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WORLD SUMMIT ON THE INFORMATION SOCIETY

**Africa Regional Preparatory Conference
Accra, Ghana
2 to 4 February 2005**

With pre-conference workshops from 28 January to 1 February, 2005

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A. Overview

The Second Africa Regional Preparatory Conference for the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was held from 2 to 4 February 2005 in Accra, Ghana. The Conference was hosted by the Government of Ghana, in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and its partners in the framework of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI) and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

Participating in the Conference were representatives from ECA member States, the African Union, private sector and civil society organizations, international and partner institutions and agencies of the United Nations.

The theme of the conference "Access: Africa's key to an inclusive Information Society" examined six key issues:

- Financing the Information Society;
- Indicators and benchmarking;
- ICTs for socio-economic development;
- Access and infrastructure;
- Industrialization; and
- Internet Governance.

An exhibition showcasing information and communication technologies for development (ICT4-D) initiatives and the latest in ICT innovations was organized in partnership with the Ghana WSIS Organizing Committee, in association with the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) and Industry Canada (ePol-Net).

In collaboration with Highway Africa, ECA produced 4 issues of an 8-page daily newspaper known as *WSIS Agenda*. The newspaper provided a snapshot of the myriad of activities, forums and presentations that took place during the course of the Conference. In-depth interviews with key stakeholders and opinion-makers, such as the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, on the challenges of building an information society were featured.

ECA and the Africa regional office of the World Association of Community Broadcasters (AMARC) set up an onsite broadcasting service. (<http://simbani.amarc.org>) with the aim of capturing key issues of the WSIS process. The material was broadcasted online to AMARC members.

There were fourteen pre-conference workshops and meetings held from 28 January to 1 February 2005. These sessions produced recommendations that were further discussed and endorsed during the main conference that took place from 2 to 4 February 2005.

The Conference adopted a number of resolutions on Africa's key issues of concern in the WSIS process and ICT issues in general. The main outcome document, "Accra Commitments for Tunis 2005", is Africa's position and contribution to the WSIS Tunis phase. The outcomes were used by the African Group at the second preparatory committee (Prepcom-2) for WSIS, which was held in Geneva from 15 to 27 February in Geneva.

B. Summary of pre-conference events

Below is a summary of the main outcomes of pre-workshops convened from 28 January to 1 February 2005. Recommendations emanating from these events formed the basis for the Accra Commitments for Tunis 2005.

1. Multistakeholder Partnerships (MSP)

The Multistakeholder Partnerships (MSP) session aimed at bringing together Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) members, representatives of governments, regional organizations, bilateral and multilateral development partners, civil society, youth, parliamentarians, academia, women and the private sector to exchange views on the concept of Multistakeholder Partnerships in the African context. Participants shared experiences and lessons learnt in the implementation of the WSIS Action Plan in particular and ICT4-D initiatives in general.

1.1 Youth breakout session

The AISI framework and the Geneva Plan of Action endorse the importance of involving Youth in building Africa's Information Society. The first African Development Forum (ADF'99) and the third meeting of ECA's Committee on Development Information (CODI III) also emphasized this role and spearheaded several initiatives aimed at crystallizing the involvement of youth in ICT4-D. Against this background, the breakout session discussed the opportunities and challenges of building Africa's Information Society and the role of youth as stakeholders. Several presentations were made on youth in the context of implementing the AISI framework and the Geneva Action Plan. Best practices from several African countries on how ICTs can promote employment and empowerment of youth were presented.

The discussions also addressed strategies to sustain youth involvement in ICT policy formulation and implementation of ICT4-D activities. The meeting resolved to create an ICT4-D Youth Network as a structured framework for coordinating youth activities at national, sub-regional and regional levels and establishing policies and strategies for better involvement in Information Society issues. The Network adopted an ICT4-D Youth Network Plan of Action.

1.2 Members of Parliament breakout session

The role of parliamentarians as publicly elected officials and lawmakers places them at the centre of building Africa's Information Society. Various presentations were made during the session, highlighting the role of Parliaments in the WSIS process. Best practice examples on how the parliaments of Mozambique, Niger and Uganda are harnessing ICTs to empower MPs were presented. Discussions focused on building a people-centred Information Society, and a road map of the new role of African parliaments.

The breakout session established a steering committee to work on the implementation of an Africa ICT4-D MPs Network. The network will help African parliaments share best practices on strategies to involve parliaments in the implementation of e-strategies and the WSIS Plan of Action as well as the creation of ICT4-D committees in parliaments.

