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Inaugural meeting of the African Stakeholders Network
Steering Committee

10-11 May 2003
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

UN- ICT Task Force African Regional Meeting

*21-22 January 2002
United Nations Conference Centre
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

INTRODUCTION

At the invitation of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and with the support of the United Nations ICT Task Force secretariat, a meeting was organised to launch the UN ICT Task Force African Stakeholders Network in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Participants discussed the organisational and functional framework for the African Stakeholders Network (ASN) at the United Nations Conference Centre (UNCC) from 21 to 22 January 2002, attended by over 60 participants and staff members of the ECA secretariat. Ms. Karima Bounemra Ben Soltane, Director of Development Information Services Division of the ECA, chaired the opening session.

Welcoming and Introductory Remarks

1. In his opening remarks, the Executive Secretary of ECA and under-secretary of the United Nations, Mr. K.Y. Amoako noted that the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force (UN ICT TF) African Stakeholders Network should be seen as a great opportunity for strengthened partnerships and collaborations. This would create more synergies in the implementation of Africa's digital agenda and avoid duplication of efforts with regard to ICT initiatives.
2. The Executive Secretary talked about the creation of the UN ICT Task Force as one concrete activity as a follow up to the ECOSOC Ministerial meeting, which also addressed the role of ICTs within the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, the Task Force would build on existing regional and global efforts such as the *African Information Society Initiative (AISI)*, *IDRC's Acacia Initiative*, the *G8 Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force)*, the *UNDP Digital Opportunity Initiative*, the *ITU Internet training programme*, the *UK Government Infundo Initiative* and *USAID Leland Initiative*.

The Executive Secretary recognized a remarkable similarity between the priorities of the Task Force and ECA's work programme, which is Harnessing Information for Development. Indeed, for over two decades, the Commission has been working to promote ICT for development in Africa, and the development and implementation of the AISI has been a springboard for accelerating the continent's participation in the global information society. ECA has provided support to its member States in elaborating and implementing their national ICT strategies and policies, and contributed to building the adequate capacity in this sector. Furthermore, the Commission also contributed to the ICT component of the New Partnership for Africa Development (NEPAD) and will actively participate in the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS).

Mr Amoako outlined the major challenges facing the African continent in ICT development, including the need to mobilize the requisite resources to implement programmes in areas such as health, education and content development. He also

noted the need to secure political will at the highest level possible for optimizing the opportunities in an information and knowledge age for political, economic and social and cultural development. Consequently, there is a need for strong partnerships at the sub-regional and regional levels so as to address some of these challenges.

He challenged participants to:

- (i) Develop modalities for the creation of strong partnerships to avoid duplication.
- (ii) Develop strategies for creating synergies between existing networks such as Partnership for ICTs in Africa (PICTA), the UN ICT Task Force and other initiatives.
- (iii) Formulate strategies for operationalizing the proposed Task Force network for Africa.
- (iv) Formulate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to gauge the effectiveness of the network.

In concluding, the Executive Secretary reiterated the fact that the success of ICT deployment in Africa would be based to a large extent on the need for collaboration and partnerships between development agencies, governments, civil society and communities, based on effective and strong networks that advance knowledge and information-sharing activities.

Agenda Item 2: Election of Officers and Organisation of Work

2. Dr. Nii Quaynor was elected as chairperson, Ms. Anne Rachel Inne, Mr. Pierre Ouédraogo and Dr. Sherif Hashem were elected as Rapporteurs.

Participants adopted the draft agenda and proceeded with the main deliberations.

Agenda Item 3: Presentation on the UN-ICT Task Force and its Work Programme

3. Mr. Sergei Kambalov, Chief, Policy Co-ordination Section at ECOSOC's Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) made a presentation on the genesis, mandate and plan of action of the UN- ICT Task Force (UN- ICT TF).

Mr. Kambalov thanked ECA for having successfully organised the meeting despite the short notice. He noted that the developing world is facing the challenges of globalisation, the proliferation of non co-ordinated ICT initiatives and stressed a strong need for more coherence, synergy and complementarity. In implementing the work plan of the Task Force, the voices of developing countries should be taken into account. He recognized the diverse stakeholders in the ICT for development field and mentioned the participation of the private sector and civil society, for instance, as some of the key stakeholders behind the creation of the Task Force.

Mr. Kambalov briefed participants on the organisational structure of the Task Force and its relationships with major global initiatives such as the G8 DOT Force and the UNDP Digital Opportunity Initiative. Consequently, the regional stakeholders' networks are designed to provide input into the work of the Task Force.

