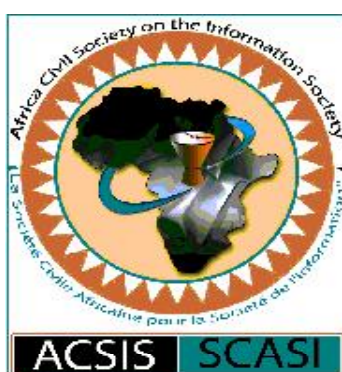


# The African Civil Society on the Information Society ACSIS



From Accra to Tunis

Report, Roadmap and Way Forward

## **Background**

The representatives and delegates of the African civil society organisations, participating in the WSIS process since the beginning, have felt the need to better organize themselves, in a light, smooth-running and efficient coordinating mechanism. This became a pre-requisite at this critical phase of the process, dedicated to action. After months of online discussion, the representatives and Delegates that met during the First Phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, in Geneva, Switzerland, in December 2003, held an election to constitute ACSIS, a Non Governmental Organisation with a non-profit aim; the action domain being the use of Information and Communication Technology for African Development. The ACSIS official launching took place in Tunis in April 2004, thanks the kind invitation of Tunisian civil society, the help of ECA and the facilitation of the Tunisian Government. This came as the realisation of a long-time dream of African civil society entities as was shared in the general civil society online forum of the African Information Society Initiative.

To better pursue its development goal, and in accordance with the objectives of the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action, the African Civil society, based on discussions carried on in its virtual plenary before, during and after the first phase of the WSIS, has moved ahead to an enabling phase in the continent's Information Society Initiative.<sup>1</sup>

### **Motto**

## **Information and Communication Technology for African Development: ICT4AD**

### **Mandate:**

ACISIS intends to act as an umbrella structure through which African CS can influence policy and ensure that strategies and programmes enable the promotion of development: Poverty alleviation, use of appropriate ICT for balanced development, participation of communities/civil society in policy and strategy development & implementation of initiatives. It will:

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<sup>1</sup> The African Information Society Initiative is Africa's framework to build its information and communication infrastructure. Click on [www.uneca.org/aisi](http://www.uneca.org/aisi)

*PROMOTE* the views and interests of African CS to ensure that new and traditional ICT can be utilised for promotion of sustainable development and the formation of an Information Society based on social justice and human development;

*ADVOCATE & LOBBY* for the development of comprehensive and inclusive ICT strategies to address the digital divide;

*INFORM* CS generally on national, regional, continental and international deliberations regarding ICT for development policies, strategies and initiatives for the promotion of balanced development;

*ADVISE* national, regional, continental and international institutions on the needs and interests of African CS;

**BUILD CAPACITY:** develop capacities and promote action-oriented dialogue on our key aims;

*NETWORK* and *PARTNER* with grassroots organisations, national, regional, continental and international institutions to develop and add value to existing policies and initiatives aimed at promoting ICT

### **Tasks:**

The chief tasks of ACSIS include, among others:

#### **ADVISORY**

- Develop and add value to existing ICT policies, strategies and initiatives;
- Advise on ICT policies and strategies that advance the social, economic and political development of Africa and African communities;
- Co-ordinate and support African CS input/participation into a range of national, regional, continental and international ICT policies and programmes;
- Ensure African CS representation (as appropriate) on a range of ICT related commissions or bodies

#### **INFORMATION**

- Draft text, conduct research and collate information including drafting an African CS position document;

- Provide information in an accessible format (including research/analyses) on ICT policies, strategies, initiatives and best practice;
- Promote and disseminate information on the use of a range of ICT for the promotion of human development, to a range of stakeholders;

#### ADVOCACY & LOBBYING

- Participate, as appropriate, in conferences, seminars and other activities related to ICT in order to advocate on behalf of and inform African CS and other partner stakeholders;
- Policy formulation and development

#### CAPACITY BUILDING

- Develop human capacities and promote action-oriented dialogue in partnership with grassroots organisations, national, regional, continental and international institutions

#### PARTNERSHIPS & NETWORKING

- Establish contact and partnerships with a range of stakeholders to enable the African CS to have input into policy formulation and implementation;
- Facilitate networking to enable the sharing of information, expertise and best practices.

#### ORGANIGRAM

For effective grassroots and inclusive development of a viable Information Society, ACSIS is organized, with Regional Coordination, a Secretariat, sub-regional and National Coordinations.

#### **Setting the Scene for the African Regional Preparatory Conference**

For effective input into the Tunis Phase of the WSIS, the African Civil Society has contributed to the resources of the Working Group on Internet Governance as well as the Task Force on Finance Mechanisms.

A three-week online consultation on the major WSIS issues was conducted for input and the formulation of Civil Society positions. The major focus of the consultation was:

- Priorities
- Internet Governance
- Finance Mechanisms<sup>2</sup>

## **The Second Africa Regional Preparatory Conference on the World Summit on the Information Society**

The African Regional PrepCom took place in Accra, Republic of Ghana, from February 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup>, 2005. The PrepCom was preceded by five days of Pre-Conferences.

### **Civil Society Activities during PrepCom**

The African Civil Society had an 3-tier Action Line

1. Capacity building
2. Strategies
3. Structure

#### **1. Capacity Building**

The Accra Civil Society Forum of Friday, January 28, was the kick-off event for the African Regional PrepCom. The first part the day was dedicated listening to the other stakeholders. The Civil Society received challenges from the Government of Ghana, the Economic Commission for Africa, UNESCO, UNDP and from the population at the grassroots<sup>3</sup>. This section was chaired by Olivier Nana Nzepa, ACSIS Regional Coordinator.

