Draft Speech of Director,
Infrastructure & Energy, African Union Commission

"Workshop on Cyber strategies, Cyber legislation and Setting up of National CERTs

23 - 27 July 2018 - Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Excellencies / Senior Officials and Delegates from the African Union Member States.

[Representative of the USA delegation to AU]

Representatives of our partners
Colleagues from the Commission
Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the African Union Commission , I am delighted to have the opportunity to welcome you at this workshop which aims at providing you with the appropriate knowledge to prepare and adopt your National Cybersecurity Strategies and Cyber legislations as well as all the requirements for setting up and managing a Computer Emergency Incident/ Response Team (CERT/CIRT).

I wish to extend our gratitude to our partners from the State Department, MITRE Corporation, SEI, Internet Society, ICT research for Africa   as well as Diplo Foundation for their support in organizing this important workshop.

Ladies and gentlemen
Distinguish participants

In today digital and global world, ICTs and particularly internet, have become the common denominator for all socio-economic development sectors and they represent the foundation for prosperity, growth and security of our societies.

Africa like the rest of the world is embracing its digital future. This has been clearly stated in many different decisions and commitments of the African Union Organs .African leaders committed to boost the digital economy and digitalization of strategic sectors such education, health, Entrepreneurship, employment, peace and security and good governance by facilitating the delivery of public services and creating more interactions between governments and citizens.

The effect of ICTs on the African economy is really impressive and the way they are changing everyday lives of African people is truly transformational. Within the continent there are many successful digital experiences that need to be replicated to other countries to promote economic growth and social development. However, the more digitalised and connected our economy, the more important it becomes to secure our systems in cyberspace.

Ladies and gentlemen
Distinguish participants

African Countries today face a full spectrum of cyber threats, cybercrime, attacks, espionage and other malicious activities and most of the time they don't have means to monitor and control their networks which expose them to real risks that may affect their national security and economy.

Cybersecurity has never been more crucial as today with daily reported news related to large-scale cyber-attacks like the WannaCry and NotPetya attacks in 2017 and other major hacks and data breaches such as the recent Facebook case where up to 87 million users were affected by Cambridge Analytica's improper collection and sharing of personal information for political and commercial purposes that endangered online privacy of individuals and even elections including some in our continent.

As African countries increase access to broadband connectivity they are becoming more interconnected and vulnerable to cyber-attacks on a wide range of targets. And it becomes critical to reinforce our human and institutional capacity to secure our cyberspace by building trust and confidence in the use of cyber technologies by African states and citizens.

According to the report on "Cybersecurity and Cybercrime trends in Africa" , we have published in collaboration with Symantec in 2016, many African countries are yet to adopt policy instruments and legislative frameworks to fight against malicious use of ICTs. Only 8 countries do have National cybersecurity strategies and Only 13 African countries have established their National Computer Emergency Response Team (CERTs). This makes Cybersecurity very challenging in our continent

Ladies and gentlemen
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The security and stability of our common African Cyber space relies on the local and national ability of all countries to prevent and react to cyber incidents and investigate and prosecute cybercrime cases. In addition to strengthening cooperation among African countries to effectively fight against the increasing transnational threats such cybercrime and cyber terrorism.

From the AUC's perspective, a resilient and safe cyberspace depends on the successful implementation and execution of a holistic cybersecurity strategy, including the development of a vibrant ecosystem with strong legislative frameworks and technical know-how that gives an oversight over securing networks and protecting critical infrastructure.

Ladies and gentlemen
Distinguish participants

To address the challenges posed by criminal activities committed with the use of ICTs, the AU 23rd Assembly of Heads of State and Government, adopted in 2014 the African Union "Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection". This convention known also as the Malabo Convention seeks mainly on the adoption of the essential security rules for establishing credible digital environment and enabling the development of modern Information Society in Africa.

However, four (4) years after its adoption only two (03) countries, Senegal, Guinea and Mauritius have provided the AU Commission with ratification instruments while, as you know, its entry into force requires 15 ratifications.

I would like to take the opportunity of today meeting to call for accelerating the ratification and implementation of this Convention as source for harmonized cyber-legislation in Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen
Distinguish participants

The global nature of Cyber space made it of unique and strategic importance for promoting economic growth and protecting public and social interests.

We must safeguard our common African Cyber space as a shared asset and also as a shared responsibility to ensure its security and accessibility to all our citizens.

We believe a strong cybersecurity is a key building block for Africa's digital transformation, so it is important to build up our cybersecurity capabilities by developing cyber policies and législations and raising awareness at all levels on the benefits and threats related to the use of digital services.

To conclude, I would like to reiterate the commitment of the African Union Commission to work closely with Member States to seize the opportunities of the digital revolution through building secure African Cyberspace and strong digital economy.

I wish you a successful Workshop and Thank you for your kind Attention.