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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

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



Report of the Meeting

Accra, Ghana

27 May 2008

INTRODUCTION

In May 1996, the ECA Conference of Ministers adopted the African Information Society Initiative (AISI). In resolution 812 (XXXI) adopting the Initiative, the Conference of Ministers mandated ECA to institute an African Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) made up 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, identifying best ICT practices, and assisting ECA mobilize resources for its work programme.

Since 1997, five committees had been established (ATAC I, II, III, IV and V). ATAC V held its first meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 12 - 14 December 2006, and a second meeting in Maputo, Mozambique from 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 form, debated extensively on the integration of science & technology in the newly re-structured ECA and its ICTs, Science and Technology Division (ISTD), made invaluable suggestions and advice on implementation.

The third meeting was organized on 27th May 2008 in Accra, Ghana prior to the eLearning Africa that took place from 28-30 May 2008. The main objective of the meeting was to review progress made since the last meeting in the implementation of the ISTD's 2007-2009 Work Programme, and seek advice from ATAC members. The meeting was also aiming at defining the roadmap/work plan for ATAC V until the end of its term in December 2008.

Session I: Opening Session

1. Welcoming and introductory remarks

In her opening remarks, Ms. Aida Opoku-Mensah, Director, ICT, Science and Technology Division (ISTD) welcomed participants and introduced Dr. Joseph Ngue from UNESCO's International Capacity Building Agency (ICBA), who attended the meeting as an observer, and thanked him for his presence. The Director thanked ATAC members for their contributions to the effective implementation of the ISTD's work programme.

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

Apologies received from Dr. Ahmed Hussien, Dr. Nagwa El Shenawy, Ms. Natalie Sunker, and Mr. Abdoulaye Ndiaye.

The list of participants with their complete addresses is attached in Annex 2.

2. Adoption of Agenda

The provisional agenda was adopted - Annex 1.

Session II: Work Programme Reports

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

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

The presentation provided updates on the progress made in the areas of:

- a) formulation of national e-strategies and harmonization of sub-regional policies and regulations,
- b) information and knowledge development and management: studies & 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 with NICI documents, which start the implementation phase has increased: Benin, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Swaziland and The Gambia. Furthermore, additional requests for support in developing NICI implementation plans were received from Comoros, Gabon, Guinea, Kenya, Sudan and Tanzania. Effort was also made to include Gender perspectives in NICI policies and plans in Chad and Togo.

With regard to regional e-strategies, it was pointed out that ECA's assistance concentrates on the areas of harmonization of national regulatory frameworks. The status of implementing ECA's ICT measurement programme through the second phase of the Scan- ICT initiative in five countries (Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Mauritius, and Rwanda) was highlighted.

With regard to studies and publications, it was noted that a number of them were produced in the reporting period. These include the AISI and NICI publications, E-trade national reports from six countries, ICTs and Employment study report, Telecom regulation/ convergence: Nigeria & Sierra Leone, Telecom regulation/ competition: Rwanda, Swaziland, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso,

Innovation and knowledge trends in national development policy implementation , Legal and regulatory frameworks for the knowledge economy, and Policy briefs on the Knowledge Economy.

Science With Africa

ATAC members were briefed on the outcomes of the “Science With Africa” conference, which was held from 3 – 7 March 2008 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It was noted that the Conference brought together over 600 participants representing 44 African member States, (HL-6 Ministers , 2 Speakers, 13 MPs), Asian, European and North American countries (Deputy Prime Minister Slovakia), 60 Regional, International organisations and UN Institutions, Business communities, Civil society organizations, and development partners from all over the world. It had created increased synergies between European, USA and other global science based organisations and those of Africa, to promote North-South cooperation, to foster technology transfer and to improve existing R&D activities, centers of excellence and partnerships. It also improved linkages between international scientific research programmes and business enterprise to expedite economic growth in Africa. It was stressed that the Conference provided a framework for using Science and Technology options to support economic progress in Africa.

