



**EXTRA-ORDINARY MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE SPECIALIZED
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATION AND ICT**

5th MAY 2020 THROUGH VIDEO CONFERENCE

DECLARATION

DRAFT
**DECLARATION OF EXTRA-ORDINARY MEETING OF THE BUREAU OF THE
SPECIALIZED TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATION AND ICT**

05 May 2020
By Videoconference

PREAMBLE

WE, the Ministers in charge of Communication and ICT, meeting through Video conferencing on 5th May 2020 as the Bureau of **the Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and ICT**, organized by the African Union Commission (AUC) to consider strategies and actions to support the continental strategy on COVID-19 pandemic;

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION Outcomes of the meetings of the African Union (AU) Bureau of Heads of State and Government held respectively on 26 March 2020 and 03 April 2020 regarding Africa's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the meeting of the Economic Commission for Africa with African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development on 19 March 2020;

ACKNOWLEDGING the efforts made by the AUC, AU Specialized Agencies and ICT Organizations Executive Management in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic;

APPLAUDING the agreement to establish continental ministerial coordination committees on Health, Finance and Transport in order to support the comprehensive continental strategy;

RECALLING Executive Council Decision [EX.CL/Dec. 1074(XXXVI)] that endorsed the Digital transformation Strategy for Africa with a vision to have an Integrated and inclusive digital society and economy in Africa that improves the quality of life of Africa's citizens, strengthen the existing economic sector, enable its diversification and development, and ensure continental ownership with Africa as a producer and not only a consumer in the global economy;

RECOGNIZING that the COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated that the digital divide, exacerbates economic inequality and lack of opportunity and it curtails access to health care and pandemic information;

BEARING IN MIND the unprecedented demand for digital technologies to facilitate containment of the spread of COVID-19.

HEREBY COMMIT OURSELVES TO:

1. **WORK** together to ensure a coordinated continental response to the COVID-19 pandemic and mitigate its impacts
2. **CONTINUE** developing policies and regulations to facilitate deployment of digital tools to improve COVID-19 responses

3. **ENCOURAGE** development partners to provide support to make use of existing technologies to manage COVID-19 pandemic.

HEREBY REQUEST MEMBER STATES TO:

4. **PUT** in place and support policies and regulations to facilitate deployment of digital tools and enable cross sector and interoperability of data to improve COVID-19 responses

5. **STRENGTHEN** digital capacity of health and national & regional diagnostic and laboratories workers.

6. **IDENTIFY** spectrum that can be exceptionally released to enhance broadband connectivity to facilitate the management of COVID-19 pandemic

7. **PROMOTE** zero-rating of access to health and educational content as a critical and urgent intervention, to counter the pandemic and to support learners and students confined to home due the closure of schools, colleges and universities.

8. **USE** digital Platforms, Portals and applications especially those developed by Africans for Africans, that can help Trace, Track and Test people who have come into contact with an infected persons while balancing health imperatives and privacy concerns and data protection.

9. **BUILD** partnerships with private technology companies, social entrepreneurs, national and international organizations to make use of existing technologies to manage the COVID-19 crisis.

10. **ENCOURAGE** the design of new applications and services to help in the fight against COVID-19, to facilitate services such as delivering food and other essential items to those most in need by optimizing the entire supply chain via digital government services.

11. **CONNECT** the unconnected to ensure all citizens benefit from the use of digital technologies in the management of pandemics

12. **CONNECT** and involve post offices in the implementation of strategies to fight against COVID-19 including remittances and e-Services

FURTHER DIRECTS THE AU COMMISSION TO:

13. **DEVELOP** a continental data policy and regulation framework to achieve uniform data processing system and harmonized legislations that enables cross sector and cross border data transfer, interoperability, aggregation, encryption and anonymization of location data as a valuable asset that can be used to develop digital solutions to counter COVID-19 crisis.

14. **DEVELOP** policy guidance on Internet networks resilience to ensure Africa continues to withstand the continued increase in traffic during COVID – 19.

15. **WORK** with African ICT and Communication stakeholders to develop a continental digital platform to serve as a secured virtual space to disseminate existing data bases, technical solutions and information on ways and means to combat COVID19 crisis.

16. **WORK** with ATU, UNECA, SMART Africa, RECs, Member States, Specialized Institutions and all African stakeholders and partners to develop and implement cooperation frameworks with the objective to support Member States to deploy effective digital solutions to facilitate containment of the outbreak while maintaining a balance of health imperatives and privacy concerns

17. **PURSUE** and expedite the implementation of the African Strategy on Digital Transformation (DTS)

18. Consider the establishment of an AU Digital Fund in support to the AU Covid-19 Response Fund to finance innovative solutions, projects and initiatives undertaken by AUC or AU specialized agencies that directly address the socio-economic impact of COVID19

19. **CALL** on all multilateral financial institutions and partners, including the AfDB, the World Bank and others to support rapid implementation of the African Strategy for Digital Transformation (DTS) and contribute to the AU Digital Fund

Done on 5th May 2020