The second part was an intensive training of the Civil Society on *Effective engagement in national, regional and international Information Society Policy Processes*.

Topics and facilitators included:

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<sup>2</sup> All information concerning the Online Consultation is available at the Africa WSIS CS plenary: <http://mailman.greennet.org.uk/mailman/listinfo/africa>

<sup>3</sup> Mr Kwaku Ofori Adarkwa, Chief Director, Ministry of Communications, Ghana; Dr Aida Opoku-Mensah, Officer in Charge, Development Information Services, ECA, Hezekiel Dlahmini, Program Officer, UNESCO, M Fawundu, UNDP Resident Representative, Kwami Ahiabenu, Ghana Civil Society and Leopold Armah, National Youth Initiative Coordinator were among the speakers.

- Thierry Amoussougbo, Regional Advisor, ECA on e-strategies, NICIs, and national ICT policies;
- Bruno Salgues, Professor of Telecommunications, The National Institute of Telecommunications, France, on Global Telecommunications,
- Willie Currie, Policy Expert, The Association for Progressive Communications (APC), on Global ICT processes and policies,
- Emmanuel Njenga, Africa ICT Chief, APC, on sub-regional African policy processes,
- Chukwudozie Ezigbalike, Team Leader, Geo Information Systems (GIS) DISD, ECA, on grassroot application of Geo Information.

### **Showcasing Country Cases**

The Civil Society Forum also gave the opportunity for African Civil Society to share effective advocacy options that have worked at different country levels. The case of Guinea, presented by Boubacar Barry was very interesting.

### **Open Discussion Forum**

Training was followed by questions, discussions, and exchange on the major challenges facing the African Civil Society from different sides. The discussions also included issues that have been raised online. It proved to be a very fruitful learning experience for participants.

## **2. Strategies**

The African Civil Society for the Information Society was present in one way or the other during all pre conferences of the regional PrepCom. Input was made from discussions that have been had online.

A full day multi-stakeholder partnership event was co-organized with the Global Knowledge Partnership. This forum allowed Civil Society participants to understand the important and different approaches to the issue of multi-stakeholderism.

The Accra meeting was a very fundamental one for the African Civil Society because it allowed for the adoption of a comprehensive Action Plan in three parts:

- A Road Map from Accra to Tunis

- A 2005 – 2007 Action Plan
- A 2005 – 2015 Plan<sup>4</sup>

Different delegation-to-personality meetings were also scheduled by the African Civil Society during this PrepCom. The discussions with personalities will help ACSIS better its structures, strategies and results.

### **3. Structure**

It is with great pleasure that ACSIS announces the organization of the Ghana Network of the Civil Society for the Information Society. This was a great moment for the entire Civil Society of the continent.

In the same spirit of an inclusive and participative Information Society at grassroots level, National Focal Points are now in position to coordinate and empower applications at almost all country levels in Africa. Reports from Country networks are very encouraging.

The African Civil Society plenary conducted two (2) important elections;

- Ms Delphine Nana was elected to the Global Civil Society Bureau. Delphine now replaces Olivier Nana Nzepa. Her alternate remains Mustpha Masmoudi
- Ms Nnenna Nwakanma was elected to the Board of the Digital Solidarity.

### **Way Forward**

Between Accra and Tunis, the African Civil Society has adopted the following :

- Five (5) sub-regional workshops; one each for East, North, South, West and Central Africa.
- The themes of the workshops will include:
  1. Internet Governance
  2. Indicators and Benchmarking
  3. ICTs for Socio-economic development
  4. Access and infrastructure
  5. Multi-stakeholder Partnership
  6. Industrialization
  7. Finance

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<sup>4</sup> Copies of the action plan are available with [anais\\_ac@yahoo.fr](mailto:anais_ac@yahoo.fr) and [nne75@yahoo.com](mailto:nne75@yahoo.com)

- The sub-regional workshops will also offer the opportunity for country best practices and lessons learned to be identified and exchanged<sup>5</sup>.
- These country cases and best practices will form the basis of the African Civil Society village which will be an important part of the ICT4ALL platform during the Tunis Phase of the WSIS<sup>6</sup>.

## Challenges

To effectively play its role in ensuring an inclusive and participative Information Society through the deployment of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for an effective, viable and sustainable development at grassroots level, the African Civil Society calls for the support of the African Civil Society for the Information Society –ACSIS. This may be in the form of

1. Contribution to the realisation of the Road Map
2. Partnership in the implementation of the Action Plan
3. Support for Secretariat and Liaison Activities
4. Participation and attendance of Internet and ICT experts.

## Gratitude

The African Civil Society for the Information Society wishes to express thanks to the following organizations for their support:

- The Economic Commission for Africa
- La Francophonie
- UNESCO
- ITU
- Heinrich Boell Stiftung
- The People and the Governments of Ghana and Tunisia.

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<sup>5</sup> ACSIS Regional Coordinators are available for information on the workshops. Leopold Rweyemamu [itvision@costech.or.tz](mailto:itvision@costech.or.tz) (East), Tracey Naughton [tracey@traceynaughton.com](mailto:tracey@traceynaughton.com) (Southern), Mustapha Masmoudi [atucom@planet.tn](mailto:atucom@planet.tn) (North), Nadia Camara [nadiasad@yahoo.fr](mailto:nadiasad@yahoo.fr) (West) and Delphine Nana [delynana2002@yahoo.fr](mailto:delynana2002@yahoo.fr) (Central)

<sup>6</sup> All information concerning the RoadMap from Accra to Tunis is available with [anais\\_ac@yahoo.fr](mailto:anais_ac@yahoo.fr) and [nne75@yahoo.com](mailto:nne75@yahoo.com)