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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

First Session of the Committee on
Development Information, Science and Technology (CODIST-I)

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
28 April – 01 May 2009

Third Meeting of the Fifth African Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC)
on the African Information Society Initiative (AISI)
27 May 2008, Accra, Ghana

Meeting Report

INTRODUCTION

1.   In May 1996, the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) adopted the African Information Society Initiative (AISI). Resolution 812 (XXXI) of the Conference adopted the Initiative and mandated ECA to institute an African Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) comprised of African experts in all aspects of information and communication technologies (ICT) and the Information Society to provide advice on the implementation of AISI. ATAC members were also expected to play an advocacy role, identify best ICT practices and assist ECA to mobilize resources for its work programme.

2.   Since 1997, five committees have been established (ATAC-I, II, III, IV and V). ATAC-V held its first meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 12-14 December 2006 and a second meeting in Maputo, Mozambique, 30-31 May 2007, back to back with the e-Government and Gender workshop organized by ECA and Industry Canada. The meeting, organized in a retreat format, debated extensively on the integration of science and technology (S&T) in the newly re-structured ECA, especially through its ICT, Science and Technology Division (ISTD). Members proffered invaluable suggestions and advice on programme implementation.

3.   The third meeting was organized on 27 May 2008 in Accra, Ghana prior to the e-Learning Africa Conference that took place 28-30 May 2008. The main objective of the meeting was to review progress made in the implementation of the ISTD 2007-2009 Work Programme since the last meeting. The meeting also aimed to define a roadmap/work plan for ATAC-V up to the end of its term in December 2008.

Session I: Opening Session

I.1 Welcoming and introductory remarks

4.   In her opening remarks, the Director of ISTD, Ms. Aida Opoku-Mensah, introduced and welcomed Dr. Joseph Ngu from the UNESCO International Capacity Building Agency (ICBA), who was attending the meeting as an observer. The Director also thanked ATAC members for their contributions to effective implementation of the ISTD work programme.

5.   The meeting was attended by the following ATAC members:

♦ Prof. Clement Dzidonou - Chairperson
♦ Ms. Olive Chikankheni - Vice-chairperson
♦ Ms. Opportune Santos
♦ Mr. Ebrima Jobe
♦ Mr. Mzwandile R. Mabuza
♦ Mr. Massani Koroney

6.   Apologies were received from Dr. Ahmed Hussien, Dr. Nagwa El Shenawy, Ms. Natalie Sunker and Mr. Abdoulaye Ndiaye. The list of participants is attached as annex 11.

I. 2   Adoption of Agenda

7.   The provisional agenda was adopted. It is presented as annex 1.

Session II: Work Programme Reports

II.1   Progress report on implementation of the ISTD 2007-2009 Work Programme

8.   Ms. Opoku-Mensah and Mr. Thierry Amoussougbo, Regional Adviser, ISTD, presented a progress report on implementation of the ISTD 2007-2009 Work Programme. The presentation highlighted the major activities and achievements since commencement of the work programme in 2007. In addition, planned activities for the remaining period of the biennium were presented.

9.   The presentation provided progress updates in the areas of a) formulation of national e-strategies and harmonization of subregional policies and regulations, b) information and knowledge development and management studies and publications, c) creating enabling environment for e-strategies through capacity building, and d) partnership and outreach on Information Society development. In terms of policy formulation, it was indicated that the number of countries that had begun the National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) process had increased, albeit at varying stages of the process. These countries included: Benin, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gambia, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Swaziland. Furthermore, additional requests for support in developing NICI implementation plans had been received from Comoros, Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Sudan and Tanzania. Efforts were also underway to include gender perspectives in NICI policies and plans in Chad and Togo.

10.   With regard to regional e-strategies, the presentation highlighted ECA support to Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in the harmonization of national regulatory frameworks. The status of the ECA ICT measurement programme through to the second phase of the Scan-ICT initiative in five countries (Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Mauritius, and Rwanda) was presented.