1.3 Academia breakout session

The breakout session aimed at reviewing the findings of research activities carried out by the Academia Research Network (ARN), established by ECA with the support of Ford Foundation. The Network is based on the following themes: Creating an enabling environment in the Information Society, African languages and content development in Cyberspace, Measuring the impact of the African Information Society and ICTs and Industrialization.

The meeting recognized that while promoting an enabling environment there was need to take into account the specificities of the continent, to develop a harmonized methodology and framework and offer a pragmatic approach to the concept of digital solidarity.

Participants highlighted the need to create an inventory of current activities in Africa on industrialization development of software applications, packages and innovative services. The need to establish an exchange and consultation mechanism between the techno-parks in Africa was also noted.

With regard to measuring the impact of the Information Society, participants noted that there was need for capacity building of national statistics offices (NSOs) and specialized agencies to enable them carry out their assessments effectively.

With respect to content development and African languages, the meeting recognized the importance of languages for facilitating the birth of a creative and innovative spirit in Africa. It was also agreed that in its research and analytical activities, academia should go beyond the consumption dimension and take into account the production dimension.

At the end of the workshop, calls were made for the establishment of an African research network, which federates national and regional research networks, the objectives being to develop communication between African researchers, and enable the implementation of collaborative research programmes.

1.4 Gender breakout session

The main objective of the session was to discuss mainstreaming gender in Africa's Information Society development, with particular emphasis on defining the roles of women entrepreneurs in the process. Sixty-eight participants drawn from nineteen countries participated in the workshop. A series of presentations were made, addressing issues such as, gender and ICTs from the AISI framework perspective, ICT initiatives in support of gender equality in the information society. Case studies on empowering women entrepreneurs through ICTs were also presented.

A number of issues were raised during the discussions, in particular, the question of mainstreaming gender equality in the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and in national poverty eradication policies. It was noted that gender equality in various socio-economic sectors is lacking due to marginalization of women in some key sectors, such as health, education and commerce. In addition, policies that support ICT and gender equality are also absent. It was also noted that national machineries for the empowerment of women, were not adequately equipped to address gender issues in planning and implementing regional, national and sectoral ICT and gender policies and strategies.

Participants highlighted some social and economic barriers to the use of ICTs by women, such as issues of empowerment and decision-making, language, religion, culture, access and tradition. In addition, women did not have ample opportunities to take advantage of ICTs and they were not actively involved in the creation, design, planning, and training of ICT programs and were also not involved in policies and infrastructure development. The linkages between the value of ICTs for women's small businesses and entrepreneurship development did not exist. Furthermore, it was noted that women lack confidence to use ICTs in their daily socio-economic activities. Participants also noted that there was a lack of disaggregated data to demonstrate the participation and impact of ICT4-D initiatives. This, participants noted, is a critical tool for guiding policy makers in measuring the gender digital gap across key socio-economic sectors.

1.5 Civil Society Forum

The Civil Society Forum was organized into three sessions. During the first session presentations challenged CSOs to define their role and priorities on Information Society issues.

The second part of the Forum concentrated on capacity building for CSOs, with an intensive training on how to engage in national, regional and international Information Society policy processes. The training session was followed by questions, discussions, and exchanges on the major challenges facing the African Civil Society.

The third component was a breakout session, which was tied to the MSP Forum. This session was geared at helping CSOs understand the rationale for an MSP approach in implementing ICT4-D. The session adopted a detailed Plan of Action containing 3 segments:

- A road map from Accra to Tunis 2005;
- A 2005 – 2007 Action Plan; and
- A 2005 – 2015 Plan.

In the segment “A Road Map from Accra to Tunis “, the African Civil Society plan to hold 5 subregional workshops, one each for East, North, South, West and Central Africa. The sub-regional workshops are expected to identify and exchange country best practices and lessons learnt to be show cased in the form of an African civil society village during the ICT4ALL Platform in Tunis.

1.6 Internet Governance

The Internet Governance (IG) workshop highlighted the linkages between IG development strategies and national ICT policies in Africa and identified opportunities, constraints and priority areas for immediate action. Presentations covered technical administrative, political, economic and social aspects of IG. The growing importance of the Internet means that more attention needs to focus on establishing technical and policy frameworks for running the Internet and the involvement of new actors. Even though there is a technical framework that has been in place for a long time (by Internet standards), it is clear that the policy framework is still in its early stages of development, especially in Africa. The workshop addressed the following issues:

- Survey of IG and appraisal of key IG issues in Africa;

- Outcomes of an e-discussion hosted by ECA on IG;
- Mainstreaming IG in national strategies;
- IG and multilingualism;
- Management of root servers;
- Intellectual Property Rights (IPR); and
- E-commerce.

