

**AFRICA REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE WORLD
SUMMIT ON INFORMATION SOCIETY**

Accra 4th February, 2005

By Bidwell Belinda, Vice-Chair, Parliament of Gambia

Excellence Chairperson, Primer Ministers, Ambassadors,

Honourable guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

The role of parliamentarians as publicly elected officials and lawmakers of the country places them at the center of the above processes. However, not many parliamentarians are fully aware of the issues and implications of Information Society in their countries, hence not able to actively participate in national debates on e-strategies and translating citizens' needs into policies.

As part of the assistance towards the e-strategy formulation and implementation, ECA has been undertaking activities to raise awareness and build capacity among policy and decision makers on key aspects of Africa's Information Society. Particular emphasis has been placed on parliamentarians and their pivotal role in the e-strategy formulation and implementation processes as well as creating an enabling environment.

But how fare MPs collectively, use ICT within Parliaments to improve their internal activities, to interact with their constituents and the public in general, to improve the scrutiny of the executive and contribute at regional and global levels to the debate on Information society? Africa Parliamentarians Network for ICT for Development will address some of the above issues and equip MPs with key skills required in the Information society.

During a pre-event of the main Conference MPs get together to reflect on their role in the Information society and discussed issues related to building Africa ICT4D MPs Network.

As outcomes of various presentations and discussion we believe that implementing an institutional framework conducive to better involvement of MPs in the Information society issues will be the short term strategy: Create at global levels an ICT4D MPs Network as advised by the Committee on Development of Information of ECA.

Mps Network will help to:

- Prepare Parliamentarians for new role in the Information society;
- Sensitise high-level African parliamentarians on the use of information and communication technologies for the

development and transformation of their constituencies and nation;

- Develop a cross-country viewpoint regarding the involvement of Parliamentarian in the Information society;
- Encourage and support inter-parliamentary cooperation in pursuit of regional integration;
- Promote regional cooperation for technology and best practices transfer and localization and
- Help MPs to promote legal and regulatory environment conducive to better competition,

We therefore call ECA and his partners to continue its advisory support to MPs and help to the implementation of the Network at the coming CODI.

- We also believe that synergy need to be created with existing global MPs initiative like, Africa Union Parliament and NEPAD Forum Parliament.

To finish I would like to thank the Government of Ghana

The Executive Secretary of ECA and all Partners involved in the process.