

**Second Media Forum on the Information Society**  
**16 – 17 May, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**  
**Report**

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The Information Society - and concomitant development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) - is mushrooming across the globe, with technology rapidly becoming part of humankind's daily existence. It is therefore of considerable concern that the majority of African citizens are unaware and therefore excluded from the impact and the advantages of this technological surge.

In the light of this, several key organisations not only in Africa, but throughout the western world, are engaged in initiatives to spearhead the introduction and advancement of ICTs in Africa. They recognise the urgent need for African capacities to utilize and optimise ICTs so that the continent may participate actively in the global information society.

### **Executive Summary**

On May 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> 2003, journalists, media workers and institutional representatives from several African countries met in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia at the Second Media Forum on the Information Society. The forum followed the Third Meeting of the Committee on Development Information (CODI.3) that focused specifically on development information; its objective was to discuss the role of the media in building Africa's Information Society. Representatives from organizations such as the PANOS Institute, AMARC, World Radio and Television Council (WRTC), Media Action International (MAI), Centre Africain des Femmes dans les Medias (CAFEM), UNICEF-ESARO and African Women's Media Centre (AWMC) were also present.

The event was organized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in collaboration with the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). It was a follow-up to the pre-conference forum arranged by the same institutions in Bamako, Mali on May 26<sup>th</sup> 2002. The deliberations of the first forum were reviewed, and outcomes from both meetings will form the basis of the media input at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) to be held in Geneva in December 2003 and in Tunis in 2005.

Participants agreed that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are impacting on every facet of people's daily lives, and that global information together with changes in telecommunication structures worldwide, offer enormous opportunities to accelerate development in Africa. This executive summary provides highlights of salient issues and conclusions emanating from the forum.

As with the previous media forum held in Bamako, Mali, the continuing core of the debate and the discussion lies to a great degree in understanding firstly the current role of the media in Africa today, and secondly the *potential* role the media could play. Through understanding the difference between these two standpoints participants were able to pinpoint specific challenges and create some further concrete suggestions for the way forward. This process assists in preparing journalists for the first WSIS later this year.

Naturally, the projects, goals and recent achievements of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI) are highly significant in this context. The role of partnerships at national, regional and international level was detailed, together with the thematic focus of program areas. Specific attention was given to various outreach initiatives,

including the Media Awards which serve to encourage, motivate and reward excellence in journalism in Africa, particularly amongst women.

Launched in 1996, the primary goal of the AISI is to speed Africa's entry into and participation in the Global Information Society. As an action framework it aims to create and facilitate effective digital opportunities for the continent so that ultimately the quality of life of every African may be improved and poverty reduced.

The need to create a 'network of networks' for media workers in Africa is a topic that resurfaced on many occasions. This will facilitate the sharing of knowledge and training for journalists and editors across the continent. It is one of the items on the agenda for the WSIS.

Over and above this, there exists a need to create awareness of ICTs and their benefit to society. As it stands there is little interest in ICT issues (particularly rural ICT issues) with editors, media owners and journalists not fully understanding the benefits of using ICTs, or the implications and danger of deepening the digital divide. In this respect, training needs to be provided as soon as possible, not only for journalists in terms of developing their skills base, but in awareness for editors too. A survey of media institutes and programs for Africa to ascertain and compare the ICT training needs in each country needs to be conducted.

The problems associated with lack of freedom of press were raised as a matter of grave concern. It is the intention and focus of the African media, including the use of ICTs, to work towards the democratisation of the continent. At present the use of ICTs are encouraged at national level in Senegal, Egypt and Bénin. Journalists in countries such as Rwanda, Uganda and Liberia are facing enormous challenges with respect to access to global information. It is particularly important that journalists, editors and media owners in these countries challenge their governments on this issue. Ultimately it is intended that journalists will not only use the internet for research but for generating their own African information for the rest of the world.

The importance of other media, such as print and community radio, touchscreens and CD ROMs were acknowledged, particularly for their success in reaching societies at grassroot level, in their own dialects. The intention is to use all aspects and elements of the media to reach into and educate every level of society so that ultimately every African will have access to global knowledge and its benefits in our developing continent.

## **Introduction**

The main objective of the one and a half day Second Media Forum that was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on May 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 2003 was to discuss the role of the media in building Africa's Information Society. The gathering brought together over 40 journalists, media workers and institutional representatives from countries across Africa to share problems, latest research and thinking on efforts to make the Information Society accessible to all Africans.

