneva) was endeavoring to work with partners so that these commitments would be translated into concrete actions.

12. Mr. Sanou also highlighted the activities undertaken by the ITU in conjunction with the African Union Commission as well as the close cooperation between the two institutions.

13. Before concluding his speech Mr. Sanou reiterated that the ITU, through its Telecommunications Development Bureau, was prepared to continue its support and cooperation with the African Union Commission in the development of the Telecommunications and information technologies sector in Africa.

Speech of Mr. Aboubakari BABA-MOUSSA, Director for Infrastructure and Energy of the African Union Commission

14. After conveying his thanks to the government and the authorities of The Arab Republic of Egypt, Mr. Aboubakari illustrated the importance of the sectoral role of Telecommunications, Information and Communication Technologies in the socioeconomic development and physical integration of the continent.

15. He added that this meeting would discuss the results of activities and especially the consideration of the reference framework for the harmonization of telecommunication and ICT policies, the progress achieved in implementing ARAPKE and consideration of strategies and policies for the development postal services in Africa.

16. He concluded his intervention by saying that the reports of the two studies had been presented to the experts for consideration and would serve as a basis for discussions, so as to prepare the recommendations to be proposed to the Ministers.

Introductory speech by Ms. Samia Moussa, Deputy Director of International Relations at the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology in the Arab Republic of Egypt

17. Ms. Samia, the Chairperson of the Session, in her welcoming remarks, on behalf of the Bureau thanked the delegates for coming and wished them a nice stay in Egypt. She indicated that since the inception of the African Ministerial Conference on CIT, the forum has been the highest policy making entity under the umbrella of AU which has been both a source of honour and challenge for the continent.

18. Ms. Moussa spelt out a number of pressing issues in the CIT sector that have to be addressed in the Conference. These issues centre around the importance of a well-developed physical infrastructure, partnerships and coordination of initiatives, and issues of climatic change.

19. She also invited the delegates to update the ARAPKE implementation action plan in order to include the new issues raised after 2005, the date of launching the action plan, and she indicated that there is need to look at issues that are faced by the continent with regard to achieving ambitious goals of transforming the African countries into a knowledge/information society.

20. Finally, Ms. Samia indicated that Egypt is hoping that deliberations will be of benefit to the continent as long as there is commitment and fulfillment of the agreements.

IV. PROCEDURAL MATTERS

21. Setting up of the Bureau : The bureau of the meeting was the following : Chair-**Egypt** and Rapporteur-**Burundi**

22. The meeting adopted the following Agenda:

OPENING CEREMONY

PROCEDURAL MATTERS

- *Setting up of the Bureau*
- *Adoption of agenda and Work Programme*

INFORMATION ON ELECTION PROCEDURES OF THE BUREAU

REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE CIT MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

INFORMATION NOTE ON AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION'S ACTIVITIES ON ICT

STUDY ON THE REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR THE HARMONIZATION OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS/ICT POLICIES AND REGULATIONS IN AFRICA

- *Presentation on the Situation of the sector, challenges and priorities for action*
- *Presentation on the Reference framework for the harmonization of policies and regulations*
- *Discussions and conclusions*

STUDY ON STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND REGULATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF POSTAL SERVICES IN AFRICA

- *Presentation of Study report*
- *Discussion and conclusions*

AFRICAN REGIONAL ACTION PLAN ON THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY (ARAPKE)

- *Presentation of ARAPKE status report; flagship projects and Action Plan.*
- *Need for Updated Strategy for ICT in Africa.*
- *Discussion and conclusions.*

OTHER INITIATIVES ON ICT

- *Report on the conclusions and implementation status of the Connect Africa Summit (October 2007, Kigali);*
- *Presentation of the “one per cent digital solidarity” principle;*
- *Internet Governance Forum;*
- *Global Alliance for ICT and development (GAID) and GAID Africa Network*

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT AGENDA AND WORK PROGRAMME OF THE MINISTERIAL SESSION

CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF EXPERTS REPORT AND DECLARATIONS

CLOSING OF THE MEETING OF EXPERTS

V. INFORMATION ON ELECTION PROCEDURES OF THE BUREAU AND THE STEERING COMMITTEE

23. The African Union presented the election procedures of the Bureau of The CIT Conference and invited the participants to consult among their region to nominate one country from each region to be a member of the Bureau and another one for the steering committee.

