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DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

## PRESS RELEASE

### EGYPT HOSTS 3<sup>RD</sup> ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN UNION STC ON COMMUNICATION AND ICT

**Sharm El Sheikh, 22 October 2019** The Third Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Specialized Committee (STC) on Communication and Information Technology (ICT) opened on 22 October 2019 in Sharm El Sheikh, Arab Republic of Egypt, with a strong call on member countries and the AU to build consensus on integrated connectivity roadmap, establish a continental cyber security guard and elaborate efficient communication strategies to bring the African Union closer to the African people, among others.

Addressing the experts on behalf of the African Union Commission (AUC), Mr. Moctar Yedaly, Head of Information Society of the Department of Information and Energy began by inviting the participants to observe a minute of silence in memory of the former Minister of ICT of Egypt, Dr Tarek who passed away two weeks ago. He welcomed the participants to the 3rd ordinary session of the AU STC on Communication and ICT. "It is important to redefine the narrative of our mother continent in this digital age where information and different kind of content can be produced and distributed to a worldwide audience in real time". He explained that African experts on Communication and ICT should put hands on deck to work together and take advantage of the existing traditional and digital communication tools and channels "to engage with our people in Africa, in the Diaspora and throughout the world".

According to Mr. Moctar, the African Union needs its audiences to understand and appreciate the developments happening on the continent as well as the good and inspiring progress taking place in many countries, as well as the phenomenal work being undertaken by the AU to transform the lives of the citizens under Agenda 2063. He pointed out that, the AU Commission together with its Organs are working on various communication plans and strategies to make sure it brings the African Union closer to the African people.

"We live in the era of digital and networked economies qualified as the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial era. Therefore, the formal frameworks used to design and structure firms/organizations, lead, govern are being totally transformed. The driving force behind this accelerating change is the digital or collaborative economy i.e. a shift from firm-based to network-based business models. Today's leading organizations in the world are network-centric and are creating remarkable economic returns by capitalizing on network advantages", Mr. Moctar explained. "It is unfortunate that some of our leaders and a big number of our people still feel that this TECHNOLIGCAL and network disruption is a distant concern for our

endeavors or irrelevant for our industry....therefore, it is our duty as experts to create our smart or digital leaders”, he added.

In his welcome remarks, the representative of the host country, Mr. Amr Farouk Safiwat, Manager of African Organizations in the Ministry of ICT, Egypt, welcomed the participants and thanked the African Union Commission for accepting to organize this important meeting in Sharm El Sheikh. He highlighted some of the existing challenges facing the sector of communication and ICT saying that, to face these huge challenges it is important to .create a conducive environment and reinforce the capacity of member states to overcome these problems. He noted that many African nations are still lagging behind when it comes to the use of internet due to poor infrastructure among others.

The Chair of the 3<sup>rd</sup> STC on Communication and ICT Experts meeting, Dr-Eng Abiot Sinamo, Director General, ICT sector, Ministry of Innovation and Technology, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in his opening speech, recalled that, the two previous SCT meetings which had gathered key players and concerned stakeholders of these sectors; including the Ministers responsible of ICT and Post, the Ministers in charge of Communication and Information from AU member States, AU Specialized Institutions and International Organizations, African and International Partners of Africa dealing with Communication and Information Technologies; committed to promote the implementation of previously adopted decisions and declarations.

These include: the establishment of Pan African Radio and Television Channels; AU Communication and advocacy Strategy 2014-2017; AU Branding Campaign; Agenda 2063 and its Communication Strategy; African media development initiatives (Pan African Media Observatory, Pan African Media Network and Pan African Media Portal); Safety and Protection of African Journalists; Pan African Platform on Access to Information (APAI); Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA); Implementation of Dot Africa; African Internet Exchange Point (AXIS); Harmonization of Policies and Regulation; Action Plan for the Development of the Postal Sector in Africa notably the addressing and the postcodes system, the connectivity and electrification of post offices in rural areas, and the financial inclusion of the low-income population; Pan African e-Network for Tele medicine and Tele education (PAeN); SMART Africa Manifesto; and One Africa Network Initiative.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Wynne Musabayana, Head of Communication who was representing the Directorate of Information and Communication (DIC), updated the participants on the activities of the DIC including the different strategies put in place to bring the population closer to the continental organization.

For three days, the experts in communication and Information Technology are expected to consider the African Union Digital Transformation Strategy which aims at harnessing digital technologies and innovation to transform Africa’s societies and economies to promote Africa’s integration, generate inclusive economic growth, stimulate job creation, erase the digital divide and eradicate poverty to secure the benefits of digital revolution for socio-economic development. They will also exchange views on the strategy for

unlocking access to basic infrastructure and services to rural and remote areas, cyber security issues, building the AU brand and promotion of Agenda 2063, as well as the action plan for the sustainability of the Pan African E-Network project, among others.

The experts' meeting ends tomorrow 24 October 2019, with a report to be presented to the ministerial session that will hold from 25 to 26 October 2019, for consideration and adoption.

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