Furthermore, it was reported that ECA, Brainstore and the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) with the support of the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) facilitated a knowledge sharing process during the Conference. The knowledge sharing process led by Brainstore, was in a form of an Ideas Factory where the conference participants developed ideas on how African R&D can be strengthened and participation of African scientists in international research projects can be notably increased. As the result of this process, 20 ideas were selected to be promoted for implementation and resource mobilization. The roadmap planning workshop of the 20 ideas will be held from 6-7 June 2008 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The ISTD Director informed ATAC members that the outcomes of the “Science With Africa” conference were included in the Resolution of the recently held ECA Conference of Ministers. Moreover, she has informed ATAC members that ISTD has already started implementing some of the recommendations of the Conference. These include developing guideline for health R&D in Africa, transport R&D programme implemented with ECA’s Sub Regional Office in Central Africa, and the roadmap planning workshop for implementation of the 20 selected ideas.

ATAC Maputo meeting report and ATAC follow-up activities

Prof. Clement Dzidonou, Chairperson of ATAC Bureau, made a presentation on the report of the second meeting of ATAC V held from 30 -31 May 2007 in Maputo, Mozambique. As a follow-up to the recommendations of ATAC first meeting held in Addis Ababa from 14-16 December 2006, this meeting was conducted in a retreat form back to back with the e-Government and Gender workshop organized by ECA and Industry Canada. After providing a background to ATAC’s role and ToR, Prof. Clement highlighted on key observations and decisions reached during the retreat. Specifically, focus was made on mapping-out implications of the reorganization of the Division on its mandate and programmes including the AISI in the post reform ECA, and the ISTD in the Post Reform Era: Concrete Programmes and Actions. He

pointed out that ATAC members suggested that 80% of ECA's ICT Policy development activity should go to NICI implementation, while 20% could go to the development process of new and on-going NICIs as recommended by the first meeting of ATAC 5. In addition, ATAC requested ECA to develop a scoring card on NICI implementation in member States in order to monitor development and impact

Furthermore, the meeting developed a matrix to map out activities on ICT, Geoinformation and Science and Technology for ECA's activities in the coming years. The Chair further reminded participants about the discussions made on the vision, goals and objectives of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI) and that ATAC members found them more than relevant and up to date as a framework for spearheading development of the knowledge economy in Africa.

Observations and Recommendations

Following these presentations, discussions were held and ATAC members made the following observations and recommendations:

- The ISTD Director requested ATAC members to consider and advise on some of the difficulties and challenges that ECA faces to implement NICIs in some countries that are yet to complete their policy development process. ATAC members appreciated the call made by the Director and suggested that moving fast on sectoral strategies and implementation linking to the MDGs may help to increase the level of interest and readiness by the countries. Moreover, ATAC recommended that official requests for NICI support should come from high-level officials, preferably from the Office of the Prime Minister/Vice President/President. There is a need to obtain commitment at a higher level through statements in Agreements that would state that if a country is developing a NICI, it has to be implemented, as a precondition for engaging in a NICI process. Engaging UNDP at country level would also help in facilitating the process and mobilizing resources.
- The Chair reminded members that three documents (2007-2009 ISTD Work Programme, ATAC Maputo Meeting report, and progress report on the implementation of the work programme) were tabled for discussion, and requested ATAC members to review the documents and make comments and suggestions.
- After reviewing the documents, ATAC stated that it is of the view that the progress made is in line with the work plan and ATAC activity matrix, and recognized that ISTD performed reasonably well in the implementation of its work programme in the reported period based on the progress report presented to the meeting.
- ATAC members commended ISTD for the excellent performance in the reported period and especially for its achievements in specific areas such as integrating Science and Technology in its activities following the re-structuring of ECA, and for starting work on the development models for Technology Parks and Centers of Excellence. Considering the global S&T context and Africa being a late-comer to S&T4D, establishing Africa's

position is so important, which has been started by ISTD through the “Science With Africa” conference. Furthermore, ATAC members suggested that the roadmap workshop should look into the interrelations and overlapping natures of some of the ideas with focus on implementation, and link them to ongoing programmes in Africa, as we are not starting from scratch.

