



**Special Issue on WSIS
November 2005**

PICTA Bulletin is a monthly publication that provides information on activities of members in the partnership, as well as offers news on ICT-related activities in Africa. This bulletin is also available at: <http://www.uneca.org/aisi/picta/PICTAbulletin>

This **special issue** focuses on the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS 2005) held from 16 – 18 November 2005 in Tunis, Tunisia.

NEWS FROM WSIS-TUNIS

More Bandwidth needed for African Universities

This was the message imparted by the speakers at the African Association of Universities (AAU) Conference on African Research and Education Networking that took place in Tunis during WSIS 2005. The speakers included Mr. Steve Song, Manager of IDRC's Information and Communications Technology for Development (ICT4D) programmes in Africa, Professor Akilgpa Sawyer, Secretary General (SG) of AAU, and Professor Venancio Massingue, Minister of Science and Technology, Mozambique. On the sidelines of the Tunis Phase of the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS), the AAU, with support of its partners, brought together over one hundred key African and international leaders of education and research networking with an interest in promoting the development of national research and education networks in Africa, and to examine critical bandwidth constraints to African education and research networking at four levels: campus, national, regional, and continental.

From formulation to implementation: Role of ePol-Net Africa in e-strategies

The ePol-Net event, organized by ECA, CePRC and Industry Canada took place on 16 November 2005 in Tunis. The workshop, on the theme, "*Assisting the implementation of national e-strategies through the formulation of sectoral and regional e-strategies in Africa*" was, chaired by Mr. Makane Faye, ECA Senior Regional Advisor. Ms. Wendy Ace, Director of the Canadian e-Policy Resource Centre (CePRC) represented ePol-NET partners. Over 100 participants from countries and institutions where ePol-NET assisted activities are being undertaken, NICI focal points, RECs and other interested WSIS participants, were in

attendance. The presentations focused on the process of developing strategies and their strategic importance. Participants highlighted the need for integrating activities at the regional level with those at the country level, and the need for ePol-NET to start looking beyond policy towards the implementation of e-strategies. In addition, ECA and CePRC held various bilateral discussions on potential activities.

ICTs a matter of necessity, says President Kagame

Rwandan President Paul Kagame has stressed that improved access to ICTs is critical to Africa's quest to meet the MDGs. He made the comments during a panel session on building regional partnerships, organized by ECA on the sidelines of the World Summit for the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis. The session, which included Executive Secretaries from Regional Commissions in Latin America and Asia, was aimed at sharing experiences and devising new ideas for developing the information society. It also focused on implementation of the African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE), which was adopted by the African ICT Ministers in September 2005, as part of the WSIS process. "Access to ICTs is a prerequisite for realizing the MDGs," said Kagame, who chaired the session. "It's not a matter of choice, but a matter of necessity."

ECA Executive Secretary calls for support for African Regional Action Plan

In his address to the WSIS Plenary, Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, Executive Secretary of the ECA called for support to the implementation of the African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy (ARAKPE) as Africa's ICT road map. He also highlighted ECA's role in supporting its member States and stakeholders in developing the appropriate policy environment whereby countries can optimize the benefits of the Information Society, Regional Economic Communities to harmonize ICT policies at the sub-regional levels in order to facilitate regional economic integration goals, and various Civil Society groups to enable a much more inclusive, development oriented approach to the creation of a shared 21st century

knowledge society in Africa. Regarding the African preparations to the WSIS, he stated that ECA, with support from the African Union and the African Ministerial Committee on ICT, had assisted its constituents by organizing regional conferences, facilitating meetings of experts and managing electronic discussion lists (among other activities), to ensure Africa's engaged participation.

SDC/IDRC/Microsoft to strengthen global telecentre movement

This multi-million dollar collaborative initiative will strengthen the capacity of tens of thousands of community-based telecentres around the world. "Telecentres provide communities with the opportunity to participate in the knowledge economy on their terms," says Maureen O'Neil, IDRC's president. "There are examples of telecentres helping people to overcome isolation and poverty, access medical and government services, and create new economic opportunities. All telecentres want to have this kind of community impact. telecentre.org will give people working in local telecentres the tools they need to make this happen." Based at IDRC's offices in Ottawa, the telecentre.org programme will invest in grassroots telecentre networks. "Networks are the key to strengthening telecentres," says Pamela Passman, Vice President of Microsoft Global Corporate Affairs. "Working together through networks, people in local telecentres will be able to learn new skills, develop new social enterprise models, and create innovative, knowledge-driven services for their communities. With the help of telecentre.org, telecentres will get stronger and better, together." IDRC, Microsoft, and SDC have stepped forward as founding social investors with the aim of promoting a widespread collaborative effort that will strengthen the telecentre movement globally. "Telecentres and other grassroots technology initiatives can only scale up through partnership," says Walter Fust, Director General, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. "We see telecentre.org as a platform for all types of partners – big and small, private and public, global and local. The point is that we need to work together if we want to realize the promise of local, bottom-up technology."