VI. REPORT OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE AFRICAN UNION CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS IN CHARGE OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES

24. On behalf of the Steering Committee Ms. Samia Moussa listed down the outcomes of the various meetings held by the Steering Committee and the Bureau of the CIT Conference such as the selection of the 11 flagship projects and the recommendations made with regard to the resource mobilization process needed to implement them.

25. In conclusion, Ms. Samia presented for consideration some thoughts to improve the working structure of the CIT Ministerial Conference and consequently its performance and pro activeness which will take into consideration the dynamism, and the rapid change of the sector.

26. Accordingly the meeting agreed to establish a working group on the structure of the CIT Ministerial Conference, that will come up with a recommendation to be submitted to the Experts for consideration. The results of this work are indicated in point XII below.

VII. INFORMATION NOTE ON THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION'S ACTIVITIES ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

27. There was a clear clarification from the first Bureau meeting in March 2007 (on the issue of other ICT initiatives in Africa) that the mandate of the CIT Ministerial Conference extends beyond issues relating to ARAPKE. The meeting agreed that it was necessary for the Bureau to be informed about these other ICT initiatives. The Commission therefore should submit progress reports on these other initiatives of the AU for the Ministers' information and for networking purposes.

28. Accordingly, AUC briefed the meeting on the various activities, programmes and events that have been organized or attended by the commission at the Regional, Continental and International levels. The meeting commended the presentation made on the various items stated.

VIII. STUDY ON THE REFERENCE FRAMEWORK FOR THE HARMONISATION OF POLICIES AND REGULATIONS IN THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS/ICT SECTOR IN AFRICA

29. The study report entitled "**HARMONISATION OF POLICIES AND REGULATIONS IN THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS/ICT SECTOR IN AFRICA**" was presented by the African Union Commission.

30. The representative of the Commission dwelt on the following points of the study:

- Justification of the study, its implementation methodology and organization;

- The situation of the Telecommunication sector in Africa, major challenges and efforts deployed to overcome them;
- Reference framework for harmonization of Telecommunication/ICT policies and regulations in Africa: guiding principles, general objectives and implementation strategies, Plan of Action, programme proposals and study priorities.

31. Following the presentation, delegates congratulate the AUC, the High Level Committee (HLC) and consultants for the excellent work done and made the following observations:

- the study report identifies the critical elements required for the establishment of the reference framework and should be strengthened to serve as a guide at the continental, regional and national levels in achieving the ultimate goal of integration of the continent;
- appropriate mechanisms should be identified for compiling and maintaining up-to-date and reliable set of statistics with regard to the development of the ICT in Africa;
- sharing of experience and best practices amongst African ICT agencies, Member States and RECs;
- the implementation framework should provide for measurable objectives and should avoid duplication in the mobilization of resources for priority projects;
- the African Union Commission (AUC) should be the driving force for the implementation and be the custodian for the study;
- the study should as much as possible, have used updated data from Member States and from any relevant instruction;
- the current status of African Telecommunications/ICT should be updated to take into greater account some issues like the on-going NEPAD Programme on broadband infrastructure, regulation in convergence environment, etc.

32. Following the above detailed discussions on the report, the experts acknowledge and recommend adoption of the Reference Framework attached as Annex.

IX. STUDY ON THE STRATEGIES, POLICIES AND REGULATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE POSTAL SECTOR IN AFRICA

33. The study report entitled "**HARMONISATION OF POLICIES AND REGULATIONS IN THE POSTAL SECTOR IN AFRICA**" was presented by the African Union Commission.

34. The representative of the Commission underscored the following points of the study:

- Situation of the postal sector in Africa;
- Strategic orientations and recommendations for the development of the postal sector in Africa.