In addition, presentations and discussions also addressed issues that require legal regulation, such as, security, content control and e-commerce. IG requires policy-making at both the national and international levels. As this is a particularly weak area for many African countries, participants examined the level of Africa's participation in the global IG system and proposed a categorization of the constraints, strengths and weaknesses according to organisation/structures, actions and objects. Calls were consequently made for mainstreaming IG issues in the National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) development process. Further, discussions highlighted the need to assign clearly defined IG roles to National NICI Committees and encourage Africa's involvement and participation in the activities of the Internet Corporation of Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).

They also highlighted the importance of a consultative and participative process and the full involvement of the Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) in supporting, promoting and developing IG issues within countries. For Africa, multilingualism and cultural diversity are at the core of the issues that should be examined within national policy making mechanisms. It was pointed out that an African language policy should be established, and in order to provide relevant content on the Internet, working languages should be identified at local, national and regional levels by consensus.

1.7 ICT and Poverty reduction

The workshop focused on interventions from experts on the definition of poverty, multidimensional intra-digital divide, gender gaps, quality of education, pro-poor approaches, and the relationship between ICTs and poverty reduction. Presentations made on how the process of ICT policy-making can be integrated into the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) in African countries. In this regard, a case study was presented on how ECA was integrating the PRSP goals into the NICI framework, including how Geoinformation Information Systems (GIS) can be used as tools for better analysis of poverty within countries.

The workshop also examined best practices and case studies on how ICTs are shaping wealth creation and empowerment, particularly among women, who were overwhelmingly the victims of poverty. Presentations were also made on literacy strategies as important tools for poverty reduction, especially when targeted at the "bottom half of the bottom half".

The ensuing discussions agreed that access to the Information Society should be addressed in a pragmatic and concrete way by using local content, local languages for local contexts in the introduction of ICTs for poverty eradication. It was felt that Furthermore, political will is required in recognizing the importance of ICT as a tool for supporting the development and inclusion of marginalized groups and their empowerment with respect to issues of health, education and human rights. It was also agreed that the introduction of ICTs in rural areas of Africa should include appropriate technologies that are realistic and relevant to the lives and livelihoods of rural people. Given the crosscutting nature of ICT it was recommended that

Governments should make provision in national budgets and allocate adequate resources for it to be an effective tool for poverty reduction,

2 E-Strategies

The overriding objective of this workshop was to examine ways in which e-strategies were evolving from the national, sectoral, local and sub-regional levels with linkages to global policy-making.

While the workshop highlighted the role of the AISI framework in assisting a number of countries complete or start the development of NICI plans, presentations also pointed out the work being done at the local level, and within socio-economic sectors to actualize the implementation of national policies. In addition, the work being carried out by the various Regional Economic Communities (RECs) on developing sub-regional level policies with support from ECA was also highlighted. The following provides a summary of the main discourse in the five sessions:

2.1 National Strategies

Apart from updates on the status of national e-strategies (from Egypt and The Gambia), other presentations addressed the need to contextualize National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) plans with the overall socio-economic development process in relation to poverty reduction programmes and achievement of MDGs.

The need for cooperation policies for Africa's entry into the Information Society and contribution to the ICT Industry, development of appropriate applications, long-term vision, political will, and the changes needed in economic and legal environment was also discussed. Participants called for the promotion of ICTs in achieving the MDGs and poverty reduction.

2.2 Regional e-Strategies

Presentations were made on how regional policies compliment and benefit countries in the sub-regions of Africa. The sessions examined the need to harmonize ICT policies at the sub-regional levels and the establishment of stronger regional markets in order to achieve regional integration. The development of a legal e-commerce framework for ECOWAS was highlighted as an example of ICT policy harmonization. The East African Community (EAC) also shared its regional e-government strategy for building stronger political unity.

Discussions also discussed the need to develop sub-regional ICT infrastructure, such as backbones to facilitate interoperability and interconnection between countries. During the discussions, governments were urged to participate in sub-regional ICT Infrastructure projects, and a call was made for a coordination mechanism for activities being carried out by the African Telecommunication Union (ATU), ECA and NEPAD.

