



Distr.: GENERAL

E/ECA/ISTD/ATAC/VI/1

**UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA

First Meeting of the Sixth African Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC-VI)

*1 May 2009
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

Report of the Meeting

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

1 May 2009

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 VI held its first meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 1 May 2009 during the first meeting of the Committee on Development Information, Science and Technology (CODIST-1) which took place from 28 April – 1 May 2009 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The main objective of the meeting was to launch ATAC VI and review the ISTD's 2010-2011 Work Programme, and seek advice from ATAC members. The meeting was also aiming at defining the roadmap/work plan for ATAC VI.

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 the new members of ATAC. The Director thanked ATAC V members for their contributions to the effective implementation of the ISTD's work programme, and for accepting ECA's request to continue serving as ATAC member. The Director explained that ATAC VI is to be a continuation of ATAC V with the same Chairperson and officers although two members were not included which has left six committee members comprising of five male and one female member (five of them were in attendance at the meeting). Ms. Aida Opoku-Mensah has also thanked ATAC members for attending in and contributing to CODIST-1.

The Director explained that continuity of ATAC V will give the members an opportunity to correct any few lapses that may occur in transition from CODI V and will give them the opportunity to add value and think ahead of the CODIST-1 recommendations. She cautioned however that there are key technical issues to explore with a lot of work to be done through email.

ATAC members also thanked ECA for the opportunity and trust put on them in assisting/providing advice in the implementation of ISTD's work programme. In discussing the gender imbalance in the Committee it was agreed that the Secretariat will be given some time to work with ATAC members to suggest African women ICT experts with the right professional skills and qualifications to be included in the Committee. In the meantime, it was decided to continue with the current six members.

All ATAC VI members listed below, except Ms. Baloko Makala from Rwanda, attended the meeting:

- ◆ Prof. Clement Dzidonu- Chairperson
- ◆ Mr. Ebrima Jobe
- ◆ Mr. Mzwandile R. Mabuza
- ◆ Mr. Massani Koroney
- ◆ 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 with amendment on item on Session III to read “Discussion on” instead of “Review”. Annex 1.

Session II: Work Program Reports

3. ISTD Work Program

The Chief of ICT for Development Section, Mr. Sizo Mhlanga, presented the report on ISTD’s work programme for the biennium 2010 – 2011 outlining areas of focus such as the 80:20 implementation and development of the NICI policies; the human capital development; promoting research and development activities; strengthening of knowledge networks, strengthening ITCA’s activities in the areas of developing information resources, databases and portals including implementation of the African eLearning Initiative; e-security; enabling environment, innovation, and m-banking; strengthening collaboration with ECA’s sub-regional offices and other regional and international ICT4D organizations .

The Director advised ATAC members that the challenge was to bring synergy between the three areas of focus of the Division that it was no longer enough to promote NICI policies only but take cognizance of geoinformation, innovation, science and technology.

ATAC members pointed out that ICT measurement (Scan-ICT) programme needs to be continued in new as well as existing countries covered by the previous phases of the programme. The Secretariat reaffirmed that the programme will continue as part of the NICI development process focusing more on capacity building for National Statistics Offices (NSOs). It was also noted that this issue was addressed in recommendations of CODIST-1.

4. CODIST-1 Recommendations

Mr. Thierry Amoussougbo, Regional Adviser, presented the draft CODIST-1 recommendations to the meeting.

Participants of the meeting noted that ICT not adequately reflected in the plenary recommendations as some of the speakers especially the key note speaker addressed the transformative role that ICTs play in scientific development, innovation and the knowledge economy. Finally, it was agreed that there is a need to ensure that the CODIST-1 plenary recommendations reflect key issues on ICTs and development.

Session III: Discussions and conclusions

5. Discussion on CODIST recommendations and proposed associated ATAC follow-up activities

After in-depth discussions, ATAC members agreed on the following:

- It was recommended that ATAC members conduct a gap analysis to identify new areas vis-à-vis ATAC V Maputo meeting, CODIST-1 recommendations, and previous CODI meetings focusing on innovation, synergies between ICTs, geoinformation and STI. It was agreed that this activity can be conducted online and submit results by the end of June 2009. The ATAC Chair to initiate this process shortly.
- The Secretariat to look into the gender balance of the ATAC VI membership composition and propose names shortly. It was suggested that areas of expertise in the other areas (geo and STI) might be required to ensure synergy.
- ATAC members to assist ISTD in developing the Division's Business Plan as part of the overall new ECA Business Plan planned to be developed this year with strong emphasis on linkages with the African Union Commission (AUC).
- ATAC members to assist ISTD in providing technical support to AUC in the organization of the 2010 Heads of State Summit scheduled to take place early 2010 on the theme "ICTs for Development".

Session IV – Wrap up and closing

6. Date & venue of next meeting, and Any Other Business

Normally, ATAC members meet face-to-face once a year, usually back to back to other related events. Which means the current meeting will be the only one for 2009. Most of the discussions and activities are undertaken online through the ATAC Dgroup.

For 2010, the Secretariat will explore the possibility of organizing a meeting as a pre-Heads of State Summit in early 2010.

On Any Other Business, ATAC members raised the issue of resource mobilization by ISTD to address the huge demands from a work programme focusing on implementation. The Director responded by acknowledging some resource gaps compared to past few years due to

discontinuation of funds from Canada. However, she said that the second phase of Finland support to ISTD focusing on implementation has enhanced tremendously the work of the Division and enabled it to move forward on the implementation of its work programme. At the same time, a continuous resource mobilization effort is underway to fill the gaps.

7. 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.

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 meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.

Annex 1

Meeting of the Sixth African Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC VI)

Friday, 1st May 2009
14:30 –15:30

Session I:

Opening Session

14:30 – 14:40

Introductory remarks and introduction of new members
Ms. Aida Opoku-Mensah, Director, ISTD

14:40– 14:50

Discussion and Adoption of Agenda and Programme of Work

Session II:

Work Program Reports

14:50 – 15:05

Report on work program for the biennium 2010-2011
Sizo D. Mhlanga, Chief ICT and Dev, ISTD

15:05 – 15:15

Presentation of the CODIST recommendations *Thierry H. Amoussougbo, Regional Adviser, ISTD*

Session III:

ATAC Work Program

15:15 – 15:30

Review of CODIST recommendations and proposed associated ATAC follow-up activities, closing remarks, AOB, date & venue of next meeting

Prof. Clement Dzidonu, Chairperson ATAC Bureau

Annex 2

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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