35. The Experts' session, after discussions, recognized the following.

- The overall size of African national postal operations in terms of postal transactions (physical, electronic and financial) lags behind its potential as measured by GDP, geographical coverage and population, and hence has a significant growth potential;
- As the modern postal network is the most extensive physical interconnected human-based network for linking organizations and households by moving money, goods, and information, its effective utilization will help increase efficiency and effectiveness of the trade, manufacturing, government services;
- That virtual (electronic) technologies complement the services and improve the performance of many services including postal services;
- The importance of market dynamics, fair competition, investment, and market awareness in development of postal services;
- That market fragmentation derails developing network-based services, including postal services;
- The ratio of postal employee/citizen ratio in Africa lacks behind modern postal operations.

36. The Experts Session on the Postal Sector recommended the following:

- To integrate the development of the postal sector as a national priority in the national plan of development;
- The establishment and improvement of national postal policies in a harmonized and coordinated manner;
- The establishment of an autonomous regulator in the field of communication;
- Implementation of universal service best practices;
- The proper investment in the modern postal network including human resource development, marketing, and automation;
- Establishment of efficient and effective organizational structures, regulations, and modern management practices such as performance management by designated postal operators;
- Promotion of Public/Private Partnership and investment in the postal sector;
- The introduction of new services e-based services and integration with the existing;
- Request AU member states who are not members of Pan African Postal Union PAPU to join the organization;

- Request member states of PAPU to Strengthen PAPU financially and with human resources through the African Union Commission;
- Ask the AUC to undertake studies for implementation of the recommendations including harmonization of policies and regulatory framework while taking account of what has already been done by RECs;
- Adopt the action plan (annex 2) as a framework for the review and strengthening of the postal sector.

37. The Experts Session on the Postal Sector believes that implementation of the above recommendations would accelerate the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (poverty eradication, employment etc) and regional integration.

X. AFRICAN REGIONAL ACTION PLAN ON KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY (ARAPKE)

38. The presentation on ARAPKE made by the African Union Commission covered different items related to the implementation of the action plan. A brief history on the ARAPKE and its flagship project selection as well as the resource mobilization process, were also highlighted during the presentation. Special attention was drawn to the ongoing efforts AUC-EU efforts to allocate funds for the implementation of five projects that have been agreed upon under the AU-EU partnership and the AU-EU Action Plan and Joint Strategy (2008-2010) that was adopted by the Lisbon Summit in Portugal on 9th December 2007. The five projects include three projects from the selected flagship projects of ARAPKE.

39. The AUC underscored the need for submitting more projects to the working group in order to keep the process going. The Representative of the AUC stressed on the necessity for more cooperation among the key stakeholders in Africa and the world to mobilize the needed resources for the implementation process.

40. The discussion was mostly dwelt on the selection of the 11 projects for the CIT Ministerial Conference endorsement. Under the AU-EU Partnership, five projects have been identified out of which three are from the ARAPKE flagship project. Accordingly, the meeting agreed to recommend to ministers the endorsement of the selected flagship projects under ARAPKE, and consequently the three projects agreed upon with the EU.

41. The meeting also stressed on the need to streamline and harmonize the ongoing projects, so that the new projects could benefit from the already existing structures in Africa.

42. Furthermore, commend the efforts made by the AUC under the EU-Africa partnership to implement ARAPKE and its flagship projects and also acknowledge selecting three projects so far for implementation.

43. The following recommendations were adopted by the Experts:

- To endorse the 11 selected ARAPKE flagship projects by the CITMC.

- ARAPKE Working group should meet and look at streamlining, coordinating and considering new projects under ARAPKE selection criteria and process.
- Call upon AUC to investigate on AU/ITU coordination areas in order to solicit adoption of ARAPKE Flagship Projects among Connect Africa Summit's Projects.
- Update the ARAPKE and have proper timeframes for action plans taking into consideration the new emerging pertinent issues affecting the continent e.g. climate change, IPRs, Internet Security, etc.
- The Conference should look at new funding elements for the selected projects
- The need to take on board the African Development Bank as the main financial institution on the continent.
- In mobilizing funds for project implementations; priority should be given to infrastructure capacity, in order to realize the objectives of the other priority projects.