2.3 Local Strategies

Participants recognized that local strategies were becoming important in as far as ICT initiatives go, including local e-government initiatives, which are all invigorating decentralization of ICTs within countries. Initiatives aimed at decentralizing the national e-

strategy process, such as the Village Information and Communication Infrastructure (VICI) plans, piloted in Ghana were also presented.

Participants were of the view that capacity-building activities needed to be targeted at local governments and local communities in order for communities to benefit from the gains of the Information Society.

2.4 Sectoral Strategies

Sectoral strategies are an emerging area within the e-strategies development process. Increasingly, many countries are requesting strategies for their socio-economic sectors such as health, education, commerce and trade, as well as banking and finance. The session shared experiences from Africa on such trends and took stock of what has been achieved thus far with some case studies from a number of countries.

In addition, some time was also devoted to the various applications being used for the education, and health sectors in particular. Strategies were recommended on how African countries can use Open Source Software for development of applications, as well as the role of local private Information Technology companies in boosting local industry.

3 Media Forum

The overall goal of the Forum was to build a critical mass of journalists that can specialize on the information society issues, while promoting awareness at national sub-regional and global levels.

Various presentations were made, including the role of media in the Information Society and a progress report on the AISI Media discussion list. Some concerns were raised with respect to limited media capacity building and the need for a resource and training centre on the Information Society in Africa. It was also observed that there was lack of political will in the majority of Africa countries to partner with media and to strengthen their role in awareness raising and capacity building on the Information Society issues using available and existing channels. Creation of funds for journalists covering ICT use in rural areas, sustaining programme exchanges among media institutions in Africa, promotion of ICT4-D media networks at national and sub-regional levels were some of the recommendations made.

The workshop appointed a group of media professionals as country level focal points to work on the implementation of national ICT4-D networks and also established a steering committee of five media professionals to lead the process of establishing an African ICT4-D Media Network. The network will have a global co-coordinator, five sub-regional representatives and a member of the Diaspora, to be assisted by competent experts as and when required.

4 Infrastructure and access

The event served as a platform to share views and experiences on ICT infrastructure on the continent. The workshop noted that overall, Africa has one of the weakest information and communication infrastructure in the world, characterized by limited geographical coverage and bandwidth, poor interconnection among countries and low quality of services. However,

discussions did acknowledge the fact that many countries have been able to upgrade and expand their infrastructure base and improve services through a combination of policy changes, institutional reforms and investments.

Participants made appeals for conducive policy and regulatory environments within countries to stimulate competition in the ICT markets, which could address access challenges such as high tariff costs that make services out of the reach of the majority of Africans. Calls were also made on strengthening regulatory bodies so that they can perform their functions well and therefore attract investments to expand infrastructure, particularly into rural areas. There were also calls for the replication of case studies in other countries as a result of some of the presentations.

5 Financing Mechanisms

The workshop examined issues concerning an evolving mechanism for financing ICT4-D initiatives in Africa. One of the major challenges facing the continent is the need to mobilize the requisite financial resources for building the Information Society – ranging from infrastructure development to mainstreaming ICTs into socio-economic sectors. Presentations were made on financing mechanisms for the Information Society, especially on the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF) and the results of the United Nations Task Force on Financing Mechanisms (TFM). Case studies by various African institutions, development partners and representatives of the private sector and civil society were presented.

During the discussions, participants recalled the deadlock that occurred in Geneva on the sustainability and viability of financing mechanisms, which had already been addressed in the first phase of the Summit. Controversy arose when some countries decided to create the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF), while others requested the UN Secretary General to set up a Task Force on financial mechanisms.

The workshop discussed the viability of current and existing financing mechanisms and how African countries could fully utilize what already exists. It was also noted that the Digital Solidarity Fund and its role in bridging the digital divide would have to be determined on whatever exists. The way forward in the consolidation of a common African position for PrepCom-2 was agreed upon and a resolution adopted by participants.

6 Evaluation of the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action and ICT indicators

The workshop evaluated the implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action in African countries and discussed preparations for the participation of African member States in PrepCom-2. The need for awareness on the importance of Information Society statistics was highlighted.

6.1 Evaluation of the implementation of the Geneva Action Plan

The session discussed the activities carried out by African countries since the adoption of the Geneva Plan of Action in December 2003. Questionnaires had been sent by ECA and the Bamako Bureau on all aspects of the Plan of Action to WSIS focal points in African States.