After the formal opening address by ECA's Director of Development Information Services, Mrs Karima Bounemra Ben Soltane, speakers on the first day focused

primarily on how the media can benefit from the Information Society. The second half of day one involved the delegates dividing into two work groups, the first covering training needs for Information Society issues and the second tackling application and content development concerns. On day two, introduced by Chairperson Aida Opoku-Mensah, speakers looked at different aspects of how the media can promote the Information Society. The meeting closed mid-day, after some discussion of problems, solutions and approaches. Several recommendations were made and ideas exchanged.

### **This Report**

This report provides a summary of the issues raised during the forum.

Following this brief introduction, Part 1 provides an overview of all presentations and highlights the key messages contained in the different presentations made during the one and a half day forum.

Part 2 covers the issues raised and some of the solutions offered in the collaborative workshops.

Part 3 then provides a synthesis of key issues arising from the addresses, the questions raised and the working group sessions.

This report provides just one source of information on the agenda. Additional information on the forum and associated issues can be found on UNECA's website [www.uneca.org/aisi/media](http://www.uneca.org/aisi/media).

## **Part 1: Overview of Presentations**

### **Section 1: Opening statements:**

The media forum was opened by the ECA's Director of Development Information Services Division (DISD), the Chair of Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) and DISD/ECA Team Leader for Promoting ICTs for Development.

**Mrs Karima Bounemra Ben Soltane, Director DISD/ECA** welcomed delegates emphasizing that this was the second media forum, following the first held in Bamako, Mali in May 2002. She remarked that the meeting should assist in preparing African journalists for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the first part of which will be held in Geneva in December 2003, and the second in Tunis in 2005. She commented that the forum had been designed so that the first part would cover what the media could *get* from the Information Society; the second what the media could *give* to it. She mentioned the African Information Society Initiative (AISI), defining the roles of each sector involved, including the media, and stressed that the critical aspect of the AISI is to reach out to all citizens. She also mentioned the role of the newly instituted AISI Media Awards in honouring the progress that is being made, especially by female journalists, in media sectors already.

**Mr Gerolf Weigel, Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) and Chair of GKP** then took the floor, welcoming delegates and key individuals. He explained that the GKP and the SDC were involved in supporting the role of the media in Africa, as they consider the media to be a key player in the Information Society through its ability to communicate with people in Africa at all levels.

**Ms Aida Opoku-Mensah, DISD/ECA Team Leader, Promoting ICTs for Development** emphasized that the role of the media was important in the democratisation of our continent. She compared the information situation in Africa to a war; people are dying because they do not have information, or because information is beyond their means. She commented that the ICT infrastructure is very skewed at present, and that the task of the media in Africa should extend beyond their usual requirements. Because ICTs have the ability to permeate all sectors, they should be influencing four critical areas in Africa: education, business, health and civil society.

Ms Opoku-Mensah then went on to explain the role of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI), clarifying that the AISI belongs to Africa, and not specifically to the ECA, with partnerships at national, regional and international levels. She detailed the thematic focus of AISI programme areas, namely its focus on information policy development and implementation, the role of information and knowledge development and management, its plan to promote partnership and networking and the particular importance of outreach activities on the subject of Information Society development.

With respect to outreach activities, several websites have been established creating awareness and providing information about African issues and ICTs. In addition, the introduction of Media Awards serves to encourage participation in ICTs, and motivates the African media to develop their own local content and thereby amplify

the voices of Africans. Ultimately outreach programmes serve to educate the media on the brokerage role media have to play in reaching every part of the continent, be it through radio, newspapers, broadcasting or the internet.