XI. OTHER ICT INITIATIVES

ITU Report on the conclusions of the October 2007 "Connect Africa" Summit in Kigali (Rwanda) and the status of their implementation;

44. After recalling the origins of the Summit and the situation of the Telecommunication/ICT sector in Africa, the ITU Representative reviewed the conclusions of the Summit, which consist of five (5) objectives to be met between 2012 and 2015 in the area of broad band infrastructures, regulations, capacity building, national internet strategies and the connection of villages.

45. Several partners, including the GSM Association, the World Bank, the ITU, the AfDB Group and the European Union, made commitments to contribute to the implementation of these objectives.

46. He further informed the participants of what is expected of African countries, namely, the appropriation of the Kigali process, the creation of conditions conducive for investments and contributions in mobilizing resources.

47. With regard to progress on the implementation of the Kigali conclusions, the ITU Representative indicated that the following major actions were undertaken:

- Mobilization of resources; elaboration of project documents;
- Coordination: missions, meetings of "Connect Africa" partners, project launching meeting, follow-up on regulatory harmonization activities.

PRESENTATION BY GSMA ASSOCIATION

48. Despite the success to date of the ICT industry in Africa, the private sector recognizes that there is much work still to be done, in order to bridge the digital divide in Africa. Primarily, industry and governments should work together in order to ensure

a balanced regulatory environment which promotes investment and growth, as well as business expansion in the African region.

PRESENTATION OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE DIGITAL SOLIDARITY FUND (DSF) ON THE 1% DIGITAL SOLIDARITY PRINCIPLE

49. In the DSF presentation it was stated that even if all member countries of United Nations join the DSF and pay their contributions, the resources would still not be sufficient to address the challenges of the digital divide. It is this consideration that made the DSF to explore other alternative means of generating stable income to reduce the digital divide.

50. Within the debate on innovative means on funding development, the Global Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF) has proposed an innovative form of contribution called the 1% digital solidarity principle related to ICT public procurements, the proceeds of which will be allocated specially to fight the digital divide.

51. The digital solidarity clause has no financial impact on the organizations and countries that applies it, as the financial contribution is paid by the vendor or company that wins the service contract. The ICT companies (the vendors) suffer no losses, as the DSF will reinvest this 1% in ICT equipment and services. Furthermore, by investing the money in ICT equipment and services in populations with insolvent demands, the ICT markets will be expanded, creating new opportunities for the vendors. DSF urges and calls on all African countries that are yet to join the DSF to do so.

Intel Presentation

52. ICT and fast-affordable broadband connectivity are paramount to bridging the digital divide and improving the standard of living for global citizens. In order to promote the success of ICT and broadband in Africa, it is important to:

- Create technology and service-neutral policies that promote competition, investment and broadband growth;
- Implement policies to reduce artificially high broadband service costs;
- Assign more spectrum in a technology and service-neutral manner for broadband wireless access;
- Establish Universal Service Funds and make available, in a technology and competitive-neutral manner, broadband applications to underserved and high cost areas
- Create national Broadband/Internet Strategies and Programs (e-inclusion etc) and promote them by creating targeted competitively-neutral assistance.
- Global Alliance for ICT and development (GAID) and GAID Africa Network

Presentation on the African Network of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID):

53. The GAID-Africa framework was designed to provide a lightweight framework to provide the requisite and easily implementable modalities for ensuring Africa's effective participation in the GAID process. It also provides a suitable framework for

identifying and implementing Africa-specific initiatives. The objective was to put in place a structure which would not compete with existing initiatives but instead would be operationalized through them. The expectation is that by implementing the proposed framework Africa, working through its constituencies: governments, private sector, civil society and academia, would play an effective and active role in the GAID process including:

- mainstreaming GAID's activities and initiatives into on-going ICT4D initiatives on the continent, including AISI and ARAPKE; and
- Contributing to the overall GAID policy-dialogue process on advancing the global ICT4D agenda and making African views reflected

Presentation on ICANN

54. Introduction on ICANN and the transformation phases it has been through was made during the presentation. The thinking behind ICANN creation is to have an effective mechanism for technical self-management by the global Internet community serving a globalized economy.