Only nine African countries responded to the questionnaire. This was due to the lack of coordination offices for collection of ICT indicators and inadequate human resource capacity for handling such type of data. The responses to the questionnaire pointed to the weaknesses in carrying out a full assessment of the implementation of the Plan of Action. These included capacity building, resource mobilization, vision and political will as well as multi stakeholder partnerships.

Although fifty percent (50%) of the countries that responded had successfully formulated national ICT policies between 2002 and 2004, countries did not adequately assess the implementation of the Geneva Action Plan, and calls were made to ECA and the Bamako Bureau to assist member States in this endeavor.

6.2 Information Society Indicators

Participants discussed the results and perspectives of the SCAN-ICT project, which enters its second phase. Among other issues, discussions focused on a list of indicators aimed at harmonizing the collection of ICT indicators at the global level with the involvement of UN Regional Commissions, UNCTAD, OECD, the UN ICT Task Force, ITU and UNESCO.

The importance of involving all stakeholders in collecting appropriate and relevant indicators and develop suitable benchmarks that are comparable internationally was emphasized, as well as the role that can be played by regional organizations and funding partners in building the capacity of statisticians to embrace information society indicators. Calls were made to member States to provide adequate support and financing for this exercise.

7 African languages: creativity in the service of African renaissance

While the workshop generally served as a platform to exchange ideas on the challenges Africa faces in developing its local languages for the Information Society, discussions pointed out the opportunities available for advancing computational linguistics through the use of Open and Free Software (OSS). Participants stressed the need for concerted political action to promote the use of local languages in cyberspace, as well as in development of applications if the majority of Africans are to gain access to the Information Society. The workshop discussed commitments on cultural and linguistic diversity.

With Africa's under-representation in the global Information Society, participants during the discussions made reference to the need to build capacity to produce and collect accurate and relevant local content in official and national languages as well as recognizing oral and traditional forms of communications. Participants also felt that there was a need to appropriate OSS in the development of African languages for social and economic development, including identifying training needs for data processing specialists. There were calls for the creation of national structures that can support application development, as well as develop standards and character sets for national languages. Other discussions centred on the need to create African language public library networks and the establishment of an African OSS observatory.

C. Opening session of the Africa Regional WSIS Preparatory Conference

After the pre-conference workshops and sessions, the main Africa Regional WSIS Preparatory Conference opened on 2 February 2005. Opening statements were made by His Excellency J. A. Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, His Excellency Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, Mr. Mohammed Ghannouchi, Prime Minister of Tunisia, Mr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Mr. Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Chair of the High-Level Organizing Committee of WSIS, Prof. Nagia M. Essayed, Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, African Union (AU). The Honorable Minister, Joseph Ndong read a message on behalf of His Excellency, Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal.

The following speakers also made presentations on behalf of partner organizations:

- Mr. Adama Samassekou, President, African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) and former President of the Preparatory Committee of WSIS phase 1;
- Mr. Gerolf Wiegel, Director, ICT Division, Swiss Development Corporation (SDC);
- Mr. Richard Bourassa, Director, Industry Canada;
- Mr. Pietro Sicuro, Director General, International Organization of Francophony (INTIF);
- Dr Abdul Waheed Khan, Assistant Director General, UNESCO;
- Mr. Spio-Garbrah, Chief Executive Officer, Commonwealth Telecommunication Organization (CTO); and
- Ambassador Janis Karklins, President of the Preparatory Committee of WSIS Phase 2.

The statements are available at:

http://www.uneca.org/eca_programmes/it_for_development/events/accra/index.htm

The plenary session was chaired by the Honorable Minister of Communications of Ghana, Honorable Albert Kan-Dapaah. The Ministers in charge of ICTs for Mali, Senegal, and Tunisia also delivered statements.

Four reports were introduced during this session:

1. Implementation of the Geneva decisions;
2. Issues arising from the meeting of African ministers in charge of ICTs;
3. The Tunis phase: Structure and content; and
4. Africa's participation in the Tunis Summit

8 Implementation of the Geneva decisions

The Honorable Minister of Mali, Mr. Gaoussou Drabo reported on the status of implementation of the Geneva decisions. He reiterated the importance of one African voice and vision in the WSIS process and in the continued quest to bridge the digital divide and the achievement of the MDGs. He also stressed the importance of the Digital Solidarity Fund, which was established to provide developing countries with significant levels of financing for bridging the digital divide. He expressed appreciation to ECA for supporting member States in developing their NICI plans.