## **Section Two: How can media benefit from the Information Society?**

**Mr Afework Temtime, ECA – ICT for Development Team** explained the highlights and outcomes from the first media forum of this nature; the Bamako 2002 Media Forum, before detailing its agenda for media in the WSIS process. From this first forum in Bamako, Mr Temtime said that the role of the media was to promote dialogue in IS issues, to provide a platform for debate and awareness, a hub for public opinion, to promote national and international ICT governance and to project the voice of the continent in the WSIS (Geneva 2003, Tunis 2005). Recommendations from the forum included the following;

- The African Charter on broadcasting should be used as an African position for ICT development for media at the WSIS
- A need for capacity building for managers, technicians, animators, producers etc. by mobilising resources at national, regional and international levels
- Strategies should be developed for the creation of African content that finances and sustains the media
- A need to develop appropriate financing mechanisms for sustaining the African private media
- The proliferation of an “ICT media” that promotes the Information Society should be encouraged
- There is a need for the introduction of new technologies at media training schools and media centers in order to manage changes in new technologies
- The creation of A media network of networks that build upon existing networks will be critical for participation in the information society by practitioners
- Research should be carried out to devise new models and configurations for motivation and training of media personnel in relation to new technologies
- There is also a need for investigation of new models that use e-commerce for the delivery of content by African media.

Mr Temtime ended his presentation by suggesting that items on the Agenda for the Media in the WSIS should be to discuss the creation of a network for the media that focuses on their role in the Information Society, the need to organise a series of consultations on issues related to the Media in the WSIS process and active engagement of the media in promoting ICT for development in Africa.

**Mr Gerolf Weigel, Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) and Chair of GKP** then took the floor to give a multi-media slide show on the ICT platform at the World Summit. More information showcasing applications and experience in IT development can be seen on [www.ict\\_4d.org](http://www.ict_4d.org)

The following questions were raised:

- Is the slide show available in different languages?  
A: It will be available in six languages

- Will there be a charge for exhibition space at WSIS?

A: Space will be hired out at different market-related prices. This can be found on the website [www.itu.int/wsis](http://www.itu.int/wsis)

- Who is the targeted audience for the slide show?

A: Individuals, private sector companies and organisations

**Mr Guillaume Chenevière, Chairman of the World Radio and Television Council, Geneva** explained that media should be placed at the centre of the WSIS, and should highlight the power of the media. He went on to say that the summit would be attended by patrons from the world's broadcasting companies, and should act as a dialogue between all media players and observers in the world. The media forum at the summit will present the hopes and concerns of media leaders, listeners and viewers, interacting live in Geneva and from their own environments around the globe. Mr Chenevière said the media forum would present the profound changes that the Information Society is bringing about in the media. He stated the first two days of the media forum at the summit would include analysis and discussion of a global vision for media. Five major sessions will explore the present and future opportunities of media in the Information Society, with particular reference to the key role of media and television, universal access to information, freedom of expression, cultural diversity, economic development, social cohesion and education. This would be followed by a day of ten workshops, after which delegates would be able to return to their own networks equipped to enforce all actors in the field of media to confront the challenges of the Information Society in Africa. He raised the question of violence, and the possibility of the media as a remedy against violence. He explained that technologies at the summit's media forum would include live TV-radio satellite broadcast free to stations all over the world, live TV interaction with eight sites on five continents and a website with eleven languages with a streaming platform.

The following questions were raised:

- Are journalists invited to the summit at an individual level?

A: Yes. Some scholarships are available.

- In terms of the First Media Forum at Bamako, what progress has been made with respect to the resolutions taken about training in ITCs?

A: The activities we are focussing on at the moment, including the awards and ascertaining training needs, are moving us towards our goal.

- In terms of capacity-building, what progress has been made in using ICTs as a source of reaching grass root levels?

A: At the moment we are conducting surveys to find out more about this.

- Does a network of networks currently exist for journalists and media workers?

A: Yes, but this needs to be developed further.

- Why not suggest a program that educates the children? Why not try to make education available to everybody?

A: This is a great challenge and an opportunity for education.

**Mr Roland Stanbridge, media/communication lecturer, Sweden/South Africa** then spoke about the state of reporting on ICTs and Information Society issues in Africa. Mr Stanbridge is the study leader of a baseline survey conducted to establish whether journalists are raising awareness about ICTs in African countries. Print, broadcast and Internet media were monitored in nine different countries for eight weeks, during March and April 2003. Mr Stanbridge stressed that his feedback was not an official report at this stage, but a preliminary overview. Results so far indicate that whilst the use of ICTs is spreading very fast throughout the world, many editors from large African media companies across Africa have not as yet realised the implications. As it stands, there is a lack of critical debate and analysis, an over-reliance on government and news agencies to provide copy, little editorial interest in rural ICT issues plus uninformed editors and unskilled journalists. Recommendations proposed by Mr Stanbridge were as follows:

