

**Communauté Economique des
Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest**

**Economic Community
of West African States**

**ECOWAS Workshop on Regional ICT
Policy
Lome, 31st January to 1st February 2006**

FINAL REPORT

Lomé, 1st February 2006

Introduction

The ECOWAS meeting on Regional Policy on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) was held in Lomé from 31 January to 1st February 200

The deliberations of the said meeting were held in the Dome of the headquarters of the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) in Lomé.

The objective of the workshop is to define a framework for a regional ICT policy.

The following member States were in attendance:

- Benin
- The Gambia
- Guinea
- Mali
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Senegal
- Sierra Leone
- Togo.

Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) also attended the meeting.

The list of participants is attached as annex 1 to this report

Opening ceremony

Three speeches were delivered at the opening ceremony, namely, a key note address by the ECOWAS Deputy Executive Secretary in charge of Integration Programmes, Dr. Shola AFOLABI, an address by the ECA Representative, Mr. Makane Faye and an address by Mr. Abayeh BOYODI, Technical Director of the Regulatory Authority for the Post and Telecommunication Sectors (ART &P) of Togo representing His Excellency the Minister of Transports, Post and Telecommunication.

In his welcome remarks, the Ag. Deputy Executive Secretary in charge of Integration programs warmly welcomed all the participants to this important meeting in Lomé.

Thereafter, he thanked the Government and the people of Togo for the facilities put at the disposal to ensure the smooth meeting. Finally, he recalled the objectives of the of the meeting at which Experts of the member States are participating, namely, the need to have a common regional policy on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) within the ECOWAS sub region in order to reduce the digital divide both between the member States and within each country.

The ECA Representative recalled the fundamental role which this Institution plays in the development of ICT in Africa and particularly in West Africa. He expressed delight over the fact that ECOWAS has identified ICT as an important factor for regional development and competitiveness.

In his opening address, on behalf of the Minister of Equipment, Transport, Post and Telecommunication, the Technical Director of the Regulatory Authority for the Post and Telecommunication Sector welcomed all the participants to Togo. He thanked the ECOWAS Executive Secretary for choosing Togo to host the meeting on regional policy for ICT.

After an overview on the ICT in Togo, he observed that the level of utilization of ICT in the countries was low. He expressed the wish that ICT be further integrated in the development process in all the socio-economic sectors of our countries.

Finally, he thanked all the participants for honouring the invitation of ECOWAS and opened the meeting.

Election of Bureau

The following Bureau was put in place:

Chairman:	Niger
Rapporteurs:	Togo The Gambia

Adoption of the agenda

The following agenda was adopted after amendments:

1. presentation of the ECOWAS general vision on ICT policy by the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat;
2. Presentation on the harmonization of NICI Plans by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA);
3. Discussions
4. Presentation ICT policies and practices by member States ;
5. Any other business.

Conclusion of the deliberations

Item 1: Presentation by the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat on the general vision on the regional ICT policy

The ECOWAS Executive Secretariat made a power-point presentation on the ECOWAS vision on regional integration and the activities of the Community Computer Center (CCC).

While basing its thrust on the highlights of the UNESCO presentation at the World Summit on Information Society in Tunis (WSIS), the ECOWAS Executive Secretariat identified the challenges to be addressed towards an appropriate ICT policy in the ECOWAS sub-region, notably:

- The development of infrastructure ;
- The establishment of an enabling environment;
- Capacity building;
- The development of educational contents and scientific innovations
- Appropriation (acceptance) of ICT by all.

Item 2 : Presentation by ECA

The ECA Representative highlighted the outlook of ECA within the framework of NICI harmonization. Concerning the cooperation with the Regional Economic Communities (REC), several African countries, including ECOWAS countries have already benefited from ECA assistance with a view to defining their NICI plan. For the ECOWAS region, in

addition to the harmonization of NICI plans, assistance would also concern defining of an e-commerce legal framework.

Finally, he referred to the SCAN ICT project that is aimed at facilitating the collection of statistical data for ICT. He also underscored the need for:

- Defining of a sub-regional framework for harmonization;
- Creating a synergy among the various actors, and
- Utilizing the opportunities offered by NEPAD

Item 3 : Discussions

Following the presentations from ECOWAS Executive secretariat and ECA there were discussion resulting in the identification of important elements that are crucial to the formulation of a regional ICT policy which will help in the achievement of an Information Society.

These are:

- The NICI plans should focus on the achievement of Universal access/service
- Internet connectivity and content development
- Promotion of ICT uses and capacity building
- Collaboration among all stakeholders
- Funding

The meeting also highlighted the importance of the political will of member states for the realization of this regional ICT policy. To this effect a draft declaration as been prepared for submission to the next ECOWAS ICT Ministers meeting for adoption. This is attached as annex 2.

Item 4 : Presentation by the member States on their respective ICT activities

Each member State made a presentation of the ICT policy and practice in their countries. From these presentations three categories of states in terms of the NICI process were identified. Vis a vis those that already have a policy and are in the implementation stage, those working on their policy and those with no distinct policy.

At the end of the deliberations that followed the presentations, the workshop supports the ECOWAS executive Secretariat's vision of defining a regional ICT policy with in the frame work of certain identified strategic pillars.

All the member states presentations are attached in annex 3

Item 5: Any other business

No issue was raised under this item of the agenda.

Recommendations:

Recognising the fact that ICTs are an indispensable tool for rapid development, the workshop recommends the following:

- The urgent adoption of the declaration on regional policy for the information society
- the urgent need to put in place an ICT regional policy and identified the following six strategic fundamental areas:
 1. Development of infrastructure,
 2. Putting in place of a Legal and regulatory framework;
 3. Development of contents
 4. Capacity building
 5. Cooperation and integration, and
 6. Funding
- Effective assistance from ECA to ECOWAS in the development of the regional ICT process.
- Seek the participation of International partners in the implementation of national ICT policies.
- Harmonization of the national ICT policies.
- Ensure the promotion and implementation of national ICT policies.
- To speed up the restructuring of the special Telecoms fund to regional ICT fund
- The need to set up governmental intranet in each the member countries.
- Integrating the various governmental Intranets to a common Intranet under the ECOWAS executive secretariate.
- Implementation of the wsisII recommendations for countries ensure the effective management of the top level country domain names (ccTLD)

Adoption of the report

The final report of the meeting was adopted after amendment.

A vote of thanks

A vote of thanks read by a representative of The republic of Mali was addressed to the Government and people of Togo.

Done in Lomé this 1st day of February 2006

The Chairman

Issoufou KOWA KOURA

VOTE OF THANKS

The participants at the ECOWAS Workshop on the Regional ICT policy held in Lomé on 31st January and 1st February 2006 in the Dome of the ECOWAS BANK FOR INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (EBID) Group wish to express their heartfelt appreciation to His Excellency Faure Essozimna GNASSINGBE, President of the Togolese Republic, to the Government and to the people of Togo for the hospitality and the warm reception extended to them during their stay.

Done in Lomé, this 1st day of February 2006

The workshop