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**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

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

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**The Committee on Development Information, Science and  
Technology (CODIST)**

**Terms of Reference (TOR)**

# **The Committee on Development Information, Science and Technology (CODIST)**

## **Terms of Reference**

### **I. Introduction**

1. The Committee on Development Information, Science and Technology (CODIST) is one of the seven subsidiary bodies of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) composed of senior officials and experts from member States who meet on a biennial basis. The role of CODIST is to review challenges and issues pertaining to the information and communications technology (ICT), geoinformation, science and technology sectors; formulate policies and strategies to address Africa's development challenges; and determine priorities to be reflected in the work programme of the ICT, Science and Technology Division of ECA.

2. The ICT, Science and Technology Division (ISTD), formerly known as the Development Information Services Division (DISD), is responsible for implementing this sub-programme, covering information and communication technologies; science and technology; and geoinformation.

3. Specifically, CODIST will strengthen the role of ECA in assisting its member States to develop their national information and communications infrastructure and integrate science and technology into their development programmes and strategies with assistance, from various experts and policymakers. The Committee will also address issues related to knowledge and information services that are key to moving the African development agenda forward. The members of the Committee will include experts from such fields as information and communications technologies, geoinformation and science and technology.

4. The terms of reference of CODIST, as established by the 40<sup>th</sup> session of the ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in their Review of the Intergovernmental Machinery of ECA in light of the Repositioning of the Commission (853-XL), 2-3 April 2007 (see Annex), identify the areas of responsibility of CODIST. CODIST will consider the terms of reference at its first meeting in April 2009 with a view to their operationalization.

5. The terms of reference to be revised and adopted are as follows:

### **II. Terms of Reference of the Committee on Development Information, Science & Technology**

#### **A. General**

6. The Committee on Development Information, Science and Technology, acting within the framework of the policies and procedures of the United Nations and subject to the general supervision of the ECA Conference of Ministers shall:

(a) Promote the growth of an information society in Africa by using information and communications technologies to organize, manage and disseminate information in Africa;

(b) Advise on measures to improve all aspects of science and technology development in member States according to the recommendations of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology;

(c) Advise on the building, maintenance and dissemination of regional development databases, including textual and spatial databases, and assist in strengthening the capacity of member States to improve their national information systems;

(d) Promote the development and utilization of geographic information technologies as decision support tools for the socio-economic development of member States;

(e) Foster regional cooperation and integration among members States, with the participation of key stakeholders in the field; and

(f) Offer a platform for African participants to interact with their counterparts from the developed world, and promote negotiations on bilateral and multilateral technical assistance.

## **B. Membership**

7. The Committee on Development Information, Science and Technology shall be composed of science and technology, information and geoinformation specialists who are also Government officials in the members States of the Economic Commission for Africa.

## **C. Observers**

8. States that are, not members of the Commission, intergovernmental organizations, academic institutions and research centres, agencies of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations shall be invited to the meetings of CODIST and its sub-committees as observers.

## **D. Sessions**

9. The Committee shall meet once every two years and shall report on its sessions to the Conference of Ministers of the Economic Commission for Africa.

10. Work at sessions of the Committee shall be organized in plenary meetings and in sub-committees. A joint report of the plenary and sub-committee meetings shall be agreed to at the final plenary meeting of each session of the Committee.

11. At the beginning of each session, the Committee shall elect a Chairperson, two Vice-Chairpersons and two Rapporteurs.

## **E. Sub-committees**

12. Three sub-committees in the following specialized fields shall be established:

- (a) Information and communications technologies;
- (b) Science and technology; and
- (c) Geoinformation.

13. The sub-committees may establish adhoc or standing workings groups, as necessary, during meetings, between meetings and as long as necessary.

14. Each sub-committee shall appoint a Chairperson, a Vice-chairperson and a Rapporteur.
15. Each sub-committee shall adopt its report, which shall be agreed to at the final plenary session of CODIST.

**F. Others**

16. Member States and agencies shall bear the cost of their attendance at the sessions of the CODIST.
17. Except as provided for herein, the Rules of Procedure of the Economic Commission for Africa shall, where relevant, apply to the sessions of the CODIST.

**III. Sub-Committee on Information and Communications Technologies**

18. The Sub-Committee on Information and Communications Technologies will provide a forum for discussion on all matters related to the utilization of information and communications technologies for the organization, management and dissemination of information in Africa, with particular reference to:

- (a) Examination of progress in this area since its last meeting;
- (b) Examination of trends, globally and within Africa, and present state of knowledge in this area;
- (c) Exchange of country experiences;
- (d) Identification of priority issues to be recommended for action by African member States;
- (e) Examination and approval of norms and standards in this area;
- (f) Review of human resources development in Africa in this area and submission of recommendations for its improvement;
- (g) Review and proposal of activities for promoting information and communications technologies for development in the work programme of ECA; and
- (h) Recommendation of any studies or documentation that may be required to facilitate the work of CODIST.

**III.1. Membership**

19. Member States will nominate their representatives from among Government officials responsible for the use of information and communications technologies in the management of development information.

### **III.2. Observers**

20. Observers will be subregional and regional organizations, universities and research institutes with particular interest in information and communications technologies for the management of Development information, as well as ECA partners from bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental organizations and foundations with an interest in this area.