- Undertake a much wider, deeper survey of editors
- Organize awareness and educative workshops for editors
- Facilitate networking of ICT interested journalists
- Undertake a survey of ICT training needs for African journalists
- Improve content management tools for journalists (eg. archive of ICT stories over and above those found on [www.Allafrica.com](http://www.Allafrica.com))
- Showcasing good ICT writing
- Ensure that rural ICT concerns find a place within national media

Country case studies of Mr Stanbridge's survey were represented at the forum by Mr Ahmed El-Gody, Director New Media Lab, MSA University, Cairo, Egypt and by Espérance Karwera, from the African Women's Media Centre (AWMC) in Dakar, Senegal.

**Ahmed El-Gody, Director New Media Lab, MSA University, Cairo** gave an encouraging presentation, illustrating what can be done to boost ICT awareness and use in a comparatively short time. Mr El-Gody explained that although the Egyptian media was initially against the use of ICTs – believing it to be a tool for cultural manipulation or a method to co-opt Egyptian culture – since 1997 the Egyptian Government has recognized the value of expanding and deepening the use of ICTs as a means of promoting greater national productivity and global competitiveness. He commented that the government sees ICTs as the way to economic development. Consequently, several deals have been signed with American, French and German governments, and with private companies such as Solaies, IBM and Microsoft to transfer ICTs to Egypt. Today, ICTs are used daily in all Egyptian newsrooms, and all new employees must be ICT literate. Echoing their government, editors strongly believe that ICT use and awareness is the only way forward for economic development in their country. Beyond newsrooms, Egypt has established a strong base for its economic future through the implementation of a project that has seen seven million telephone subscribers connected to the internet at almost no cost to themselves.

**Espérance Karwera, African Women's Media Centre (AWMC), Dakar** commented that many journalists in Senegal are trained overseas and that the standard of journalism is high. In her case study she examined the coverage of ICTs in two daily newspapers, one private ('le Sud Quotidien') and the other public press ('le

Soleil’). In the public press she found ICTs were mentioned 13 times, and in the privately-owned press ICTs were mentioned on average once a week. She remarked that these articles were usually strategically well-placed in the newspapers. In interviews with the editors, she discovered that although the subject of ICTs was not necessarily a priority in Senegal, the President does support the focus on ICTs and the environment. The problem at the moment is human resources, with few journalists considering themselves qualified to write on technical matters. Innovation is therefore often what makes the story, eg. a German firm recently launched an internet connection via microwave links. This type of angle encourages the press to cover the story in more depth.

The following questions were raised:

- In Egypt, did people become more interested in ICTs once the internet became free?

A: Many people have contributed to the success of ICT use in Egypt. Both the government and private sectors reduced prices of connectivity. What is more, the government provides training in these areas.

- In Egypt, how involved are journalists in using the internet for writing/researching their stories?

A: All journalists use a program in which they write, edit and then send to their editors.

- In the studies conducted by Mr Stanbridge’s team, is there a link between media coverage and the existence of an official ICT policy?

A: We do not know as yet, but this will be examined in the final report.

- In your study, did you examine specialised ICT topics or generally-related ICT issues?

A: The monitoring process involved using an extensive set of predetermined key words so as to capture all articles or broadcasts that in any way impinged on ICTs or Information Society discussion.

- Did you correlate ICT reportage to the amount of ICT-focussed advertising?

A: No.

- In the case of Rwanda, there is still no awareness campaign for ICTs, no training. So what would be the point of having free internet, as in Egypt, if you do not know how to use it?

A: Three journalists from a Rwandan school of journalism were sent to Sweden for training, and returned to Rwanda to train others. Writers are also commissioned from NGOs to write columns about ICTs. In time, journalists will learn the full advantages of using internet journalism based on competition. In Egypt, awareness began in internet clubs in rural areas, where very cheap prices were available for learning how to use it. Facilitators were also available to teach.

- How do ICTs benefit the illiterate?

A: At the moment touch-screen computers assist with this, as do the use of CD-ROMS. Users can simply touch the pictures.

- How do Egyptian ISPs make money?  
Via the cost of telephone calls - the ISP takes half and the government takes half.