8.1 Issues arising from the meeting of African Ministers in charge of ICTs

The Senegalese Minister for ICT, Honorable Joseph Ndong provided a summary of the meeting of the Ministers in charge of ICTs, held on 1 February 2005, which focused on among other issues, the Digital Solidarity Fund, its composition and the establishment of the African Ministerial Committee on ICTs. He informed participants about a resolution which was being prepared on worldwide support for the Digital Solidarity Fund. He presented the composition of the Ministerial Committee as follows: Algeria, Egypt, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana (Chair), Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Republic of the Congo, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda; with ECA as secretary to the committee.

8.2 The Tunis phase: Structure and content

The Tunisian Minister for communication described the format of the second phase of the Summit, which will take place in Tunis from 16 to 18 November 2005. After stressing the strategic importance of the Information Society in Africa, he noted that the Tunis Summit, which was designed to provide solutions, will be an opportunity to create an all-inclusive partnership both He informed participants that the Tunis phase was expected to come out with a political and operational document.

8.3 Africa's participation in the Tunis Summit

The Ghanaian Minister of Communications explained how Africa should participate in the Tunis Summit, taking into account the lessons learned at the first Summit. He stressed the need to build an extremely strong African consensus, prior to PrepCom-2, on emerging issues, namely: operationalization of the Digital Solidarity Fund and the optimization of existing resources available for ICT development on the continent; Internet Governance; languages and content; open source software; and the role of the media. Discussions also centred on the preparatory conference for the Arab region and the African-Arab dialogue, to be held in Egypt in May 2005, where countries were invited to participate.

9 Financing Mechanisms

The session was chaired by the Senegalese Minister of ICTs, to provide a better understanding of the positions of the participating delegations concerning possible innovative financial approaches for bridging the digital divide. In this regard, experiences on financing mechanisms were presented. Participants examined the adequacy of existing mechanisms for implementing and sustaining an inclusive information society on the continent. They also discussed the viability of the existing financing mechanisms and the role of the Digital Solidarity Fund in bridging the digital divide.

Participants acknowledged that the private sector, and governments, through existing available funds, should finance some aspects of the Information Society, while other areas will require new or additional sources of funding. Participants also agreed that there was a need to improve current funding as well as a clear outline of priorities and niches by countries as they implement Information Society programmes and projects. Another aspect raised was that by improving the legal and regulatory environment, ICT markets could be opened up attracting greater investments.

10 Indicators and Benchmarking

The session was chaired by the Minister of Communications of Gambia, Honorable Amadou Janneh, to discuss Africa's involvement in collection of ICT indicators for benchmarking and measuring the information society. Participants were reminded of the WSIS Geneva Plan of Action, which called upon all countries and regions to develop tools for measuring and benchmarking the information society in order to assess involvement of all stakeholders and benefits derived from an inclusive information society. A call was made by the Geneva phase of the WSIS to involve statistical offices in collection, management and dissemination of statistical ICT indicators.

Presentations were made on the core indicators adopted by African countries during the pre-conference workshop and partnership arrangements for supporting African countries in measuring ICT penetration in the continent. The SCAN ICT framework was acknowledged as a suitable mechanism for data collection for African countries, and several member States requested to be included in the second phase of the SCAN ICT project.

11 ICTs for socio-economic development

The session was chaired by the South Africa Deputy Minister of Communication, Hon. Radhakrishna Roy Padayachie and was devoted to strategies for integrating ICTs into socio-economic sectors of countries with governments playing a central and pivotal role. The workshop also recognized that holistic approaches were needed for integrating ICTs in the socio-economic sectors, including ensuring that infrastructure and finance were in place as well as the relevant indicators for measuring impact.

A strong vision by African governments and agencies working in this area is required, so as to determine national priorities in sectors such as health and education. Sound policies will also be needed to stimulate growth in trade, commerce and agriculture through the introduction of ICTs. This could be self-sustaining as these sectors are economically viable.

In their deliberations and interventions, participants voiced the need to link Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and MDGs to ICT policies as advocated in the NICI Plan development model in order to stimulate pro-poor growth, monitored through the use of Geoinformation systems for poverty mapping and planning interventions.

12 Access and Infrastructure

The session on access and infrastructure was chaired by the Minister of Energy and Communication of Rwanda, Honorable Albert Butare. There is now a consensus that in what is increasingly becoming a highly competitive information-driven global economy, development without a sound ICT infrastructure and modern communication services would be an disadvantage.

