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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

Inaugural meeting of the African Stakeholders Network
Steering Committee

10-11 May 2003
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Conference Room 5 – United Nations Conference Centre

**Overview of Major ICT activities in Africa
October 2002 – February 2003**

AISI

African Vision to Create Digital Opportunities

**Fourth MEETING OF THE UN- ICT TASK FORCE
Geneva, 2-22 February 2003**

I. Background: AISI and the MDGs

In September 2000, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution that is commonly known as the Millennium Declaration. This Declaration sets a number of goals known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

In May 1996, the Conference of African Ministers responsible for Economic and Social Development and Planning adopted a resolution entitled "*Implementation of the African Information Society Initiative*". Seven among the MDGs were addressed by the AISI document, "The African Information Society Initiative (AISI): An Action Framework to Build Africa's Information and Communication Infrastructure".

The correspondence between the MDGs and the AISI challenges and opportunities is shown in the table below:

	Millennium Development Goals	AISI challenges and opportunities
1	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	Food security related objectives
2	Achieve universal primary education	Education and research
3	Promote gender equality and empower women	Gender and development
4	Reduce child mortality	Health
5	Improve maternal health	Health
6	Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases	Health
7	Ensure environmental sustainability	Man-made crises and natural disasters

In addition to the above-mentioned areas, AISI recommends that ICTs be mainstreamed in other sectors that are judged potentially important for Africa's development, and these include: job creation, culture, trade and commerce, and governance, which was added to the list during subsequent assessment exercises of the AISI (namely ADF'99 and Bamako 2002).

Regarding the eighth MDG, which is to develop global collaboration for development, this is addressed in the AISI framework that reiterates the fact that no concrete advancement can be achieved without the establishment of strong partnerships, as expressed in paragraph 5 of the AISI:

5. Thirdly, the initiative calls for bilateral and regional mechanisms to stimulate cooperation between African countries. Fourthly, the Initiative calls for support and partnership with the friends of Africa including bilateral and multilateral development agencies, regional economic organizations and the private sector. Collectively, the experts believe that Africa can make such a transformation towards an information society, with tangible economic and social returns. If we cooperate and form partnerships to face the developmental challenges

It is with the aim of addressing these major goals that activities have been implemented during the last six years under the AISI framework.

Consequently, the purpose of this contribution to the forth meeting of the UN ICT TF is to provide a brief overview of the most recent ICT activities. It presents the latest development in the NICI process and focuses on the preparatory process of the WSIS.

II. The NICI Process

III.

Currently, assistance to Member States is ongoing in the formulation and implementation of national e-strategies, known as the National Information Communication Infrastructure Plans (NICIs). This involves recruitment of technical experts for guiding the process and undertaking baseline studies, consultative and sensitization workshops for policy and decision makers and other major stakeholders, as well as the development of implementation strategies. Below are updates on the NICI processes in the following countries:

Ghana

After some ambiguity on the side of the government, the country's political leadership have re-initiated a national policy process through the Ministry of Communication and Technology. The draft policy framework document has already been submitted to the Office of the President and it is expected that the final policy document will be ready by the end of March, to be tabled at a High Level Ministerial Meeting chaired by the President. A documentary film entitled "Ghana's ICT for Accelerated Development Policy" has been made. The video features the consultative process in the formulation of the national ICT policy in the country.

Niger

The process, launched in 2002 under the leadership of the Centre de coordination de l'Informatique et des NTIC" in the Office of the Prime Minister to promote ICTs in the country. Currently a feasibility study on the widespread use of ICTs for sustainable development has been completed and the data is being analyzed and will be made available shortly.

Mali

The development of the NICI plan in Mali was started before the national elections of 2002 and was stalled due to the creation of a new government. The new government has announced a new head of the Mission de l'Informatique et des Nouvelles Technologies de l'Information, who has now been charged with expediting the process.

Malawi

ECA in collaboration with UNDP/Malawi led the national policy initiative and even though ICT Policy framework was approved in May 2002, there is currently intense consultation underway to solicit feedback from stakeholders.

