

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

Press Release No:051/2020

Date: May 22, 2020

Venue: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

AU Commissioner Abou-Zeid calls for solidarity and partnership to push implementation of Africa's digital transformation strategy



H.E. Dr Amani Abou-Zeid, African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure & Energy delivered the keynote address to the virtual e-Governance Conference organised by Estonian e-Governance Academy under the theme "Giant Leaps Start with Small Steps".

In her opening remarks, H.E. President Kersti Kaljulaid said that "Governments should change old rules and legislation to enable the permanent implementation of technologies that have been shown to be efficient during the crisis, for instance, in remote learning, telemedicine and remote work." President Kaljulaid stressed the need to maintain users trust in digital solutions and the implementation of new post-crisis digital solutions while ensuring cybersecurity.

AU Commissioner Abou-Zeid thanked the President of Estonia, H.E. Kersti Kaljulaid for her leadership in the digital space and for setting a shining example for championing the digital agenda for socio-economic transformation in Estonia, across Europe and globally. She recalled the renewed interest Of Estonia in working with Africa, stressed upon by President Kaljulaid's during her last year visit to the African

Union as well as her recent bilateral meeting with the Chairperson of the AU Commission recently.

In her keynote address H.E. Commissioner underscored that “COVID-19 crisis has become the single biggest catalyst for digital transformation and has moved digitalisation from a niche market into mass adoption”. She underscored the immense opportunity for African countries to re-invent businesses and public services models, to prepare for the inevitable change in citizens and consumers' behaviour and to align for a “new, more digitised normal”.

AU Commissioner reminded the audience that most of Africa remains unconnected or with slow connections at unaffordable prices. “Connections are not reliable most of the time as energy is not reliable all the time. Coverage levels in rural areas and landlocked countries, lack of skills especially among girls and women, use of non-natural languages are existing barriers and divides that we have to consider as we go forward and press on digitalisation in our Continent.” added Dr Abou-Zeid

She brought to focus the African Digital Transformation Strategy (DTS) 2020-2030, endorsed by the African Union Summit of the Heads of State and Governments held in Addis Ababa in February 2020 and reiterated her call upon all partners to speed up, now, the implementation of the Strategy. Dr. Abou-Zeid also highlighted the emergency action plan developed by the AUC to respond to the crisis, increase resilience and Africa to the path for recovery using technologies and digital solutions.

The e-Governance Conference in its 6th edition, is an annual event organized by the Estonian e-Governance Academy under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Estonia and attended by over 1,000 participants from 134 countries. The main objective of this year's Conference was to reflect on current challenges in helping citizens to manage their lives and business online, and in converting a vision of digital transformation as essential part of countries' development paths.

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