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Directorate of Information and Communication

PRESS RELEASE

The African Union calls for accelerating the creation of a single digital market for Africa and Strengthening of the Broadband Commission



Kigali, Rwanda – 11th May, 2018: The fourth Transform Africa Summit, an annual continental forum that convenes global and regional leaders from government, business and international organizations to collaborate on new ways of shaping, accelerating and sustaining Africa’s on-going digital revolution was held from 8-10 May 2018 in Kigali, Rwanda. The Summit was preceded by the Smart Africa Steering Committee held on 6th May 2018 and

the broadband commission meeting held on 7th May 2018.

In his opening address, H.E. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda stated that Africans must work harder to ensure that African private capital is mobilized to participate fully in major projects on the continent.

“There is this myth that we always have to look outside the continent to fund major initiatives. But this simply cannot be true when Africa is losing billions every year through lost taxes, sending private assets abroad, and other factors. We are not poor, not at all. The issue has more to do with the mindset, that it is normal to use our money for consumption, while we leave strategic, long-term investing to others. It means that no matter how much we earn, we would remain poor. Whether this comes from colonialism or not, is irrelevant. It is up to us to identify mindsets that hold us back as a continent, and change how we do business.” Said H.E. President Paul Kagame.

In her remarks at the Transform Africa Leaders' Summit on the building blocks for a successful single digital market for Africa, H.E. Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, AU Commissioner for Infrastructure & Energy, noted that Internet has already increased cross-border trade and this is only going to accelerate with the advent of three AU flagship projects namely, the Africa's Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the Single African Air Transport Market and the Protocol on the Free Movement which are crucial to Africa's integration and that will lead to a unified market that will open up immense sources of jobs to our youths.

She further highlighted that in order to accelerate the creation of a single digital market for Africa, there is a need to have similar or common rules across the continent to ensure a more predictable legal environment for companies trying to scale across a region. This implies pursuing a basic strategy of harmonization and building bridges between regulators and policy makers.

On the side lines of the Transform Africa Summit, H.E. Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, AU Commissioner for Infrastructure & Energy, also co-chaired the 10th SMART Africa Steering Committee and attended the SMART Africa Board meeting which considered and approved a number of projects.



SMART Africa is an initiative within the framework of the Presidential Infrastructure Championship Initiative (PICI). The Steering Committee is composed of Ministers of ICT, International Organizations, and Private Sector and is Co-Chaired by the AU Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy & the ITU Secretary General. The Board is composed of Heads of State of SMART Africa member countries, the AU Commissioner of Infrastructure and Energy and the Secretary General of ITU.

H.E. Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, AU Commissioner for Infrastructure & Energy, also participated as a new Commissioner in the broadband commission meeting that preceded the Transform Africa Summit. The meeting, committed to concrete actions that will advance the roll-out of broadband around the world – and with it, much-needed digital connectivity, which is necessary for the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In his opening address to the Broadband Commission, H.E. President Paul Kagame said: "Africa's economic transformation requires broadband infrastructure with an emphasis on both access and affordability. The reality is that all other digital services whether in commerce or education or healthcare run on top of broadband. Africa's size, geography and settlement patterns mean that we must rely on a variety of different technologies to deliver broadband including satellite, fibre optic and mobile. It is up to us to lead the way in driving innovation both in policy and business models in order to speed up the provision of broadband where it has been slowest to reach."

During the broadband meeting, H.E. Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, AU Commissioner for Infrastructure & Energy, moderated the session on boosting broadband in Africa. The session considered some of the specific issues facing Africa in terms of the evolution of local markets, regulation and local content.

The AU Commission in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia also organized a session on e-Government. The session examined how E-Government solutions are transforming public service delivery by improving efficiency in government and creating accountability & transparency and providing access to information. In line with the African Union 2018 theme: "*Combating corruption, a sustainable path to Africa's transformation*", the session gave some perspectives in harnessing e-Government potentials to contribute to achieving this theme. It also considered how e-Government is advancing e-participation through citizen engagement and participation.

H.E. Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, AU Commissioner for Infrastructure & Energy also gave a keynote address at the SMART Africa Women Summit where she encouraged Member states to develop ICT policies and strategies that promote women's digital empowerment and gender inclusion.

The SMART Africa Women Summit included awarding of 10 female contestants from across Africa that competed in the final round for this year's *Miss Geek Africa* title, an annual competition encouraging girls to address community challenges through technology.

Ms Salissou Hassane Latifa, 21, of Niger, was crowned Miss Geek Africa 2018 and won a cash prize of 3 Million Rwandan francs, a laptop, and a smart phone. She designed an app called "First Responder", which informs the community on first aid for accident victims before the ambulance arrives.

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