

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Powering Africa's Digital Future: AU Ministerial Meeting set to ignite Digital Transformation in Africa

African Ministers of ICT and Communication will convene in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 23rd November 2023 for the 5th Ordinary Session of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and ICT (STC-CICT), a biennial African Union ministerial meeting aiming at driving Africa's digital agenda forward. The Ministerial Session will be preceded by the meeting of experts to be held from 20-22 November 2023.

The august gathering will enable AU Member States to review policies and strategies in a bid to accelerate Africa's digital transformation in line with Agenda 2063, which seeks to transform Africa into the global powerhouse of the future through inclusive growth and sustainable development.

Africa is at the cusp of a digital transformation that has the potential to greatly improve lives across the continent. The African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy provides a vision and roadmap for harnessing technology and innovation to meet Africa's development goals.

Ahead of the meeting H.E. Dr Amani Abou-Zeid, AU Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy mentioned that African Union is leading human & community-centric digital transformation. "Africa must and will be at the forefront of shaping how technologies are developed and deployed to meet the needs of the people. This will require investments in digital infrastructure, skills development, entrepreneurship, and

research and development. That's what we are striving to harness at the African Union".

For Dr Abou-Zeid, any digital transformation strategy must start with the people and communities it aims to serve. "Technology should augment human capabilities, not replace them. Our focus is on using technology to solve real problems that Africans face, from access to education and health services to financial inclusion. Technologies like mobile money, e-commerce, and e-learning have the potential to create new opportunities if developed with the needs of African users in mind," she added.

Citing the draft Continental AI Strategy as an example Dr Abou-Zeid further noted that the Strategy seeks to position Africa at the forefront of harnessing artificial intelligence for socioeconomic development ethically and inclusively. "By adopting a human-centric approach to AI, the Strategy aims to leverage the opportunities that emerging technologies offer while mitigating potential risks and negative impacts."

The African Union has taken concrete steps to accelerate digital transformation across critical sectors and has developed digital strategies for education, agriculture, and health:

- The African Union Digital Education Strategy and Implementation Plan, covering 2023 to 2028, establishes a framework for adopting digital technologies aligned with the Continental Education Strategy for Africa.
- The draft African Union Digital Agriculture Strategy and Implementation Plan from 2023 to 2027 aims to support member states' efforts to accelerate agricultural growth and transformation through adopting digital technologies. It seeks to improve prosperity and livelihoods through increased production efficiency and resilience to climate shocks.
- The draft African Union's Digital Health Strategy supports the Agenda 2063 aspiration of "a high standard of living, quality of life, sound health and well-being" as well as the African Health Strategy goal of "healthy lives and well-being for all in Africa."

While the potential benefits of digital transformation for Africa's development are substantial, limited resources, funding constraints, and a limited coordination present significant hurdles. With smart strategies, increased domestic investments, and improved collaboration, Africa can overcome the existing challenges and realize the promise of a digital economy.

Concrete recommendations and actions that will fast-track implementation are expected to be endorsed by the Ministers. Accordingly, the Institutional Architecture and Implementation Framework for the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa, a Continental Strategy for creating an enabling environment for a Digital Single Market, an AI Strategy Conceptual Framework, a Continental Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy, the Malabo Review Report, and a study on digitalizing postal services will be presented for consideration.

The meeting will also provide a chance to examine the advancement made in executing core communication initiatives. The review will spotlight the progress in putting key communication activities into action to promote the Africa Union with an emphasis on the mandate of the organization, Agenda 2063 and building the corporate brand identity to increase visibility and outreach.

The AU Commission looks forward to fruitful discussions and recommendations from Member States to advance the digital future of Africa for the benefit of all its citizens.

To follow the opening sessions online on 23rd November 2023, 9AM EAT virtually on:

[Opening of Ministerial Session on STC on Communication and ICT, and Press Briefing:](#)

Visit <https://au.int/en/5thstccict> to learn about the STC.

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