IICD/ECA Launch *iConnect*

On November 15, IICD and ECA launched their joint publication *iConnect Collected* at the ICT 4 All Exhibition area. During 2005, as part of an effort to get more southern voices into the current global discourse on ICTs, *iConnect* coordinators in Africa began commissioning regular articles by local journalists on the impact and use of ICT for development in their countries. The stories

collected in *iConnect Collected* were written by journalists in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. The articles appear regularly on the *iConnect* Website and are disseminated in Africa by ECA through *iConnect Africa*, and in the *i4D* magazine. Mr Jac Stienen, Managing Director of IICD noted the important collaboration between ECA and IICD in promoting the media to report on Information Society issues, whilst Ms Aida Opoku-Mensah, Officer-in-Charge, DISD/ECA, remarked on the remarkable way African journalists had taken up coverage on ICT4D issues, especially with respect to assessing impacts on livelihoods. The event was attended by African journalists, as well as a number of CSO representatives.

A Roadmap for a Continent

Following the African Regional Action Plan for the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE) workshop, a "partnership announcement" session was held to chart the way forward for the implementation of ARAPKE. In her welcoming remarks, Ms. Opoku-Mensah, Officer In Charge of the Development Information Services Division (DISD), who chaired the session on behalf of the ECA Executive Secretary highlighted why structured and sustainable partnerships are necessary for financing the Information Society. Professor Nagia Essayed, Commissioner, Human Resources, Science and Technology, African Union (AU) delivered the keynote speech. She stressed that Africa's success in the implementation of the Plan of Action, "is closely tied to the success in the integration of African economies and States". Mr. Amadou Top, Vice-Chair of the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF), presented the objectives of DSF and its activities. He recognized that the demand for building the Information Society in Africa is high and needs more energy and more partnership for more impact. He reaffirmed DSF's interest in collaborating in the implementation of ARAPKE and suggested the establishment of an Information Society Observatory for better follow-up, monitoring and fine-tuning of various ICT4D projects. Stakeholders were given the floor for their comments, including African Development Bank (ADB), NEPAD e-Africa Commission, International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD), Industry Canada. It was also suggested that ARAPKE focus on sub-regional initiatives for more visibility of the implementation process.

More support for the Partnership on measuring ICT for Development

The Partnership on Measuring ICT for Development workshop that also took place as a

WSIS 2005 event discussed core ICT4D indicators and for socio-economic sectors. The major issues covered were measuring, indicators, benchmarking, partnership, and sharing experiences. Participants emphasized the need for continued support for the activities of the international partnership, which is between 11 organizations including Eurostat, ITU, OECD, UNCTAD, ECA, ECLAC, ESCWA, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), UN ICT Task Force and the World Bank, which was founded in June 2005. In the discussions, the Government of France expressed support with a financial pledge to contribute to the Partnership. Other donors in the meeting also expressed interest in supporting and working together with the Partnership. Participants also emphasized the need to strengthen and involve research institutions in developing countries, as measuring the impacts of ICTs on development requires a strong research and analytical capacity. Institutional and human resources capacity building was another area identified by participants needing special attention, including guidelines and methodologies. The panel concluded with the need to promote partnerships in measuring the Information Society, identifying key indicators, and sharing knowledge and experiences and best practices of people from different parts of the world.

AISI/GKP/SDC Media Awards 2005 for African Journalists

The ceremony was organized by the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) and the Swiss Development Corporation. The AISI media awards are presented by ECA and it went to **Joseph Adri Gnassengbe** of TV Togo joint first prize along with **Salif Sanogo**, Mali TV. Joseph produced coverage and analysis of the WSIS Plan of Action, the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), NEPAD ICT programmes and the link to WSIS in a video entitled "Les Initiatives Africaines dans le processus du SMSI." Salif also produced a programme on the WSIS process – "From Geneva to Tunis", highlighting Africa's participation during the first phase in Geneva, through the Bamako Regional Preparatory Conference organized in 2002. He looks at Africa's preparation for the second phase and offers a critical analysis of on how WSIS can help fine-tune the continent's strategy in building an inclusive Information Society. The second prize winner print journalist **Emmanuel Onyongo** from Tanzania wrote articles, such as "Get to Know about the WSIS and its processes; Towards WSIS"; "Why Africa's participation is important"; "Why African media should be recognized at WSIS". He focuses on creating awareness of the WSIS process, and the importance of Africa's participation and argues that

there should be digital solidarity in which the rich nations help the developing ones gain greater access to ICTs.