### **Section Three: Media and the promotion of the Information Society**

**Mr Ramanou Kouferidji, Radio Afrique Espoir, Bénin** began the following day's presentations by examining how the media can promote Information Society. He reiterated the role of the AISI in the promotion of ICT issues whilst discussing the information revolution, and positioning the media situation in Africa within the Bamako 2002 and WSIS context. He raised the importance of stakeholders, from government, private sector, civil society and development partners, highlighting the role of the media in the interaction process. He also mentioned the problem of freedom of the press, which is not enjoyed across the continent. He stated that in many countries fear existed that populations might call states to account which would necessitate an unwelcome call for transparency. In this regard, he endorsed the demonopolization of the media and called for an action plan at national, sub-national, regional and international levels. He advocated a national forum for evaluation and redefinition to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to engage qualitative and intelligent participation from all media groups. He stressed the need to fight for presence on the satellites plus the need for financing of programmes. He recommended that stakeholders and partners should be involved at every level, so that political will is moved towards facilitating the development concerns of the media.

**Mrs Veronica Wilson, Journalist/Producer Radio Netherlands African Media Productions** has recently launched The African Information Society Initiative (AISI) Radio Series which talks about the development role of ICTs in five countries in Africa. In her presentation she mentioned the cost-effectiveness of radio as a medium for reaching people at every level of society. Quoting examples from the series she highlighted how these programmes changed people's mindsets about ICTs and gave them hope. The radio series (also on CD-ROM and soon to be translated into several languages) spoke about how ICT-related concepts such as e-mail, e-business and e-commerce gave people both hope and an income. Mrs Wilson also commented on the importance of CD-ROMS for the illiterate.

#### **Ms Marilu D'onofrio, Project Co-ordinator, Media Action International, Geneva**

Ms D'onofrio emphasized the need for the media to alert the public's attention to advancements in new technologies, also stressing the need for the media to work together, to network, towards a plan of action whereby governments are challenged to find solutions for the use of ICTs in their countries.

Ms D'onofrio explained that Media Action International will be the voice of African journalists at the WSIS, and will therefore be training media workers how to cover the summit. On a strictly practical level, she asked that all issues regarding African media be forwarded to Tracey Naughton, who will be representing African media to the WSIS.

## Feedback and suggestions

- One of the most pressing concerns identified was that the African media do not understand the role of ICTs. For example, two PANOS reports from Uganda show that due to the cost of electricity and poor telecommunications, internet connectivity is not widely offered. For the government to improve this connectivity, journalists in Uganda need to be writing about such matters.
- Comment was also made that in Liberia, the government sees the Information Society as a serious security risk and consequently only wants technology for its own use. Their lack of support for ICTs perpetuates non-transparency, non-accountability on a governance level. Governments need to be challenged by journalists.
- Feedback from Egypt is that whilst that country is facing a real depression, the Egyptian government nevertheless continues to promote ICTs, which in turn has boosted the economy. In Brazil a similar policy to stimulate e-commerce has been encouraged with successful economic results.
- The response to this was that action should stem from a national level. In Bénin, for example, the government has found technology in the media useful when it comes to Research and Development. In those countries where governments do not support ICTs, journalists need to raise awareness.
- The question was raised as to whether the WSIS would focus on technical issues. The reply was that as in all summits, technology would be assessed, but essentially the WSIS is primarily about development, including linguistic and cultural diversity.
- The question as to whether journalists were being trained to report on the WSIS was answered by Guillaume Chenevière, who explained that Media Action International is training journalists from five countries for the summit. Also, specialized training in WSIS issues will be given to journalists attending the Highway Africa conference at Rhodes University, South Africa in September this year.

## - Part two: Working Groups

### 1. Training Needs for Information Society Issues – led by Mrs Beatrix Mugishagwe, Abantu Vision, Tanzania

The group first identified the following areas related to ICT training which could help the mass media to play a more significant role in promoting the Information Society:

(It was noted that appropriate curriculum development was needed at many training institutions that had not risen fully to the information technology needs of media workers.)

Training in:

Political conditions and policies

Business and management aspects of media and publishing

Electronic writing

Internet journalism

Intellectual property rights

Technical aspects which increase the efficiency in reporting, including hardware, software, searching for info on the Internet and layout.

It was felt that on-the-job training, online training and cross border/ multicultural training would be effective. In addition, the group advocated the creation of newsletters and specialized mailing lists and the possibility of swapping journalists across countries for exchange of experiences and networking. It was also established that training would be required for Media Owners, Editors, Journalists (especially female journalists) and Trainers.