11.   The presentation alluded to a number of studies and publications produced during the reporting period. These included AISI and NICI publications on e-trade national reports from six countries, and studies on ICTs and Employment, on Telecom regulation/convergence in Nigeria and Sierra Leone, and on Telecom regulation/competition in Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Rwanda, and Swaziland. Other outputs included studies on innovation and knowledge trends in national development policy implementation, and on legal and regulatory frameworks for the knowledge economy, as well as policy briefs on the Knowledge Economy.

II.2   Science with Africa

12.   ATAC members were briefed on the outcomes of the "Science with Africa" Conference, which was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 3-7 March 2008. The Conference was attended by over 600 participants representing 44 African member States (6 Ministers, 2 Speakers, 13 MPs); Asian, European and North American countries, including the Deputy Prime Minister of Slovakia; regional and international organizations and United Nations institutions; business communities; civil society organizations; and development partners from all over the world. The Conference presented an opportunity for the creation of synergies among European, US, African and other global science-based organizations and entities whilst also promoting North-South cooperation to foster technology transfer and to improve existing research and development (R&D) activities, centres of excellence and partnerships. This event also served as a platform to improve linkages between international scientific research programmes and business enterprises to expedite economic growth in Africa and to provide a framework for utilizing S&T options to support economic progress in Africa.

13.   The meeting was further informed that a knowledge-sharing activity was conducted during the Conference, facilitated by ECA, Brainstore and the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP), with the support of the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC). This activity, led by Brainstore, was in the form of an Ideas Factory where Conference participants developed ideas on how African R&D could be strengthened and the participation of African scientists in international research projects effectively enhanced. As a result of this process, 20 ideas were selected for implementation and resource mobilization. It was decided that a roadmap-planning workshop on the 20 ideas would be held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 6-7 June 2008.

14.   The Director informed ATAC members that the outcomes of the "Science with Africa" Conference were included as one of the resolutions at the ECA Conference of Ministers in April 2008. Members were also informed that ISTD had already commenced implementing some of the recommendations of the Conference. These included developing guidelines for health R&D in Africa, a transport R&D programme being implemented with the ECA Subregional Office (SRO) in Central Africa and the scheduled roadmap-planning workshop for implementation of the 20 selected ideas.

II.3   ATAC Maputo meeting report and ATAC follow-up activities

15.   Prof. Clement Dzidonou, Chairperson of the ATAC Bureau, presented the report of the second meeting of ATAC V held in Maputo, Mozambique, 30-31 May 2007. This meeting had been held back to back with the e-Government and Gender workshop organized by ECA and Industry Canada as a follow-up to the recommendations of first ATAC meeting held in Addis Ababa, 14-16 December 2006. After providing a background to the ATAC role and terms of reference (ToRs), Prof. Dzidonou highlighted the key decisions reached at the meeting and informed participants that the Maputo meeting had focused on mapping out the implications of the reorganization of the Division on its mandate and programmes including those of AISI. He underscored the recommendation by ATAC members that 80 per cent of ECA ICT policy development activities should be dedicated to NICI implementation, and 20 per cent to

development of new and on-going NICIs, as recommended by the first meeting of ATAC-V. A request was also tabled for ISTD to develop a scorecard on NICI implementation in member States in order to monitor the development impact. This would enhance the ATAC advisory role in the areas of focus, including directing partners to deserving countries.

16. Furthermore, the meeting developed a matrix to map out activities on ICT, Geoinformation and S&T for ECA activities in the following years. The Chairperson confirmed that the AISI vision, goals and objectives were discussed within the restructuring context and were deemed to be still relevant and up to date as a framework for spearheading development of the knowledge economy in Africa.

II.4 Observations and Recommendations

17. Following the presentations and discussions, ATAC members made the following observations and recommendations:

- Given the concern of the ISTD Director that some countries were not taking NICI implementation "seriously" and were "not ready, thus presenting serious challenges to the ECA role, members suggested that linking implementation of sectoral strategies and activities to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) could assist in raising the level of interest and readiness in such countries. Moreover, members recommended that in order to guarantee commitment, requests for NICI support should come from a higher level of authority than that of a ministry. It was agreed that obtaining commitment at a higher level should come in the form of an agreement, as a precondition for engaging in the NICI process. The agreement could stipulate that if a country was developing an ECA-supported NICI, this had to be followed through to successful implementation. It was also suggested that engaging the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at country level would also help in facilitating the process and mobilizing resources.