ECA, Africa and follow-up to WSIS

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) ended with a strong call to speed up the pace of building a global information society. The summit, which reaffirmed commitments made during the first WSIS meeting in Geneva two years ago, took decisions ensuring internet security and improving financial mechanisms to support ICT in developing countries. It also examined ways of bridging the digital divide, improving internet governance and developing strategies for implementing the Geneva and Tunis decisions.

AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS @ WSIS: EXCERPTS OF PLENARY STATEMENTS

"Egypt sees internet governance as a continuous dialogue. This stems from our realization that the internet is no longer a mere means of exchanging information or an e-content depository, but rather has evolved in the framework of convergence between telecommunications and media, as a tool for development capable of affecting all aspects of life. This necessitates the development of the mechanisms that govern the Internet, the most important of which is greater international participation to encourage multilingualism on the net."

H. E. Dr. Tarek Kamel, Minister of Communications and Information Technology, Arab Republic of Egypt

"The African continent is quite aware of the huge potentials ICTs hold for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals and the PRSPs. It is for this reason that various regional consultations have been held to advance Africa's capacity to harness and leverage ICTs to improve the socio-economic conditions of its people. Therefore, the commitment to use ICT as an entry point into the information society gave rise to the African Information Society Initiative (AISI). This commitment is considered not only with the national development blueprint of the Gambia (Vision 2020) which seeks to develop and use electronic information for development, but also the spirit embodied in the African Union and the NEPAD framework for the development of the African continent.

Hon. Neneh MacDoual-Gaye, Secretary of State for Communication, Information & Technology of The Gambia

"We are proud of our modest achievements in the implementation of WSIS Plan of Action. We have integrated ICT into our development strategies. We have formulated our National ICT and Rural Telecommunications for Development Policies. Our communication sector is fully liberalized, duty on computers and computer peripherals has been removed, in order to attract investors, extend services to rural areas, and alleviate poverty."

Hon. Patricia Kaliati, Minister of Information and Tourism, M. P. on behalf of His Excellency Dr. Bingu Wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi

"... My thanks go to all African states that put their confidence in my country in the process of preparing for the Tunis Summit. Mali had continued to hold the Presidency of the Bamako Bureau that had coordinated with the assistance of Ghana, Senegal and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa the work of the African group of experts involved in the preparation of the World Summit on the Information Society...."

H.E Mr. Amadou Toumani Toure, President of the Republic of Mali presented by His Excellency Mr. Ousmane Issoufi Maiga, Prime Minister, Head of Government

"... ICANN, on its part, deserves our full support for the continuation of the good work done so far on the technical implementation of the ccTLD administration. Mauritius is fully supportive of the Dakar resolution regarding the African position on Internet Governance, which amongst others, recommends the active participation of specialized African institutions in the technical Internet Governance bodies."

H.E Etienne Sinatambou, Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunications of Mauritius

"... It is because of such vision that we started to be engaged, since 2002, with the assistance of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, in the process of elaborating a national strategy for the development of ICTs, that goes along with our poverty reduction strategy, on one part, and with the objectives of the Millennium on the other part. The process was finalized in January 2004 by adopting the ICT development plan."

H.E Hama Amadou, Prime Minister, Head of Government of The Republic of Niger, delivered by the Minister of Culture Arts and Communication Mr. Oumarou Hadary

"... At the international, regional and national levels, we must, however, establish follow-up mechanisms for continuous assessment,

monitoring and evaluation of progress to ensure comprehensive implementation, by all parties, of obligations arising from our decisions. On the part of Nigeria, I wish to assure you all that these decisions will be incorporated into our national development plans."

H.E Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chairman, African Union

"... Our country and continent are determined to do everything possible to achieve their renewal and development, defeating the twin scourges of poverty and underdevelopment. In this regard, we have fully recognised the critical importance of modern ICTs as a powerful ally we have to mobilise, as reflected both in our national initiatives and the priority programmes of NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa's Development."

HE Mr. Thabo Mbeki, The President of South Africa

"... In drafting the policy, the Kingdom of Swaziland has taken into account the importance of capacity building at all levels of society. Since Geneva, we have witnessed a number of capacity building initiatives, which have taken place through the assistance of our partners. However, a large gap in capacity still remains between developing countries, like Swaziland, and developed economies that have spearheaded the information technology revolution. We therefore, call for a closer cooperation between the developing and developed countries to bridge the digital divide".

H.E The Prime Minister A. T. DLAMINI (MP), Swaziland

PICTA Bulletin is a monthly information sharing service designed to keep members informed of each other's activities in the area of ICTs in Africa.

Please send relevant information, stories or exchanges you may want to share with other members to atemtime@uneca.org for inclusion in subsequent issues of the PICTA Bulletin. If you have any comments and/or suggestions, please contact:

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