### **III.3. Monitoring and reporting**

21. Each member State shall submit a progress report of its activities to the secretariat at least two months before the next meeting of the sub-committee.

## **IV. Sub-committee on Geoinformation**

22. The Sub-committee on Geoinformation shall be the forum for high-level representatives of ECA member States to discuss, share information and establish policies for the development and use of geographic information. In particular it shall:

(a) Raise awareness of the benefits of using geographic information for socio-economic development;

(b) Promote the development and utilization of geographic information in member States;

(c) Identify and raise awareness about priority issues in geographic information;

(d) Examine and review progress made by member States;

(e) Facilitate capacity-building with regard to spatial information capture, management, dissemination and utilization;

(f) Provide information, through partnerships, on recent and proven trends and present status of knowledge and advise on new and proven technologies and methodologies to improve spatial data collection and its processing into useful information for decision-making;

(g) Promote the development of methodologies and standards in these fields;

(h) Develop and support the establishment of national, regional and global geo-spatial infrastructures with the aim of facilitating integration of data and optimizing the use of resources;

(i) Identify, promote and support regional projects;

(j) Examine and provide principles regarding ownership, access to, custodial responsibilities and commercial aspects of spatial data which will promote transparency and the flow of spatial data and information;

(k) Liaise and coordinate its activities with other similar international, regional and subregional bodies, initiatives and conferences; and

(l) Promote networking among institutions and practitioners in geoinformation and generate synergy at national level to facilitate its management.

#### **IV.1. Membership**

23. The heads of national agencies responsible for the production and custody of geographic data and information, such as mapping agencies, remote sensing centres, geographic information councils, or their representatives shall be members of the sub-committee. Each member State will identify its focal points.

#### **IV.2. Observers**

24. Observers will be representatives of national, subregional, regional, international organizations, United Nations agencies, Intergovernmental organizations, NGOS, academia and research institutions, private sector and industry, including producers and users of geoinformation; and the heads of the national agencies from non-African Governments or their representatives.

#### **IV.3. Monitoring and reporting**

25. Each member State shall submit a progress report of its activities to the secretariat at least two months before the next meeting of the sub-committee.

### **V. Sub-committee on Science and Technology**

26. The Sub-Committee on Science and Technology will provide a forum for discussion on all matters related to science and technology for development in Africa. In particular it shall:

- (a) Examine progress in this area since its last meeting;
- (b) Identify priority issues to be recommended for action by African member States;
- (c) Identify, provide information and raise awareness of recent trends in science and technology (S&T) and major policy issues relevant to African development;
- (d) Provide a virtual space in which S&T policymakers and other stakeholders can network and share information dynamically by helping to build and sustain a virtual community of African S&T stakeholders;
- (e) Provide up-to-date information on the international governance structure of S&T;
- (f) Provide a comprehensive and up-to-date list of African and non-African S&T resources (e.g. major S&T institutions, journals, documents, publications);
- (g) Provide information on experiences of African and non-African countries (for example, under the heading of “lessons learned”) and highlight “good or best practice cases” in selected S&T policy areas;
- (h) Identify areas of S&T in which it would be useful to develop Africa-wide standards or “rules of the game” in order to improve convergence or compatibility of national policies;

- (i) Highlight through evidence the linkage between S&T and the economy;
- (j) Provide information on country experiences and best practices on S&T-related institutional and regulatory reforms that promote innovative behaviour;
- (k) Provide information on resource persons such as experts and consultants, including a referral service to relevant S&T institutions upon request and where appropriate;
- (l) Advocate and encourage the development of internationally comparable data on science, technology and innovation that help monitor change and progress in African S&T in Africa;
- (m) Recommend any study or documentation that may be required to facilitate the work of the (CODIST); and
- (n) Review and make recommendations on promoting science and technology for development in ECA's work programme.

#### **V.1. Membership**

27. Member States will nominate their representatives from among Government officials responsible for the science and technology, including heads of national agencies or related development sectors (such as S&T national agencies) or their representatives as members of the sub-committee. Each member State shall identify its focal points.

#### **V.2. Observers**

28. Observers will be subregional and regional organizations, universities and research institutes, science and technology agencies and experts, representatives of the NEPAD Office of Science and technology and, the African Union Commission's Human Resource, Science and Technology, Division as well as ECA partners from bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental organizations and foundations with an interest in this area.

#### **V.3. Monitoring and reporting**

29. Each member State shall submit a progress report of its activities to the secretariat at least two months before the next meeting of the sub-committee.

### **Annex**

The terms of reference of CODIST as established by the ECA Conference of Ministers in 1997 were to:

(a) Review and advise on the implementation of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI)- an action framework for national information and communication infrastructure with a view to suggesting measures to accelerate its implementation;

(b) Mobilize funding and technical assistance for the implementation of AISI;

(c) Identify and suggest techniques for the application of geographic information for natural resource exploitation and management;

(d) Examine and advise on progress by member States in all aspects of statistical development;

(e) Advise on the establishment of arrangements for the improvement of all aspects of methodology and practice in the areas of statistics, information, science and geographic information systems (remote sensing and cartography); and

(f) Coordinate the training of African personnel in the areas of statistics, information, science and geographic information systems.