It was noted that ICT infrastructure required a variety of technologies and delivery mechanisms for supporting the transmission of voice, data and video, through telecommunication infrastructure. Local and wide area communications and computer networks, broadcasting networks, radio and TV networks as well as the Internet require

integrated multimedia infrastructure for seamless transmission at the national, regional and global levels.

In Africa, however, due to poor ICT infrastructure, combined with weak and disparate policy and regulatory frameworks and limited human resources, there has been inadequate access to affordable telephones, broadcasting services, computers and the Internet in a number of African countries. Furthermore, investment in the sector, rates of deployment and penetration of ICTs is considerably low in Africa compared to the level in other regions of the world. The overwhelming support for the Digital Solidarity Fund is in part to promote the development of infrastructure and recommendations for investments in the sector were strongly endorsed.

13 ICT Industrialization

The session was chaired by the Tunisian Minister, Honorable Montassar Ouaili and addressed issues related to the potential for ICT industrialization and manufacturing in Africa. It was noted that Africa's digital economy is characterized by being a net importer of all ICT products – computers, communication equipment, software and related services. Digital inclusion in the African context entails support and access to information and communications manufacturing capabilities, especially with regard to low cost and appropriate technologies.

The NEPAD work plan emphasizes “the need for increasing Africa's capacity in design and manufacturing of communications equipment”. In some African countries, ICT manufacturing capabilities are being encouraged through providing support to local ICT companies involved in innovative activities, such as technology or IT parks.

A number of issues were raised, including the need for strong political will by African Leaders to support the emergence of e-services and e-industries, the need to rethink strategies with regard to development of ICT industries and the promotion of regulatory and legislative environment conducive to competitiveness, public private partnership and sustainable research and development activities in the Information Society. The forum made recommendations including the need to harness the enormous Diaspora know-how, mainstreaming industrialization in ICT policies and a permanent process of evaluation and re-evaluation.

14 Internet Governance

Mr. Ernest Ndukwe, Chief Executive Officer, Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC) chaired the session on behalf of the Minister. Internet Governance was identified during the 1st phase of the WSIS process as one of the critical issues for Africa's development. It was noted that there is a growing interest amongst the various stakeholders and partners in development in boosting efforts and revamping strategies to create a conducive IG environment. However, at the country level, IG is yet to be effectively integrated into national development strategies.

It was recommended that ECA and its partners should focus on the linkages between IG-development strategies and ICT policies in Africa. The discussions dwelt on the need to identify the key actors and their various roles in addition to addressing capacity building, infrastructure and public policies. In particular, there were calls for countries to support the

newly emerging African-centric IG institutions and bodies on the continent that can defend Africa's interest on Internet Governance issues, especially with respect to the technical and administrative management of the Internet at the regional and global front.

D. Conclusion: Accra Commitments for Tunis 2005

The Africa Regional Conference, preparatory to the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society was held at the Accra International Conference Centre at Accra, Republic of Ghana from February 2 to 4 2005.

Participating in the Conference were representatives of 53 African countries, delegates from many other countries and people representing African and international organizations, the private sector and civil society.

On the basis of the outcomes, the Conference adopts the following:

• Key Principles

The African information society community agrees on the following general principles:

- Building the information society must be inclusive of all stakeholders including Government, as well as private sector, civil society and the United Nations and other regional and international organizations
- Building the information and shared knowledge society will contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals to improve quality of life and eradicate poverty by creating opportunities to access, utilize and share information and knowledge
- The international community will tackle information society building on the basis of commitments to remove obstacles to bridging the digital divide.
- Building an inclusive information society requires the use of the languages of the concerned populations.

