



Directorate of Information and Communication

Press Release N°096 / 2012
**COMMUNICATING ABOUT AFRICA NOW A MAJOR STRATEGIC
ACTIVITY AS AFRICA SEEKS TO REBRAND ITSELF**

Communication officers of the African Union meeting to agree on a common communication strategy



Addis Ababa, October 3, 2012- As Africa seeks to rebrand itself and take a more active role in shaping how it is perceived, communication officers of the African Union are gathered at the Union's headquarters in Addis Ababa to agree on a coherent, Union wide communication strategy for the period 2013- 2016. This is the first time the Union has gathered its communication

officers for strategic planning purposes.

The meeting of communication managers and officers from the organs, offices and programmes of the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, some of its member states and development partners will deliberate on the common strategic plan over the next 3 days. Leading the process will be the AU Commission's Directorate of Information and Communication (DIC). Its Director, Mrs Habiba Mejri Cheikh will be coordinating the whole process. Participants will be working from a draft document that was produced by an expert consultant earlier this year.

The AU communication strategy document will focus on both internal and external communication. It will review the current situation of communication within the AU: assess the progress made and the challenges faced. It will identify areas needing collaboration among the different communication actors in the AU, as well as make recommendations. It will also identify the key internal and external stakeholders and the most appropriate channels to use in communicating with them.

In the process of agreeing the common communication strategy, officers will discuss in detail, the aspect of how Africa shares and receives information of integration and development within its borders. This is with a view to providing maximum information

to African citizens so that they can participate in the development process from an informed point of view. According to the AU Commission's Deputy Chairperson, the continent should not wait for outsiders to inform its citizens about events within the continent.

"Africa should not see itself through a third party but from within itself", said Mr. Mwencha at today's opening session of the strategic planning workshop.

Adoption and use of new media will be a prominent consideration, as these media offer easier and faster ways of communicating. Further to this, the strategic plan will ensure that all the communication emanating from the African Union and Regional Economic Communities is professionally done and serves the continent's best interests, in terms of portraying both the continent's successes and challenges, for consumption by African and international audiences.



The need for more strategic, coherent and effective communication by the African Union has become more apparent as the African continent has progressed and its citizens as well as its partners in the global community expect more information. As indicated by the AUC Deputy Chairperson, access to information is a human right, and the African Union holds information in trust. It therefore has an obligation to provide that information to the public.

He also indicated that the way Africa is perceived around the world now matters more than ever, because in today's world, perceptions have a cost. That cost, he explained, is evident in the levels of investment that flow into the continent. "What we see on TV and hear on the radio everyday influences our minds" the Deputy Chairperson said. Therefore the more positively Africa is perceived, the more it will be able to attract investment, thereby creating more opportunities for its people and ultimately raising the standards of living. In this way, effective communication by the African Union will be contributing in a strategic way to the attainment of the vision of

the African Union, i.e. that of a peaceful, prosperous and integrated continent, driven by its own citizens.

Note for Editors.

The African Union is composed of 54 African member states. On 9 September 1999, the Heads of State and Government of the then Organisation of African Unity issued a Declaration (the Sirte Declaration) calling for the establishment of an African Union, with a view, inter alia, to accelerating the process of integration on the continent, to enable it to play its rightful role in the global economy while addressing multifaceted social, economic and political problems. The AU was formally launched in Durban in July 2002.

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