He finally noted that the UN ICT Task Force Secretariat would like to learn from ICT related initiatives in the regions and receive guidance from various stakeholders and constituencies on the work of the Task Force.

Responding to questions from participants on the short- and long-term strategies of the Task Force, Mr. Kambalov said that in the short-term, the UN would establish a Secretariat made up of a small group of experts. A communication strategy for the Task Force will be developed, and funding mechanisms put in place to support the Secretariat and projects in the areas of health, education, public information etc. emerging from the recommendations of the regional stakeholders' networks. (For more detailed information on the UN-ICT Task Force, see www.unicttaskforce.org)

Agenda Item 4: ICT Initiatives in Africa

4. Participants were given the opportunity to briefly present their ICT initiatives that are being implemented or planned.

The following institutions made presentation on their activities.

- (i) African Connection Initiative (AC)
- (ii) African Development Bank (ADB)
- (iii) African Telecommunications Union (ATU),
- (iv) Agence de la Francophonie- Institut francophone des Nouvelles Technologies de l'Information et de la Formation (INTIF)
- (v) Association of African Universities (AAU)
- (vi) Association for Progressive Communication (APC)
- (vii) Federation of African Media Women (FAMW)
- (viii) Global Internet Policy Initiative (GIPI)
- (ix) Information Technology Centre for Africa (ITCA)
- (x) International Telecommunications Union (ITU)
- (xi) United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
- (xii) United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
- (xiii) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- (xiv) United Nations Development Programme Central and Eastern Africa Sub-Regional Resource Facility (CEA- SURF),
- (xv) University Cheikh Anta Diop (Telemedicine Project)

Countries that shared their experience during the meeting include Rwanda, Egypt and Mozambique. A presentation was made on the support of the Republic of Korea to ICT activities in Africa, and in particular to the Information Technology Centre for Africa.

Presenters highlighted the need for the development of national and regional ICT strategies. They also noted that building infrastructure and ICT application in education and health was critical for Africa's overall development, reiterating calls for strengthening African capacities in ICT research especially in the use of free software. The development of content, as well as community-oriented applications and language interfaces were also emphasized. In this regard, the participation of grassroots organizations in the activities of the UN ICT Taskforce was also welcomed and applauded. Copies of individual presentations will soon be available at the ASN site, which is under construction.

Agenda Item 5: Break out Sessions on Different Thematic Issues

5. The following groups were formed to discuss 4 thematic issues:
 - Working Group 1: National and Regional Strategies, Governance and Policy
 - Working Group 2: Capacity Building, E-business and Entrepreneurship
 - Working Group 3: Resource mobilization, low cost connectivity and access
 - **Working Group 4: African Stakeholders Network: Logistics and Financial Issues**

The groups met and presented the outcome of their discussions during a wrap up session. Reports of discussions and recommendations were made during these sessions and are attached as an annex to this report.

Agenda Item 6: Common Position for Africa's Digital inclusion

6. Professor Mamadou Gueye, Chairman of the African Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) of the AISI, presented a report on the Common position for Africa's Digital Inclusion adopted during the meeting on Africa's contribution to the G8 Dot Force and the UN ECOSOC panel on Digital Divide, 10-12 May 2001 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Professor Gueye stressed the need to strengthen national capacities to address information policy issues and initiatives in the areas of policy and plans, improving connectivity, building human and institutional capacity, and sectoral opportunities

especially in business, trade, education and health sectors. In effect, all stakeholders would have to commit themselves to specific actions and support efforts associated with the development of the African Information Society Initiative. Professor Gueye indicated that development community and the private sector should be encouraged to support the implementation of specific programmes at country and regional levels.

Suggestions were made that the African Common Position document should also emphasize ICT infrastructure development and partnerships particularly with the private sectors and financial institutions. The meeting unanimously adopted the African Common Position document as the framework for the UN ICT TF ASN activities.

Agenda Item 7: Presentation on Partnership for Information Technology in Africa (PICTA)

7. Ms. Karima Bounemra Ben Soltane, Director, Development Information Services Division (DISD) made a presentation on the Partnership for Information Technology in Africa (PICTA), which is an informal network of donors and executing agencies committed to improving information exchange and collaboration on ICT activities in Africa. She informed the participants about the genesis, structure, action plan and the membership contributions.

