Press Release

African Digital Transformation Strategy and African Union Communication and Advocacy Strategy among major AU initiatives in final declaration of STCCICT3

Sharm El Sheik, Egypt 26 October 2019- African ministers responsible for communication, and information and communication technologies (CICT) have adopted the 2019 Sharm El Sheikh declaration, that puts special focus on the African Digital Transformation Strategy (DTS) and the African Union Communication and Advocacy Strategy (CAS), as well as the Union's Brand and Communication Style Guideline.

The ministers, meeting in their third Specialised Technical Committee (STC-CICT3) meeting, affirmed the role of digital technologies and innovation in the achievement of the vision and goals of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa is based on foundation pillars, critical sectors to drive the digital transformation, and cross cutting themes to support the digital ecosystem. It also

includes policy recommendations and actions under each foundational pillar, critical sectors and cross-cutting themes.

The CAS, for the period 2018 -2023, identifies and prioritises the key activities to be implemented to ensure that the AU is seen as a "People Centred Organisation and the only truly pan-African organisation working to ensure inclusive and sustainable growth for the African continent and its citizens.

At the end of the meeting, the ministers agreed to open the DTS for online contributions until the 8th of November 2019. They requested the AU Commission to finalise the document by 11th November and submit it for consideration and adoption at the Union's summit in January 2020. They also directed the Commission to launch the AU Media Awards and the African Factbook.

The ministers requested member states to:
- Promote and implement the DTS as the common digitalization agenda for the continent upon its adoption;
- Use the Policy and Regulatory Initiative for Digital Africa (PRIDA) Digital Platform as a space to build an African Common Position, coordinate and distribute roles to each stakeholder, share experiences and best practices, and exchange lessons learned on ICT and digital policies;
- Include postal digitalization in both national priorities and digital strategies, pursue the digitization of postal financial services, and set up a cashless system;
- Accelerate the establishment of their national IGFs, and support national and regional IGFs;
- Accelerate the ratification of the Malabo Convention on cyber security and personal data protection;
- Encourage the use of DOT Africa
- Encourage national broadcasters to disseminate content produced by the AU, including the editing of AU produced films to make them available in national and local languages in order to reach the widest audiences;
- Establish a working group on Artificial intelligence to study
  a. The creation of a common African stance on Artificial Intelligence (AI),
  b. The development of an Africa wide capacity building framework
  c. Establishment of an AI think tank to assess and recommend projects to collaborate on in line with Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals

The ministers commended the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe for funding the process for the creation of the first edition of the Africa Factbook, and called upon Member States to fund subsequent publications on a rotational basis. They also commended the Republic of South Africa on her offer to assist the AUC to hasten the refurbishment and operationalization of the AU Studio.

The bureau of the STC for the next two years was elected as follows:

Chair: Egypt- Northern Africa
1st Vice Chair: Burundi- Central Africa
2nd Vice Chair: Malawi- Southern Africa
3rd Vice Chair: Sierra Leone- Western Africa
Rapporteur: Djibouti- Eastern Africa

At the meeting's opening session on the 25th October, the Egyptian Minister of Communications and ICT Dr Amr Talaat stressed the strategic importance of ICTs in the socio economic development of Africa. He further highlighted the transforming power of artificial intelligence (AI).

African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy Dr Amani Abou Zeid highlighted the need for African countries to work together to ensure connectivity and access to all Africans before 2030. She also emphasised the importance of adopting the Digital Transformation Strategy as a blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa's economy and societies. The ministerial meeting followed that of the experts which ran from 22 to 24 October.

Other speakers at the opening ceremony were Ambassador Dina Mufti, who was representing Ethiopia as Chair of the outgoing bureau, and Mr Houlin Zhao, the Secretary General of the International Telecommunications Union.

The full 2019 Sharm El Sheikh Declaration of the STC CICT3 and the Ministerial Report are available on www.au.int.

For media inquiries contact:
Wynne Musabayana | Head of Communication | Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | Tel: (251) 11 551 77 00 | Fax: (251) 11 551 78 44 | E-mail: DIC@africa-union.org | Web: www.au.int|Addis Ababa | Ethiopia

Follow us
Face book: https://www.facebook.com/AfricanUnionCommission
Twitter: https://twitter.com/_AfricanUnion
YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/AUCommission
Learn more at: http://www.au.int