

AFRICAN UNION		UNION AFRICAINE
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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia P. O. Box 3243 Telephone: +251 11 5517700/+251 11 5182558/Ext 2558
Web site: www.au.int

Directorate of Information and Communication

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Smart infrastructure accelerate regional integration, say experts at African Union STC on Energy, Transport and Tourism



Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt, 14 April 2019: The second ordinary session of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee meeting on Transport, Transcontinental and Interregional Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism (STC-TTIIET) kicked off in Cairo today, with emphasis on the importance of smart infrastructure to accelerate Africa's integration.

The weeklong event will weigh and evaluate this year's theme "Developing SMART Infrastructure to boost Africa's Continental Transformation and Integration" against the backdrop of a clarion call on the continent's leaders to embrace technology on the margins of the 32nd African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government during a high level luncheon dubbed "Digital Transformation for Africa: leaping into the African Century."

The Minister of Electricity and Renewable Energy of the Arab Republic of Egypt, H.E. Dr. Mohamed Shaker El Markabi, who officially opened the meeting, warmly welcomed the delegates to Cairo and informed the meeting that the STC-TTIIET provides an excellent platform to promote the decisive role of infrastructure in the development of the continent.

"This platform also presents us with another opportunity to emphasize the importance of partnerships in the development of Infrastructure as a real catalyst for economic growth and poverty reduction in Africa," the Minister underscored.

The Minister affirmed his Government's commitment to support the development of the continent.

In his contribution, the African Union Commission Director for Infrastructure and Energy, Mr. Cheikh Bedda said that the second edition of the STC meeting on Transport, Transcontinental and Interregional Infrastructure, Energy and Tourism (STC-TTIIET) is the culmination of a process that started in March 2017 in Lomé, Togo, with the first meeting of the STC.

Speaking of the significant progress achieved since the last STC in Energy, Transport and Tourism, Mr. Bedda underscored, “The launch of the Single Africa Air Transport Market (SAATM) in January 2018 was historic as the first AU Agenda 2063 flagship project to be realised”.

“Infrastructure connectivity and availability of sufficient, reliable, affordable and sustainable energy are key ingredients for maximizing the benefits to be reaped from the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) another Agenda 2063 flagship project, which was launched at a special Summit of AU Heads of State in Kigali, Rwanda in March 2018. The Commission is, therefore, laying emphasis on developing SMART infrastructure and provision of energy for productive uses, industrialization and promotion of trade in goods and services among AU Member States”, the Director intimated.



The Director’s statement was echoed in remarks by other speakers during the opening session.

In his remarks, representing the African Development Bank, Mr. Mike Salawou, stated that the continuing demand for effective infrastructure services delivery at the regional and continental levels to promote cross-border trade calls for the development of smart and integrated infrastructure.

“The African Development Bank has understood the imperatives of smart infrastructure and has been promoting Smart Mobility, Smart Energy infrastructure and Smart digital layers through the Bank’s High 5, supplemented by the targets of sufficient power generation and intelligent infrastructure” Mr. Salawou noted.

This call was concurred by the representative of the African Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD), Mr. Symerre Grey-Johnson, who focused his intervention on the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), the continental reference programme for infrastructure, which promotes Smart Infrastructure to boost continental transformation and integration.

“As we enter into the fourth industrial revolution, we have to ensure that our policies and guiding frameworks for infrastructure development evolve and to develop the complementary skills that will drive smart infrastructure that Africa urgently requires,” Mr. Grey-Johnson opined.

Over two days, the Experts will consider and deliberate on a number of issues on their agenda including: taking stock of the implementation of the last STC decisions as embodied by the sectoral Action Plans and set the vision for the next two years. The meeting will also consider the preliminary findings of the Mid Term Review of the first Priority Action Plan of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA PAP 1). It is, therefore, expected that PIDA PAP 2 will build upon PIDA PAP 1 but will also be radically different in the way it addresses pressing needs on the continent including jobs, youth and women, low access to energy and other basic infrastructure among rural communities.

The meeting, jointly organized by the African Union Commission, the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), convened over 400 experts from Ministries responsible for Transport (i.e. Air, Road, Railway and Maritime Transport), Energy and Tourism sectors from 38 AU Member States, the Regional Economic Communities, the regional development banks and financial institutions, the continental specialized organizations, academia, private sector and civil society, and representatives from the development partners and international organizations involved in energy, transport and tourism.

The meeting will also feature the soft launch of the African Women in Infrastructure Network (AWIN) dubbed “Promoting inclusion and participation of women along the infrastructure Value Chains”, which will be held to guide the establishment of the network and enable stakeholders initiate the process of scoping the vision and structure of the network.

The Experts Session will end on 15 April, and it will present its conclusions and recommendations to the Ministerial Session, which will open on Tuesday, 16 April 2019.

The outcomes of the Second Ordinary Session of the STC-TTIIET will be submitted for adoption by the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government at its Ordinary Session in July 2019.

For further information contact

Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | E-mail: dic@africa-union.org | Web Site: www.au.int | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia

Media inquiry Contacts:

Sophia Nesri | PIDA Information Analyst | Department of Infrastructure and Energy | African Union Commission | E-mail: sophian@africa-union.org | Web Site: www.au.int | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia

Molalet Tsedeke; Directorate of Information and Communication; African Union Commission; +251911-630-631; molalett@africa-union.org

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