AFRICAN UNION **UNION AFRICAINE**

الاتحاد الأفريقي **UNIÃO AFRICANA**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia P. O. Box 3243 Telephone: +251 11 551 7700 / +251 11 518 25 58/ Ext 2558
Website: www.au.int

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Press Release

Landmark Court Ruling Kicks Off African Web Domain

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – 27 February, 2017: After years of legal battles, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) has finally delegated the dotAfrica (.africa) generic top-level domain to the ZA Central Registry (ZACR). The delegation comes after a lengthy and protracted legal challenges that saw a delay in the designation process.

The African Union Commission, through a procurement process, selected and signed an agreement with Uniforum trading as ZACR to operate dotAfrica (.Africa) on behalf of the African Union. In 2014, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), which is a worldwide web administrator, awarded the delegation of dotAfrica to ZACR after a bidding process.

However, DotConnectAfrica (DCA), which was the only other bidder for the name, challenged ICANN's decision in a US court, resulting in delays. However, the legal process ended after DCA lost the motion in a Californian court for a preliminary injunction to stop ICANN's delegation of the domain name to ZACR.

"This essentially means that the decision would clear the way for ZACR and the AUC to begin registering Africa's websites to jump-start economic growth and build a shared online identity among Africans," H.E. Dr. Elham Mahmoud Ibrahim, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy at the African Union Commission stated.

A pan African Steering Committee (SteerCom) has been established to provide leadership and oversight over both the application process and the launch of the dotAfrica top-level domain, as well as to provide a vehicle through which the broader African community may participate in the project. The SteerCom is also the precursor to the dotAfrica Foundation.

"The delegation also paves the way to start the process to create the dotAfrica Foundation that will oversee various developmental projects and initiatives relating to the Internet in Africa", the Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy opined.

Availability of the dotAfrica domain will commence in July 2017, at about which time the general public can apply for their dotAfrica domain names.

For further information contact
Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission I E-mail: DIC@africa-union.org
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