Referring to recommendations made at the last PICTA meeting (7-8 September 2001), Ms. Bounemra Ben Soltane noted the need for strengthening participation of members and resource sharing through the PICTA database (GK-AIMS) and website. She also announced the recent launch of the PICTA bulletin. Detailed information on PICTA is available at <http://www.uneca.org/aisi/partners.htm>

Agenda Item 8: Setting up the UN-ICT Task Force African Regional Network

8. Rapporteurs of the different working groups presented to the plenary their reports of discussions and recommendations made during the break out sessions (see annex).

After consultations with participants, and as a result of the outcome of the working groups, Ms. Karima Bounemra Ben Soltane presented a preliminary proposal for the organisational and institutional framework for the African Stakeholders Network. Some of the main ideas were as follows:

- Develop a network relevant to Africa's needs and in line with the mandate of the Task Force and its Working Groups.
- Share information on major African activities and initiatives through mailing lists, web sites, country profiles.
- Sensitize and mobilize major actors to ensure African ownership and support from partners
- Share information, and encourage membership when relevant and organize special events.

- Assist in linking the network with African and international initiatives (e.g. NEPAD, G8 Dot Force, WSIS, other regional stakeholders' networks, and WEF).
- Attract funds and investments in the ICT sector in Africa. The UN-ICT TF process, the private sector, financing institutions and development banks could contribute to funding ICT programmes.
- Co-ordinate the African Stakeholder Network activities with the UN-ICT TF Secretariat.

The following structure for the African Stakeholders Network was proposed:

- Structure should be simple, flexible and inclusive.
- Chairperson should be elected for 1 year.
- Chairperson to report to the Task Force convenes meetings and consults with coordinators.
- Secretariat to assist the chairperson and to compile information on the UN ICT TF African Stakeholder Network.
- Stakeholders will participate at an inaugural meeting and thereafter in annual meetings.
- A Steering Committee should be constituted to define membership criteria.

As for the programme of work, she noted that the African Stakeholders Network would:

- Develop a one-year work programme.
- Develop a web site.
- Establish a communication strategy.
- Institute on-line consultations.
- Organize annual meeting of its stakeholders.
- Organize meetings during (or at the occasion of) other special events.
- Meetings results should be conveyed (or shared) with the UN ICT TF meeting and other international and regional initiatives such as NEPAD and the G8 annual meetings

Participants welcomed the above suggestions as a working framework and engaged in a broad discussion on issues related to the governance of the African Stakeholder Network particularly on the responsibilities of the Chairperson, the Steering Committee and the Secretariat. The following recommendations and decisions were made as a way forward on the establishment of the African Stakeholders Network to the UN ICT Task Force.

a. Secretariat for the African Stakeholders Network

The Economic Commission for Africa was unanimously elected as the secretariat for the African Stakeholder Network. The Secretariat will be in charge of Network's operations including recruitment of bilingual moderators to facilitate on-line

discussions. ECA would liaise with the UN ICT Task Force Secretariat for securing the necessary resources.

b. Interim Steering Committee for African Stakeholders Network

It was agreed that the Committee could have five members representing the sub-regions of Africa, and the ADB during the interim six months period. Members of the Interim Committee are:

Mamadou	GUEYE	(Western African Rep)
Jennifer	MAKUNIKE-SIBANDA	(Southern African Rep)
Sophia	BEKELE	(Eastern African Rep)
Sherif	HASHEM	(Northern Africa Rep)
Chuka	ADUBA	(ADB Representative)

It was decided that the Interim Steering Committee would co-ordinate with ECA, UNDP, ITU, UNESCO and the African members of the UN ICT TF.

It was noted that the Interim Steering Committee would operate for six months and work with the Secretariat during this period to deliver its plan of action. A proposal for a permanent Steering Committee would be made before June 2002.

The first meeting of the Interim Steering Committee was held immediately after the election of its members. Members unanimously elected Prof. Mamadou Gueye as the Chairman, Ms. Sophia Bekele as Secretary and Chuka Aduba, Rapporteur.

The next meeting of the Interim Steering Committee was scheduled to take place during African Development Forum (ADF) III to be held March 3 - 8 2002 in Addis Ababa.

Agenda Item 9. The Way Forward

9. Ms. Anne Rachel Inne, the overall Rapporteur, presented the Statement of the African Regional meeting for participants to comment. The Secretariat was also requested to circulate the report of the meeting as well as the final statement before the end of January to enable a final version of the report to be presented at the next UN ICT TF meeting scheduled for 4th February 2002.