- The Chair advised members that three documents, namely, the 2007-2009 ISTD Work Programme, the ATAC Maputo Meeting report and a Progress Report on implementation of the work programme, had been tabled for discussion at the current meeting and requested members to review the documents and offer relevant comments and suggestions.

- After reviewing the documents, members advised that it was evident that progress had been achieved in line with the work plan and ATAC activity matrix. They commended ISTD for its excellent performance during the report period, especially for its achievements in integrating S&T into its activities following the re-structuring of ECA and in developing models for technology parks and centres of excellence. Considering the global S&T context and the potential of S&T as an engine of growth and development, establishing Africa's position was vital and activities such as the "Science with Africa" Conference were opportune. ATAC members further suggested that the roadmap workshop should analyse the interrelation and possible overlap of ideas for implementation and also seek links to other ongoing programmes in Africa.

- ATAC members were informed that ISTD had developed a NICI questionnaire to collect data on the status of NICIs. Members advised that the questionnaire should be short and precise so as to increase the response rate and enable effective data collection for meaningful analysis. It was recommended that the questionnaire be tested before use and that the longer version should be administered in structured interviews.

- With regard to resource mobilization, participants were briefed about the challenges in mobilizing resources for ICT for Development (ICT4D) due to donor fatigue and also to internal challenges in the countries. ECA would, under these circumstances, continue to utilize its convening power to mobilize resources for NICI implementation. ECA would also strive to unlock internal implementation challenges through consultation with respective governments and assistance for tapping into donor resources. To facilitate this, members suggested that ECA should organize donor roundtables that would include key stakeholders, donors, governments and development partners, and in which best African practices could be presented. These roundtables would serve as awareness-raising forums for policy-makers on resource mobilization for NICI implementation.

- ISTD activities in building the capacity of parliamentarians were appreciated, although, the high turnover of MPs was noted. It was suggested that focus could be placed on sustaining the process, strengthening activities, developing guidelines and building institutions such as e-Parliaments and ICT committees in parliaments. In line with this, ATAC members from Gambia and Niger shared experiences and good practices as they had sustainable institutional mechanisms in place. As the activities required large resources, parliaments should be urged to allocate adequate ICT training/capacity building budgets and to adopt the ECA model used in Gambia and Niger for replication in their countries.

- Gender mainstreaming should be considered in new and existing NICIs. ATAC members recommended that guidelines should be developed to assist both Anglophone and Francophone countries to mainstream gender perspectives in NICIs. This exercise could build on the experiences and lessons learnt in similar activities in Chad and Togo.

- ECA should continue to strengthen multi-stakeholder consultation programmes in the NICI process. It was noted that, as a result of ISTD work in this area, some youth and media networks were registering marked success in promotion of the Information Society in their respective countries. However, engaging the local private sector remained a challenge and members agreed that innovative mechanisms were needed to effectively engage local private sectors in the NICI process.

- On administrative issues, members requested that the Secretariat should avail Committee working documents in English and in French in advance, to enable members to have adequate time to review the documents prior to the meetings.

Session III: ATAC Work Programme

18.   Prof. Dzidonou presented the roadmap for ATAC-V focusing on the ATAC role, mandate and deliverables.

19.   He reminded members that the ATAC mandate included an advisory and advocacy role on implementation of AISI and the ISTD Programme of Work and representing ISTD at national and international meetings.

20.   Regarding ATAC achievement of its mandate, he cited the Maputo ATAC Meeting outcomes (providing advisory and substantive inputs on the direction and orientation of ISTD work in view of its broadened mandate since the ECA re-structuring) as a major success. In addition, he reported that ATAC members had represented ISTD at some international meetings and conferences.

21.   Assessing ATAC-V deliverables to date, the Chair acknowledged that there was room for improvement of performance. Challenges related to lack of clarity about activities, methodology and responsibilities. These should be addressed from the on-set and attached to the Work Programme. Issues that needed to be addressed also included the standard of administrative facilitation on the part of the Secretariat.

