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Speech of H.E. Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, Commissioner for Infrastructure & Energy, African Union Commission

AT The Second Special Technical Committee Meeting. AU/CCICT-2

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia,

20-24 November 2017

1. Excellency Minister, Dr. Debretsion Gebremichael , Minister of Communication and Information Technology of Ethiopia and Chair of this Ministers Conference in charge of ICT and Communication.

2. Excellencies Ministers

3. Excellencies Ambassadors and Distinguished delegates representative of the African Union Member States

4. Distinguished representatives of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and AU Specialized Institutions.

5. Representatives of Regional and International Organizations

6. Invited guests

7. Ladies and Gentlemen , All protocol Observed

On behalf of the African Union Commission (AUC), it is my great pleasure and honour to welcome you all at this Second Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Communication and Information Communications Technology (ICT), one of the key organs of the African Union.

First of all, allow me to thank you most profoundly for responding positively to our invitation and joining us in advancing the Communication and ICT agenda of our continent. Your presence here is the main determinant of the success of this conference which, indeed, belongs to you.

Honorable Ministers

Distinguished Participants

Since the previous session of the Special Technical Committee on Communication and ICT which took place here in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in September 2015, notable developments have taken place in the two sectors and in Infrastructure development in general. The Bureau of this conference had the opportunity to review them in its meeting which took place on 28 April 2016 here in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The Bureau will present the report on the main activities achieved during his term .As you would note, the Bureau oversaw the elaboration of some key policy,

strategic and regulatory frameworks which have also been included on the agenda of your conference.

In that regard, the Meeting of Experts which took place from the 20th to 22th November 2017 in preparation for your conference has deliberated on all the agenda items and made specific recommendations for your consideration and approval.

Let me express my deep congratulation to the experts for the good work and the quality of discussion during their session.

Honorable Ministers

Distinguished Participants

This conference central themes are related to the evolution of the Information Society in Africa and its ongoing digital transformation namely: the intra Africa connectivity, access to broadband Internet, delivery of digital services and digital literacy of the African citizens.

Information Technologies have brought fundamental changes in our societies, and particularly Internet has profoundly shaped our today world driving it forward from the industrial age to the networked and digital era. It is clear that Internet, mobile networks, and related Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) have become indispensable tools for governments, businesses, civil society, and for individuals across the globe

We are all aware about the strategic economic and political importance of ICTs and particularly Internet and we are convinced by the vital role they had played, play and will play in the advancement of the social and economic developments .They are source of creativity and also source of great opportunities to provide online services such education, health, government services and so on ….

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are drivers for change in all aspects of our everyday lives from entrepreneurship to education, and delivery of new digital services. Their impact in the economic, social, cultural, political and individual spheres of life is widely accepted and recognized world over. ICTs and

Internet give the young generation a whole range of new opportunities such as socializing & exposure, employment and conducting research among others.

The effect of ICTs on the African economy is impressive, but the way they are changing everyday lives of Africans is truly transformational. And due to the development of broadband infrastructures and technology advances, Internet will become even faster, available anytime and anywhere. The Internet of Things (IoT), the Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cloud Computing and the use of Big Data will further materialize, connecting objects, homes, cities and machines.

Consequently, we, the policy makers need to review our approaches and adapt ourselves to the new world of digitalization by developping harmonized digital policy to promote economic growth and protect the public and social interests of our countries. And enhance the digital integration of our local market and leverage the use of ICTs to reduced business costs.

This is our challenge: Building an African information society for future generations.

Honorable Ministers

Distinguished Participants

The African Union Commission has taken steps to improve access, promote electronic transaction, combat cyber-crime, enhancing Africa's participation in Internet policy, Internet Governance and Cybersecurity fora at the International level and indeed the delegation of (.Africa) as a new generic Top Level Domain (gTLD) for the African continent is a great opportunity for Internet economy in Africa.

The following is to name a few achievements:

- The African Internet Exchange Point System (AXIS) is developed for assisting Member States in setting up and building IXPs. Following the technical and financial contributions of the African Internet Exchange System (AXIS) project, thirty three (33) member states have now established Internet exchange points. And AXIS project support the establishment of Regional Internet Exchange Points (10 IXPs to grow up to Regional IXPs). In addition to supporting the RECs in developing Regional Cross Border Policies and regulations to facilitate regional interconnection.

- The African Leadership in ICT program (ALICT) is one of the flagship projects of the African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE). Its overarching goal is to develop a group of ICT and Knowledge Society leaders that can become agents for change in their respective countries and be catalysts for regional cooperation in the ICT domain and digital policies. With ALICT programme a total of 487 participants from AU Member States have completed the course.

- The African Union Commission developed a Convention on Cyber legislations for the Continent that adheres to the legal and regulatory requirements on electronic transactions, cyber security, and personal data protection. The Convention was adopted by AU Assembly in June 2014 and so far we have Two (02) countries out of required fifteen (15) have ratified (Senegal and Guinea) and Nine (09) have signed. We call the remaining member states to follow.

- On DotAfrica, As you know the (.Africa) has been delegated officially by ICANN to the African Union Commission sponsored applicant - ZA Central Registry (ZACR) - on 15 February 2017 after years of processing. Now, DotAfrica domain name extension (www.nic.africa) is added to the root zone managed by Public Technical Identifiers (PTI), a subsidiary of ICANN. ZACR has already started registering Africa's websites to build a shared online identity for Africa. The dotAfrica is the new generic Top Level Domain (gTLD) for the African continent which has an invaluable continental asset with a potential of having great impact on the African digital economy.

- The Pan African e-Network (PAeN) Project for Tele-education and Tele-medicine with a total of 21280 students graduated from 39 participating countries in various undergraduate and graduate disciplines in different Indian universities through the network. And a total of 771 Tele-medicine consultations took place, in addition to 6771 Continuous Medical Education (CME) sessions held.

Honorable Ministers

Distinguished Participants

The African Union Commission strongly believes that the building an Africa's information society requires a secure and safe Cyber space, an appropriate infrastructure and efficient coordination and adequate harmonised legal and

regulatory frameworks. Multilingualism in Cyberspace and developping local content are also key concepts to ensure cultural diversity and inclusiveness in the African Cyberspace.

The Extraordinary session of Specialized Technical Committee of the African Union Conference of Ministers in charge of Communication and Information and Communication Technologies (CCICT-1) held in Bamako, Mali, 11 - 14 September 2016 addressed two agenda items related to Internet Governance and Cybersecurity and recommendations were adopted. We seize the opportunity of addressing you today to call for the adoption of the African Declaration on Internet Governance.

We also are inviting all stakeholders in this gathering to join with us and together develop ICTs for the benefit of our economies, for the benefit of our people.

This is what drives our action.

This is what will eventually lead to the integration of Africa

Honorable Ministers

Distinguished Participants

I believe with your vast experience and wisdom, this session of the conference will produce significant and historic results. Most important, it will put in place the appropriate policy and strategic framework that is essential for guiding the activities of our countries, the AUC, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), NPCA, specialized institutions and our partners in the long-term development of the ICT and Communication sectors within the context of the African Agenda 2063.

I would like to end by wishing you a successful conference with very fruitful deliberations.

God bless you

Thank you for your kind Attention