Agenda Item 10. Any Other Business

10. There was no other issue raised during this session.

Agenda Item 11. Closure of the session

11. The Interim Steering Committee and participants expressed their appreciation to ECA, especially the staff members of the Development Information Services Division (DISD) for organizing the meeting given the short notice. They also extended their thanks and appreciation to the Secretariat of the UN ICT Task Force for making available the funds required for participation to travel. Mr. Sergei Kambalov, Chief of the ECOSOC Secretariat was also commended for his efforts in making the meeting a success and for his presentation on the UN ICT Task Force. Participants asked him to convey their appreciation to the UN Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan.

The conference Chairman Mr. Nii Quaynor, in his closing remarks expressed gratitude to Mr. K.Y Amoako, Mr. Sergei Kambalov, Ms. Karima Bounemra Ben Soltane, Director of the Development Information Services Division and her staff for the support given to him in discharging his duty as chairperson. The meeting extended its thanks to all the speakers for their presentations and speeches, as well as to the interpreters.

Annex I. Minutes of the meeting of the Interim Steering Committee

Noting the absence of a representative for Central Africa and based on the regional balance and non-exclusive principle of appointments to the regional network of the UN ICT Task force, the Interim Steering Committee members resolved that:

- (i) The Secretariat should set in motion the modalities to quickly identify suitable candidates represent central the sub-region.
- (ii) For equity and fairness, no two members of the Steering committee should be from the same organisation.

Members reviewed the key functions of the Interim Steering Committee, which would:

- (i) Deliver a plan of action for the African Stakeholders Network.
- (ii) Ensure the UN ICT Task Force plans are relevant to Africa.
- (iii) Establish mechanisms for information sharing on projects, lessons learnt and best practices.
- (iv) Establish the modalities for attracting the necessary investment and project funds.
- (v) Co-ordinate the African Stakeholders Network activities with the UN ICT Task Force.

Members agreed on the need to align the African mission to the UN mission, and consequently noted that the UN ICT Task Force should:

- (i) Help in harnessing the power of ICTs to advance the millennium goals
- (ii) Create forums for ICT for development in Africa
- (iii) Forge synergies and generate action through multi stakeholder partnerships by drawing on the principle of universality, non-exclusiveness and neutrality.
- (iv) Help mobilize, co-ordinate and link existing, new public and private resources
- (v) Promote affordable, low cost and meaningful access to ICTs for Africa.

The Interim Steering Committee members agreed on the following short -term plan:

- (i) That the Secretariat should identify key African leaders as programme champions. In doing this, there is need to ensure a spread and language balance. Consequently, there should be at least one champion from each of the main language blocks in Africa, namely: Anglophone, Francophone, Arabic, and the Lusophone. The Secretariat should particularly identify African leaders who have demonstrated keen interest in ICT activities in the past.

- (ii) The Secretariat should set in motion a mechanism for the identification and incorporation of several other existing networks into the UN ICT Task Force African Stakeholders Network.
- (iii) The Secretariat should establish an African Stakeholder Network portal.
- (iv) The Secretariat should carry out a recruitment campaign on key ICT stakeholders by developing a database.
- (v) The Secretariat and the Steering Committee will develop a media and communication strategy to enhance awareness at all levels.
- (vi) The Interim Steering Committee in collaboration with the Secretariat will mobilize resources. The Committee noted in particular, the immediate need for resources to enable activities to begin, and recommended the following sources as the main initial targets:

- The UN ICT TASK Force Secretariat
- Bellanet International
- The Markel Foundation
- The OECD
- The Bill and Melinda Gate Foundation
- The British Council
- The Government of Japan, Korea and India

The Interim Steering Committee Proposed the following medium term actions:

- (i) Assistance should be provided to countries in designing national and regional strategies. This should be done in cooperation with development institutions working on regional integration and various economic groupings such as ECOWAS and SADC, for instance.
- (ii) Support should be provided to African countries in global ICT policy, governance and technical issues.
- (iii) Work on improving connectivity, increasing access and lowering costs.
- (iv) Promotion of national and international efforts to support local content and application.
- (v) Promotion of ICTs for health-care particularly in the fight against HIV/AIDS, and other infectious and communicable diseases.
- (vi) Fostering of enterprise and entrepreneurship for sustainable economic development, including poverty alleviation, noting particularly opportunities for women and youth.
- (vii) Enhancing human capacity development, knowledge creation and sharing.

The Interim Steering Committee proposed the creation of the following working groups:

- (i) Policy, Governance and regulation.
- (ii) Low Cost connectivity and Access and infrastructure.
- (iii) Education, Youth and Capacity building.