22.   The Chair concluded his presentation by providing some suggestions on the way forward. He stressed that the Accra Meeting should concentrate on crystallizing the activities (WHAT), methodology (HOW), the timeframe (WHEN), and the responsible persons/entities (WHO) in relation to ATAC-V work for the rest of its term. Following this, participants had extensive discussions to map out the ATAC work programme for the remaining portion of their term and developed the matrix below.

ATAC-V Work Programme (June-December 2008)

Activity (WHAT)	Methodology (HOW)	Timeframe (WHEN)	Responsible person(s) (WHO)
Assist ISTD in ADF/ICT breakout session in the preparatory stage and during the meeting	Online discussion, review of documents, Technical committees, participation	September – October 2008	ALL
Assist in the development of ToRs for specific initiatives and activities in which ATAC members have expertise	The how will be defined as per the tasks	On-going up to the end of term	ALL
Help with CODIST Agenda	Review new CODIST ToRs in view of the transition from CODI to CODIST; consultations and inputs on the theme of CODIST	September-October 2008	ALL
Assist in review and reporting on the WSIS Follow-up Conference documents for November meeting	Share the agenda and documents as soon as possible and receive comments from ATAC	August 2008	Ebou Clement, Olive Massani
Review e-learning platform and document	Review the source documents and comment on the structure	July 2008	Clement Olive Ahmed
Assist in TIGA 2009 process in the areas of nominations, publicity and selection	Identify potential entries, share TIGA announcement and selection	July 2008	ALL
Provide advisory services in specific areas	On-going as per request; attend EGM	On-going up to the end of term	ALL
ATAC members should be available to represent the Division from time to time at international and subregional events	On-going	On-going up to the end of term	ALL

Session IV: Wrap up and closing

Date and venue of next meeting and Any Other Business

23.   Under Any Other Business, the meeting agreed on the following delivery schedule of ATAC- V outputs:

     5 June 2008: The first draft of the meeting report to be posted for comments
     12 June 2008: Draft report to be finalized by ATAC members
     19 June 2008: French translation to be made available

24.   If there were no amendments, the report would be adopted. The Secretariat would finalize the report one week after the deadline in the case of any comments submitted.

25.   The next meeting was scheduled to take place in Addis Ababa in October 2008 during the Sixth African Development Forum (ADF-VI).

Closing remarks

26.   The Chairperson thanked all the members for their active participation and urged them to continue their commitment to support ISTD/ECA in implementing its activities. Some members also expressed their satisfaction with the outcomes of the meeting and reaffirmed their commitment to deliver as per the joint work plan.

27.   Ms. Opoku-Mensah on her part thanked participants for attending the meeting despite their busy schedule. She also thanked the Chair for his excellent leadership and moderation and ATAC members for their invaluable contributions to the deliberations. The Director took note of the concern raised by Francophone colleagues on translation issues and confirmed that the Secretariat would address this in subsequent ATAC meetings.

28.   The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Annex I

Meeting of the Fifth African Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC-V)

Tuesday, 27 May 2008
<u>14-30 –18.00</u>

<u>Session I</u>:	**Opening Session**
14:30 – 15:00	Welcoming and introductory remarks *Ms. Aida Opoku-Mensah, Director, ISTD*
15:00 – 15:10	Discussion and Adoption of Agenda and Programme of Work
<u>Session II</u>:	**Work Programme Reports**
15:10 – 15:30	Report on ECA activities in the area of ICTs, 2007-2008 and the Work Programme for the biennium, 2008-2009 *Ms. Aida Opoku-Mensah, Director, ISTD*
15:30 – 15:45	Presentation of the outcomes of the Science with Africa Conference *Thierry H. Amoussougbo, Regional Adviser, ISTD*
15:45 – 16:00	*Coffee Break*
16:00 – 16:20	Presentation of the ATAC Maputo meeting report and ATAC follow-up activities *Prof. Clement Dzidonou, Chairperson, ATAC Bureau*
16:20 – 17:00	**Discussion**
<u>Session III</u>:	**ATAC Work Programme**
17:00 – 17:30	Adoption of the ATAC Work Programme; date and venue of the next meeting; and AOB
<u>Session IV</u>:	**Closing Session**
17:30 – 18:00	Closing remarks

Annex II

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