55. The ICANN' mandate is to ensure a single, interoperable Internet, inclusive expression of the various languages and identities and efficient deployment of resources in support of a global network.

56. On key elements and ongoing work at ICANN, Ms. Inne, briefed the meetings on gTLDs, WHOIS, IP/RIRs and Strategic and also on Operating Planning Process.

57. ICANN gave examples of challenges that are facing the internet in the future e.g. spam and phishing, attacks at DNS level, attacks at routing level, and fraud/IP spoofing.

58. ICANN encourages more participation from the African member states on issues of its concern to be taken into account at global level.

Presentation on IGF

59. The IGF presentation outlined the evolution process of the forum and the previous two phases which were conducted in Athens and Rio de Janeiro. The IGF themes covered various topics e.g. Access, Diversity, Openness, Security and Critical Internet Resources.

60. Africa has organized two workshops during the coursework of the 2nd IGF. The African participation in the 2nd IGF in Rio de Janeiro was 10% of the total participation, and since the 4th IGF will be in Cairo, Egypt the African society requested to participate more actively and collectively in the 3rd IGF in India as a preparatory stage for Cairo.

61. IGF encourages participation from the African member states at the issues of its concern to be taken into account at the global level.

Note on the best Practices on ICT

62. The Burkina Faso delegation indicated that following an initiative by the President of Burkina Faso, H.E. Blaise Compaore and the Chairman of Microsoft Africa, Mr. C. M. Diarra, two fora on best practices on ICT were held in Ouagadougou with the assistance of AfDB, ECA and EU. Noting the success of these two fora, the delegation wished that African Union might agree to support the regular holding of this forum in order to maintaining it as a forum for exchanges on best practices on ICT.

XII. GOVERNANCE

63. Recalling that the African Union Conference of Ministers on CIT is the highest coordination body for all ICT issues/activities in the continent, all decisions emanating from other fora in Africa should be endorsed by the Bureau and Conference of Ministers on CIT.

64. It was decided that the AU CIT Ministerial conference's programmes and activities should be aligned, streamlined, and rationalized according to the existing AU principles, practices and rules of procedure. In this regard:

- The Bureau is composed of five members as representatives of the five African regions (a Chair, three Vice Chairs and a Rapporteur) and the African Union Commissioner will be an ex-officio member;
- The Steering Committee will consist of:
 - Five representatives for each of the Minister members in the Bureau.
 - Five representatives from the Member States which are not members of the Bureau, one from each region.
 - Two representatives for the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and African Development Bank (AfDB).
 - Two representatives for the Department of infrastructure and Energy and the Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology, as ex-officio members.
- RECs to be invited to all meetings of the Steering Committee
- The Bureau and the Steering Committee Members are to be elected during the African Union Ministerial Conference on CIT Sessions.

65. The Bureau is requested to act on behalf of the CIT 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.

66. Authorize the CIT Bureau in coordination with the African Union Commission to convene a stakeholder' meeting to establish a cluster of implementing agencies and to mainstream and harmonize the existing programmes and projects in the Telecommunication/ICT sector in Africa with a view to eliminating duplication and reducing wastefulness of resources.

XIII. CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT AGENDA AND WORK PROGRAMME OF THE MINISTERIAL SESSION

67. The experts considered the Agenda and Work Programme of the Ministerial Session to be submitted to the Ministers

CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT AND DECLARATION OF EXPERTS

68. After Adoption of their report, the experts considered the Draft Declaration to be submitted to the Ministers.

XIV. CLOSING OF THE EXPERT'S SESSION

69. The Chair thanked the experts and the participants for the quality of work and high spirit expressed during the entire session. The African Union Commission reiterated its gratitude to the Government of Egypt and the Participants.