- ATAC members were informed that ISTD has developed a NICI questionnaire to gather data on the status of NICIs, which will also be used as a score card, as suggested by the second meeting of ATAC in Maputo. The questionnaire will also be used to better inform partners about the progress made. ATAC members appreciated the effort made by the Secretariat in this regard. However, ATAC suggested that the questionnaire should be short and easily understandable by the respondents so as to increase the response rate and gather adequate data for proper analysis. ATAC further strongly recommended that ECA should develop and test NICI questionnaire before expanding it. The Secretariat took note of the suggestions made and confirmed that proper adjustments will be made, and the longer version of the questionnaire will be used to administer structured interviews.
- With regard to resource mobilization, participants were briefed about the challenges and difficulties of mobilizing resources for ICT4D due to donor fatigue and also internal challenges in the countries. However, ECA as a facilitator, its role will focus on using its convening power to mobilize resources for NICI implementation, as implementation is very expensive. It also tries to unblock internal challenges for implementation through consultation with the Governments to help them tap into donor resources. As part of this endeavor, it was suggested that ECA should use its convening power to facilitate organizing donors’ roundtables by bringing together key stakeholders including donors, governments and development partners, and present best practices from Africa and raise awareness among policy makers on mobilizing resources for NICI implementation.
- ISTD’s activity in building the capacities of Parliamentarians is appreciated. However, considering the high turnover rate of MPs in Africa, ECA should focus on sustaining the process and strengthen its work on developing guidelines and building institutions such as eParliaments and ICT committees in Parliaments. In line with this, the experiences and good practices from Gambia and Niger were presented by ATAC members from the respective countries, who stated that institutional mechanisms were put in place that would help sustain the process. ATAC members noted that this activity requires a lot of resources, and ECA cannot do it alone. Instead, effort should be made to convince Parliaments to allocate adequate ICT training/capacity building budget, and adopt ECA’s model from Gambia and Niger to replicate in other countries.
- Gender mainstreaming in NICIs should be considered in new or existing NICIs. ATAC recommended that a Guideline should be developed to help in mainstreaming gender in NICIs both in Francophone and Anglophone countries. This exercise should build on experiences and lessons learnt in ISTD’s earlier similar practices in Chad and Togo.
- ECA should continue and strengthen its programme in engaging all stakeholders and conducting multistakeholder consultations in the NICI processes. It was noted that as the

result of ISTD's work in this area, some networks such as the youth and media networks are showing very successful results in promoting the information society in their respective countries. However, engaging the local private sector was found to be very difficult. ATAC suggested that some innovative mechanisms should be put in place to effectively engage the local private sector in the NICI process.

- ATAC suggested that effort should be made by the Secretariat to make working documents available in advance before the meeting so as to have adequate time to review and make comments.
- ATAC suggested that the Secretariat should make effort to address translation issue for ATAC meetings and make available documents in both English and French.

Session III: ATAC Work Programme

Prof. Clement Dzidonou, Chairperson of ATAC Bureau, made a presentation on the roadmap for ATAC V focusing on ATAC's role, mandates & deliverables.

The Chair reminded ATAC members about their mandates, which include advisory role on the implementation of AISI and the Program of Work of the ISTD, advocacy role in relation to the Work of the ISTD, and representing the ISTD at national and international meetings to support and promote the ISTDs work.

Regarding the achievements/deliverables made so far by ATAC as per its mandate, he pointed out that the major contribution was the Maputo Meeting Outcomes providing advisory and substantive input on the direction and orientation of the ISTD work in view of its broaden mandate and ECA re-structuring. In addition, some ATAC members participated in and represented the ISTD at international meetings and conferences.