• Development orientations

- ICT can contribute positively to sustainable development,
 - Building the information society should be development oriented and take into consideration especially the development needs of African LDCs,
 - Providing universal, equitable and affordable access to ICT will create new digital opportunities,
 - The adoption of African languages as working languages in the public domain, is a requirement to the development of the continent and to the preservation of the cultural and linguistic diversity in the Information Society,
 - A collective action of all African stakeholders is mandatory for the integration of gender perspective in the information and knowledge society in general and ICTs in particular.
 - Africa's youth have and should play a key role in bridging the digital divide in establishing an Information Society that focuses on people in development over profit and technology.
 - The African continent with its high illiteracy rate and vulnerable populations should develop specialized centres and relevant materials to overcome these major handicaps.
 - Civil society and the private sector have a key role to play in the development process in general, and especially in building the Information Society.
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- Scientific and Technological Research should focus on the concomitant development of society and efficient use of technology.
 - Media is catalyst of social changes and can, through multi-channel partnerships, foster the implementation of WSIS Plan of Action.
- **Resource mobilization including human resources**
 - Develop need oriented approaches in establishing national, sub-regional and regional e-strategies;
 - Pay particular attention to human resources training and development, particularly teachers and students so as to promote content and infrastructure development with the view to facilitate the emergence of an inclusive information society in Africa;
 - Provide increased attention and support to human resource development and education for the information society with emphasis on the youth and women in order to increase African contribution to the global knowledge economy;
 - Develop specialized centres and relevant materials for illiterate and vulnerable populations;
 - Use the existing technical organizations to help reinforce capacity building at all levels of ICTs; and
 - The Digital Solidarity Fund and existing financial mechanisms should be mobilized to face the challenges of implementing the action plan.
 - **International cooperation**
 - We call upon international and regional organizations to assist African countries in the implementation of the WSIS.
 - **Operational Aspects**

The African information society community agrees that short, medium and long term plans are required to realize and implement the general objectives set forth by the Geneva Action Plan. To achieve this, we recommend that the following:

a. The way to Tunis 2005:

1. **WSIS Targets:** The Tunis Summit will be the second and last phase of WSIS and will be an opportunity to strengthen confidence in building the information society as efficient means to improve human conditions. Accordingly, the African stakeholders are invited to cooperate in order to defend the African common positions regarding the main issues raised by the international debate.
2. **Indicators:** To assess the implementation of the information society, a specific set of basic indicators should be established and used to evaluate progress in the process.
Composite indicators should also be developed to reflect the trends without introducing competition between African countries.
3. **Stocktaking:** African countries are invited to establish an information gathering mechanism at the national level with the involvement of all concerned parties.

b. General Implementation Strategies: African countries are invited to establish national e-strategies based on the overall social economic goals of the countries including the poverty reduction programs.

Regional and international cooperation should contribute to national capacity building and to the development of national, regional and sub-regional implementation strategies.

c. Financial mechanisms:

The Digital Solidarity Fund complements other mechanisms and does not compete with them. It should be publicized widely accordingly.

Existing financial mechanisms should continue to be fully utilized to fund the growth of new ICT networks and services.

d. Internet Governance:

1. Special attention should be given by International Bodies dealing with Internet Governance, to the needs and interests of the developing and least developing countries
2. Special attention should be paid to the Integration of African Languages and to multilingualism in the Internet
3. Internet Governance aspects should be mainstreamed in the establishment of national and regional e-strategic plans
4. A participatory management of the Internet should include all stakeholders (government, private sector, civil society, and intergovernmental organizations)
5. Appropriate regulatory frameworks should be established to deal with public policy issues related to Internet infrastructure and applications (e-commerce, SPAM, cyber-criminality, Privacy, etc.) and to enable the implementation of regional and sub-regional Internet exchange points and relevant technical regional institutions (Ex: Afrinic).

e. Partnership

1. Multistakeholder partnership is needed to overcome the challenges ahead, the implementation of WSIS Action Plan in particular, and ICT for development in general
2. **We commit** to create an environment as well as mechanisms conducive to an effective Public and Private Partnership (PPP)

f. The way ahead: After Tunis 2005..

1. The African Community agrees on the need to establish appropriate implementation mechanism involving relevant national, sub-regional, regional, and international bodies.
 2. Adequate financing mechanisms should be sought to implement the long-term action plans dedicated to the building of the information society.
 3. Follow up mechanisms should be based on a multi-stakeholder approach.
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Annex 1.

List of Pre-conference meetings and events

- Civil Society Capacity Building Forum;
- Internet Governance;
- ICT and Poverty reduction;
- National, regional, local and sectoral e-strategies;
- Africa language and Open source: creativity in the service of African renaissance;
- GKP Africa day on Multistakeholder Partnerships in building Information Society;
- Media Forum;
- Information society and regulation: Access and Infrastructure;
- Financing the Information Society;
- Private Sector Forum
- Evaluation of the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action and Information Society Indicators
- Meeting of the African Ministerial Committee on ICTs
- ICANN At Large meeting
- E Ghana workshop

Parallel workshops and Round Table

- Indicators and benchmarking
- ICTs for Socio-economic development
- Financing the Information Society
- Indicators and Benchmarking
- ICTs for Socio-economic Development
- Access and Infrastructure
- Industrialization
- Internet Governance
- Round Table on Financing mechanisms