Ethiopia

The national ICT policy is before the Council of State for approval and the Government is examining implementation options, including the use of ICTs for the country's decentralization programme.

Sudan

An ECA multidisciplinary team of trade negotiators, economic advisors and ICT experts undertook a mission to Sudan in January 2003 to discuss modalities to support Sudan's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and to sustain the post accession process once the country is admitted to the organization. This entails building ICT capacity of the National WTO Secretariat and a Sudan Business and Trade Network (SubuNet) is being created to address e-Commerce issues and electronic government needs.

The Gambia

The aim is to build an "AISI e-government model" and needs assessment and consultations will start in March to develop the country's e-government strategy.

Uganda

The Uganda ICT policy process has been underway for the last two years. Under the request of the Government, and a proposed e-government strategy is also in the pipeline as a result of discussions. A project proposal is being prepared by ECA in cooperation with UNDP.

Central African Republic

The government passed in January 2002 a decree to start the NICI development process and initial consultation workshops were organized for government, academia, private sector and telecom operator/regulators. A baseline study undertaken in June/July 2002, however, due to political instability the process has been stalled. The report of the baseline study is currently being processed and will be tabled at a forthcoming stakeholders validation workshop later this year.

Cameroon

The national ICT policy process is not yet completed due to institutional changes in the country. With the creation of a new authority, it is expected that the policy will be finalized.

Burundi

The policy document was completed and submitted to the Cabinet for approval and it is expected that the an implementation plan will be finalized by the end of 2003.

Rwanda

President Kagame launched the policy in January 2003 and now sectoral strategies are being developed as part of the implementation process. In addition, a donors roundtable is being planned for mid 2003 to support activities.

Regional Activities

- A workshop on ICT policy with a focus on African CSOs' participation in the WSIS process was held from 6-10 November 2002 in Addis Ababa, and attended by over 50 civil society organizations from the continent. The objectives of the workshop were to:
 - develop an African civil society position for the WSIS
 - build knowledge and expertise of civil society organizations engagement in ICT policy processes
 - mobilise the participation of civil society organizations at the national and regional levels
 - foster dialogue among civil society organizations

Other regional activities jointly carried out with partners include:

- The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts for the ECA Regional Office for West Africa, Niamey (September 2002).
- Workshop on ICT and Regional integration, convened by the Communauté Économique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale (CEMAC) with support from Agence Internationale de la Francophonie, Yaounde, Cameroon (September 2002).

- The Intergovernmental Committee of Experts for the ECA Regional Office for East Africa, Kigali (October 2002).
- The Common Market of East and Southern Africa (COMESA) Workshop on establishing a Regulators Association for Eastern and Southern African countries, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, (January 2003).
- Consultative Meeting on e-governance training in Africa, organized in cooperation with UNESCO and IICD in Tangiers, Morocco, (January 2003).

III. Knowledge and Information Development

Exchange of information and knowledge plays an important role in the implementation of the AISI goals. As a result, several on-line discussions are underway, moderated by ECA.

- **E-governance online discussion.** This discussion began on 15 July and ended in October 2002, to:
 - provide valuable input to the WSIS
 - provide a space for discussion on e-government in Africa
 - determine trends and directions
 - provide appropriate strategies for accelerating e-government process in Africa
 - sensitize decision makers in Africa on practical approaches to e-government/e-governance programmes
 - serve as an input into the production of briefing papers for decision makers on e-governance.

In collaboration with the Association of Progressive Communication (APC) and Article 19, ECA held another discussion for the African civil society.

- **The Civil Society discussion list on e-governance.** This discussion was moderated from 3 October 2002 to the end of November 2002 to:
 - Debate the basis for articulating the African civil society's views in the World Summit
 - prepare participants for the Workshop on CSOs and ICT policy-making in Africa
 - prepare a CSO position for the WSIS process.
 - examine the overall contributions of CSOs to the emergence of the Information Society in Africa
- **The Bamako 2002 discussion list.** Launched in October 2002 to serve the Bamako 2002 Bureau members, its objectives are to:
 - discuss Africa's participation in the WSIS process
 - follow up on recommendations coming out of Bamako 2002
 - exchange views on the national preparatory process
 - prepare joint strategies towards the World Summit