It was noted that little has been done to date, to network training and institutions in mass media and journalism, and therefore co-ordination and collaboration are required. This collaboration and knowledge sharing among journalists could be enhanced through communications and networking.

Finally, the group prioritised concrete recommendations, suggesting the following two action plans be put in place:

- **Survey of ICT-related training for media workers in Africa**

The objective of such a survey, of media institutes and ICT training programmes on offer in Africa would be to:

- (i) Serve as a resource for journalists seeking relevant training
- (ii) Enhance collaboration and networking between trainers and training institutes working for Africa, and enable them to compare teaching methodologies, develop future course materials and share materials, consultants and experiences.
- (iii) Identify lacunae in current training
- (iv) Serve as a guide to donors funding training programmes

As the way forward, ECA was identified as an institution the working group recommended to initiate the survey and contact potential collaboration partners. In

terms of methodology, PANOS shared their survey methodology, called Country Communication Audit, which has been developed to map out regulatory frameworks related to radio broadcasting, programmes and content in identified radio stations on the continent.

- **Training of media owners, editors and journalists**

Awareness of ICT issues and ICT development concerns should be stressed among media decision makers, such as media owners and editors, in addition to journalists. Although the group focussed on technical training, the substantive issues of Information Society and ICT for development in general should be an integral part of training. It was also proposed that each institute could focus on one aspect of ICT training for journalists, thus creating a network of centers of excellence on the continent.

## **2. Application and content development issues – led by Mr George Christensen, Radio 1 FM, The Gambia/AMARC Africa**

Some time was spent identifying the terms of the discussion. Thereafter, it was suggested that elements of the media over and above the internet should not be ignored. All elements of the media should be used to educate and reach all Africans. As radio and print still reach grassroot level societies, they should be used to bridge the gap between themselves and the internet. The need to remember the validity of local languages was stressed. At the moment print and radio reach communities in their own dialects. This needs to be retained at internet level. The challenges of illiteracy also need to be kept in mind at all times.

The following recommendations were made:

- A survey of media/ resource centers should be conducted to compare training modules, contents and curriculum. This will assist editors, journalists and media owners to know to which courses and centres they can apply
- African Governments should encourage the following:
  - Development of home portals
  - PCs should be subsidized and taxes should be reduced (or at least until 2005, according to Bamako Declaration 2002)
  - The development of hardware in African countries
  - Lower connectivity costs
  - Donors should facilitate connectivity
  - Touch screens should provide information access for illiterates
  - Archiving of indigenous material
  - Developing a network for knowledge sharing
  - Utilization of and contribution to open source opportunities
  - Creating a database for every country, whereby each country has a directory
  - Education on e-commerce opportunities for people at home, to offset the costs of running the internet

## **Part three: Synthesis of issues and final recommendations**

From the forum's discussions, two major issues arise: (i) How can ICTs equip African journalists to work more effectively; and (ii) Once these journalists

understand how to use ICTs for themselves, can they write about them and their role in African society?

A proactive need for training editors, journalists and media owners in both these areas is vital. A network between training centers, and ultimately between all journalists and media workers in Africa would lead to increased awareness and global interrelation. This training of editors and journalists should keep an awareness of the key issues in mind at all times. The training should also facilitate democracy and transparency to favour development on the African continent at all times. In addition, journalists need to bear in mind that the legislative framework of governments needs to be revised to facilitate access to new technologies.

A further need for an in-depth survey to ascertain what level of ICT understanding is being taught in each country, was identified.

The training of female journalists needs to be a priority. Gender balance issues will be addressed at the WSIS.

The need for special funding to reinforce the importance of the media in every region of Africa was highlighted.

In terms of the WSIS, it was noted that it is imperative for the public to have access to the decisions made at the summit. In that regard, Prepcom meetings are being arranged to train journalists. On the WSIS website, all inputs to the two Prepcoms are recorded. In addition, the Highway Africa conference in South Africa in September will train journalists for the summit.

It was stressed that even if journalists are trained for the summit, they are required first and foremost to understand their own country's national policy towards ICTs before they attend, so that they can report from an analytical and critical perspective. UNECA will, as far as they are able, supply as much information as possible on respective policies in each country. Where they are unable to supply information they will put the journalist in contact with the relevant source.

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