Highlighting on some observations on ATAC-V deliverables to-date, the Chair said that given the high expectations on the launch of ATAC-V, deliverables to-date could have been better. He also outlines some of the challenges. These include difficulty with crystallizing the role of ATAC in terms of the WHATs & HOWs, lack of clarity on WHO is to map-out the WHAT & HOW, and some facilitation problems on the part of the Secretariat.

The Chair ended his presentation by providing some suggestions on the way forward. He stressed that the Accra Meeting should concentrate on crystallizing the WHATs, HOWs, WHEN in relation to ATAC-V work for the rest of its term. Following this, participants had an extensive discussion to map out ATAC's work programme for the remaining period of its term and came up with the matrix below.

ATAC V Work Programme (June-December 2008)

Activity (WHAT)	Methodology (HOW)	Time (WHEN)	Frame	Responsible person (s) (WHO)
Assist ISTD in ADF ICT Breakout session in the preparatory stage and during the meeting	On-line discussion, review of documents, Technical committees, participation	September – October 2008	–	ALL
Assist in the development of TOR for specific initiatives and activities that ATAC Members have expertise in	The how will be defined as per the tasks	On-going to rest of term		ALL
Help with CODIST Agenda	Review new CODIST TOR in view of the transition from CODI to CODIST, consult and input on the theme of CODIST	September-October 2008		ALL
Assist in Review and comment on WSIS Follow-up Conference documents for November meeting	Share Agenda, available documents as soon as possible and receive comment from ATAC	August 2008		Ebrima Jobe, Clement Dzidonou, Olive Chikankheni, Massani Koroney
Review e-learning platform and document	Review the source documents and comment on the structure	July 2008		Clement Dzidonou, Olive Chikankheni, Ahmed Hussien
Assist in TIGA 2009 process in the areas of nominations, publicizing, judging	Identify potential entries, share TIGA announcement, Judges	July 2008		ALL
Provide Advisory services in specific areas	On-going as per request, attend EGM	On-going to rest of term		ALL
ATAC Members should be available to represent the Division from time to time at international and sub-regional events.	On going	On-going to rest of term		ALL

Session IV – Wrap up and closing

Date & venue of next meeting, and Any Other Business

On Any Other Business, the meeting agreed on the following delivery schedule of ATAC 5 output:

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

If no comment, the report will be adopted. If there are comments, the Secretariat will finalise the report in one week after the deadline.

The next meeting is scheduled to take place in Addis Ababa in October 2008 during the sixth African Development Forum (ADF 6).

Closing remarks

The Chairperson of ATAC, Professor Clement Dzidonu thanked all the participants for their active participation. He said all members are committed to continue supporting ISTD/ECA in implementing its activities. He said that ATAC needs to put in place a process. Some members have also expressed their satisfaction with the outcomes of the meeting and reaffirmed their commitment to deliver as per their joint work plan.

Ms. Aida Opoku-Mensha, Director of ISTD, on her part thanked participants in making themselves available for the meeting despite their busy schedule. She also thanked the Chair for his excellent leadership and moderation, and ATAC members for their invaluable contributions in the deliberations. The Director took note of the concern expressed by Francophone colleagues about language, and confirmed that the Secretariat will do its level best to address this challenge in subsequent ATAC meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.

Annex 1

Meeting of the Fifth African Technical Advisory Committee (ATACV)

Tuesday, 27th May 2008
14-30 –18.00

Session I:

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

Session II:

Work Program Reports

15:10 – 15:30

Report on ECA's activities in area of ICTs in 2007-2008
and Work program for the biennium 2008-2009
Ms. Aida Opoku-Mensah, Director, ISTD

15:30 – 15:45

Presentation of the outcomes of 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

Session III:

ATAC Work Program

17:00 – 17:30

Adoption of the ATAC Work Programme - Date & venue of next
meeting and AOB

Session IV:

Closing Session

17:30 – 18:00

Closing remarks

Annex 2

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