- **The Diaspora discussion list.** This discussion began on 10 February and will run up to 28 March. Its objectives are to:
 - identify a core list of African academics, ICT experts and consultants in the Diaspora that have a keen interest in the ICT arena on the continent.
 - develop a strategic action plan outlining the core focus, including the core thematic areas where the deployment of ICT tools will have an immediate impact in Africa, involving the Diaspora
 - produce a comprehensive report, for the WSIS on possible diaspora interventions in Africa

IV. Outreach

A series of information products have been produced as a way of sharing information and knowledge on the AISI and sensitizing various stakeholders on Information Society issues. These products are:

- The AISI Radio Series, developed with support from the Africa Region of the World Bank. The radio programmes discuss the development of the information society in Africa, and presents trends and developments in Ghana, Mali and Uganda. The series have been distributed inside and outside of the continent. However, it is especially targeted at radio stations for broadcast in their countries and to stimulate debate and create awareness on the information society.
 - The AISI Briefing Papers. The first out of a series has been produced on the NICI process and what it entails. Other series are planned on the specific experiences of the process in various countries.
 - **A website was set up in October 2002 to disseminate information on the Africa Regional Conference and follow up activities.**
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- Posters on the role of ICTs for African development were prepared and displayed by ECA's Information Technology Centre for Africa (ITCA) at various exhibition fora.

V. Networking and Partnership

ECA participated and collaborated on the following activities:

- The Fourth Annual Regional Consultation of UN Agencies Working in Africa was held in October 2002 in Addis Ababa, to discuss UN support to NEPAD.
- The CAFRAD/UN-DESA Regional workshop on building e-governance capacity in African countries, held in October 2002 in Johannesburg, to sensitize African policymakers on e-governance issues.

VI. The G8 Africa Action Plan

In the framework of the G8's contribution to the implementation of NEPAD, several activities have been adopted by the G8 Summit. The following ICT programmes are funded by the Government of Canada in support of ICT activities under the AISI, and the NEPAD and WSIS processes:

- a. **The International e-Development Resource Network (IeDRN).** ECA is going to be the regional hub working with Industry Canada, on behalf of the Government of Canada on developing a resource and regional hub on e-strategies in Africa through the International e-Development Resource Network (IeDRN). This Network will offer African countries technical advice on policies, plans and strategies.
- b. **The Centre for Connectivity in Africa (CCA).** Discussions are underway with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada to define joint implementation of activities for the proposed Centre for Connectivity in Africa that will be launched in April 2003. The CCA aims showcase the deployment and development of ICTs in Africa as well as promote innovation in the sector among other things.

VII. 2003 Activities

As well as providing advisory and technical services in the area of policy to Member States in the context of ICT for development, the following activities will also be undertaken during this year:

- The Third meeting of ECA's Committee on Development Information (CODI) to be held from 13-16 May 2003 on the theme of ICTs and Governance, with special events on:
 - The African Virtual Library and Information Network (AVLIN)
 - Open Source for Improved Public Administration in Africa
 - AISI Media Award Ceremony
 - The African Virtual Library and Information Network (AVLIN)
 - Media Forum on the Information Society in collaboration with GKP
- Meeting of the African Stakeholders Network (ASN) in May 2003
- Advisory services to countries and regional organizations on aspects related to their contribution and participation in the WSIS process.
- An ICT Visioning Retreat for African Academia in June (VarsityNet) will be launched in March 2003 to secure and galvanize the participation of universities in the information society.
- A series of training and sensitization workshops for African Parliamentarians from March 2003
- A series of workshops for African diplomats based in Addis Ababa from April 2003
- Organization of regional and sub-regional consultations on Africa's participation in the WSIS process
- The Annual AISI Forum to be launched in September
- Organization of an Africa Day during the Congress of the World Federation of Engineering Organization to be held in Tunis from 14-16 October.
- Recruitment of Regional Advisors to work on the ICT for development needs of RECs, regional bodies, CSOs, media, academia and the private sector, as well as undertake AISI outreach activities.