

ACCRA COMMITMENTS FOR WSIS TUNIS 2005

The Africa Regional Conference, preparatory to the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society was held at the Accra International Conference Center at Accra, Republic of Ghana from February 2nd to 4th, 2005.

Participating in the Conference were representatives of the African countries, delegates from many other countries and people representing African and international organizations, the private sector and civil society.

On the basis of the outcomes and taking into account the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action adopted by the first phase of the Summit in Geneva, the Conference adopts the following:

• Key Principles

The African information society community agrees on the following general principles:

- Building the information society must be inclusive of all stakeholders including Government, as well as private sector, civil society and the United Nations and other regional and international organizations
- Building the information and shared knowledge society will contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals to improve quality of life and eradicate poverty by creating opportunities to access, utilize and share information and knowledge
- The international community will tackle information society building on the basis of commitments to remove obstacles to bridging the digital divide.
- Building an inclusive information society requires the use of the languages of the concerned populations
- The utilization of ICT technologies will advance the geographic and political unity of the African continent and strengthen, expand and facilitate growth of the African economy for the betterment of our peoples' lives
- Building the information society requires the construction and maintenance of an adequate ICT infrastructure

• Development orientations

- ICT can contribute positively to sustainable development
- Building the information society should be development oriented and take into consideration especially the development needs of African LDCs
- Providing universal, equitable and affordable access to ICT will create access opportunities for all
- The adoption of African languages as working languages in the public domain, is a requirement to the development of the continent and to the preservation of the cultural and linguistic diversity in the Information Society

- A collective action of all African stakeholders is mandatory for the integration of gender perspective in the information and shared knowledge society in general and ICTs in particular
- Africa's youth will play a key role in bridging the digital divide in establishing an Information Society that focuses on people in development over profit and technology
- The African continent with its high illiteracy rate and vulnerable populations should develop specialized centers and relevant materials to overcome these major handicaps
- Civil society and the private sector will play a key role in the development process in general, and especially in building the Information Society
- Scientific and Technological Research will focus on the concomitant development of society and efficient use of technology
- Media is catalyst of social changes and can, through multichannel partnership, foster the implementation of WSIS Plan of Action

• **Resource mobilization including human resources**

- Develop need oriented approaches in establishing national, sub-regional and regional e-strategies
- Pay particular attention to human resources training and development, particularly teachers and students so as to promote content and infrastructure development with the view to facilitate the emergence of an inclusive information society in Africa
- Provide increased attention and support to human resource development and education for the information society with emphasis on the youth and women in order to increase African contribution to the global knowledge economy;
- Develop specialized centers and relevant materials for illiterate and vulnerable populations
- Use the existing technical organizations to help reinforce capacity building at all levels of ICTs
- The Digital Solidarity Fund and existing financial mechanisms should be mobilized to face the challenges of implementing the action plan

• **International cooperation**

- We call upon international and regional organizations to assist African countries in the implementation of the WSIS decisions including the urgent development and implementation of a broadband ICT infrastructure as anticipated by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

• Operational Aspects

The African information society community agrees that short, medium and long term plans are required to realize and implement the general objectives set forth by the Geneva Action Plan. To achieve this, we recommend that the following:

a. The way to Tunis 2005

- WSIS Targets: The Tunis Summit will be the second and last phase of WSIS and will be an opportunity to strengthen confidence in building the information society as efficient means to improve human conditions. Accordingly the African stakeholders are invited to cooperate in order to defend the African common positions regarding the main issues raised by the international debate.
- Indicators: To assess the implementation of the information society, a specific set of basic indicators should be established and used to evaluate progress in the process. Composite indicators should also be developed to reflect the trends between countries. All institutions involved with ICTs at the national, sub regional, regional and international levels are encouraged to work in partnership and in close cooperation with national statistics offices in collecting, processing and disseminating ICT indicators.
- Stock-taking: African countries are invited to establish an information gathering mechanism at the national level with the involvement of all concerned parties.

b. General Implementation Strategies

It is recommended that African countries establish national e-strategies based on the overall social economic goals of the countries including the poverty reduction programs.

Regional and international cooperation should contribute to national capacity building and to the development of national, regional and sub-regional implementation strategies. In this regard the support of the regional organizations to the process is essential.

c. Financial mechanisms

Africa calls for support for the Digital Solidarity Fund that would complement and not duplicate other mechanisms of funding the Information Society. The fund will be global in scope and be utilized to bridge the digital divide and development divide in the world. It is further recommended that existing financing mechanisms should continue to be fully utilized to fund the growth of new ICT infrastructure and services.

Africa should develop a plan of action containing specific ICT development projects, which are properly costed to be presented at WSIS 2005 for financial resource mobilization.

d. Internet Governance

- Special attention should be given to the composition and the role of the present Internet governing body with a view to ensuring its legitimacy as a fully representative authority
- Africa should participate actively in international organizations dealing with Internet Governance. In this regard special attention should be given by international bodies dealing with Internet Governance to the needs and interests of the developing and least developing countries
- Special attention should be paid to the Integration of African Languages and to multilingualism in the Internet
- Internet Governance aspects should be mainstreamed in the establishment of national and regional e-strategic plans
- An appropriate participatory management of the Internet should include all stakeholders (Government, private sector, civil society, and intergovernmental organizations)
- Appropriate regulatory frameworks should be established to deal with public policy issues related to Internet Infrastructure and Applications (e-commerce, spam, cyber-security, privacy, etc.) and to enable the implementation of national, sub-regional and regional Internet exchange points and relevant technical regional institutions (Ex: AfriNic)
- Efforts should be made so that all CCTLDs are managed by respective countries

e. Partnership

- Multistakeholder partnership is needed to overcome the challenges ahead the implementation of WSIS Action Plan in particular, and ICT for development in general
- It is also necessary to create an environment as well as mechanisms conducive to an effective Public and Private Partnership (PPP)

• The way ahead: After Tunis 2005

- The African Community agrees on the need to establish appropriate implementation mechanism involving relevant national, sub-regional, regional, and international bodies.
- Adequate financing mechanisms should be sought to implement the long term action plans dedicated to the building of the information society.
- Follow up mechanisms should be based on existing institutions and use a multi-stakeholder approach.

Adopted in Accra on 4 February 2005