

WSIS TUNIS AGENDA

“Nobody will do it for us”

African governments, civil society organisations and the private sector must take the challenge of ensuring access and participation of rural communities in the Information Society, said a representative of Africa Civil Society.

Olivier Nana Nzepa said participants from Africa must demonstrate dedication to bridging the digital divide and grassroots communities have to be involved.

“Nobody will do it for us. We have to drive the change and listen to what people in the grassroots are asking for,” he said.

Nzepa, regional coordinator of the Advisory Network for African Information Society (ANAIS) said discussions at the ongoing World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) had revealed optimism in narrowing the divide.

He was confident that Africa could engineer its growth saying Africa has had a chance to organise itself, present a united view, and gather momentum on the challenges and way forward.

In his opening address at the summit, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan noted that government and the private sector had a role to play in ensuring all communities access information and communication technology



Nnenna Nwakanma a development and ICT consultant: the summit was a disappointment.

gies (ICTs).

Nnenna Nwakanma a development and ICT consultant and a member of ANAIS said WSIS risks losing its momentum unless proper implementation and commitment is assigned to various role players at the summit.

She urged the 175 participating governments to inject a fresh dose of commitment to the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action made in Geneva two years ago.

“This second phase has no renewed commitment and the follow-up is less than clear,” says Nnenna

In his WSIS opening address, Janis Karklin, President of the WSIS Tunis phase preparatory committee said the process had

involved the civil society more than any other UN summit.

However, speaking at last night’s plenary, Susan Tahmasebi, who represented civil society organisations from the Middle East and West Asia, said while the UN sought to engage local actors, the organisation lacked the mechanisms to reinforce such participation.

“I think the WSIS has had some ideal goals in ensuring multi-stakeholder participation but I think in reality, they have not been able to engage with civil society in a meaningful way. We don’t come to this with an equal footing. The whole accreditation process is not set up for equal participation by civil society,” said Tahmasebi.

Tahmasebi said, the UN accreditation process needed to be reformed, in order to strengthen civil society participation, adding that civil society from her region was under represented in the WSIS process.

According to Khaled Fattal, chairman of the Multilingual Internet Names Consortium in Singapore, communities whose languages are not used on the internet are still marginalised since there was no clear way forward.

“We wanted action, not compromise. People are expecting action not talk. If people are hungry, give them food not consultation, if they have no access, connect them, do not call for dialogue,” says Fattal.



Khaled Fattal

ICT Organisations Welcome Internet Governance Forum

Seven global internet organisations exhibiting their work at the Kram Palexpo Tunis, as part of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) have welcomed the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) proposed at the Summit.

The Forum, created as part of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, has been

mandated to build on existing governance mechanisms, some of which include the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).

ICANN, the Internet Society (ISOC) and the Number Resources Organisation (NRO) however, welcomed the Forum, saying it will encourage broader engagement and dialogue.

Paul Twomey, ICANN President, told reporters at a press conference: "We are supportive of the internet evolution. The fact that this Forum will be a multi-stakeholder Forum, will ensure that policy issues will also be concentrated on. This Forum will provide the platform for the exchange of ideas between governments."

Concern had been raised among some organisations at

the Summit that ICANN, being the assigner of internet names and numbers, was governing the internet.

Twomey refuted this: "There are lots of myths about ICANN. We don't govern the internet and we don't own it. We just ensure that addresses are allocated to people. Our decisions are based on advisory principles from different governments," he said.

EASSy: Reducing Internet costs in Africa

The Eastern Africa Submarine Cable System (EASSy), will reduce the costs of internet connectivity in Africa by over 50 percent once it is completed in 2007.

According to developers of the initiative, the EASSy will enhance Africa's access to the internet by providing high speed connections through fibre optic cables.

The initiative aims to enhance the optical fibre link between southern Africa and Djibouti. At its completion, a 9 300 km broadband cable will connect the whole African

continent.

This will put an end to the use of satellite connections normally routed through Europe.

Sammy Kirui, chairperson of the initiative told participants at the NEPAD organised dialogue on 'Creating Partnerships for ICT Connectivity in Africa' at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis, that "the growing demand for internet access, exploding mobile market, corporate business and the business communication needs of the African people demand the provision of a regional and global broadband

ICT connectivity and EASSy will meet this."

Kirui said, "the most important thing about this initiative for the ordinary man and woman in eastern Africa is that once it is completed, costs for connecting to the internet, in cafes, schools, etc will be reduced to more than a half of what it is today'.

EASSy is African driven, African owned and African supported.

Kirui said that so far 23 private sector organisations in Africa have signed onto the \$ 205 million initiative. Landlocked countries participating in the

initiatives include Botswana, Zambia, Lesotho, Burundi, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Swaziland, Rwanda and Ethiopia. Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Madagascar, and South Africa, are coastal countries participating in the project.

Dr Henry Chassia of NEPAD's e-Africa Commission is coordinating the process to ensure that governments support the initiative

"We would like to ensure that governments take their rightful role in supporting the construction of this network," said Chassia.

Nigeria Reaffirms Pledge to DSF

Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo has reaffirmed his country's 500 000 Euro pledge to the Digital Solidarity Fund (DSF).

Speaking at the DSF session held at the on-going World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis, President Obasanjo reiterated the pledge made by Nigeria during the inauguration of DSF in March this year in Geneva.

Obasanjo announced that

his country was ready to host the regional office of the DSF.

"I am happy to inform you that Nigeria would provide the DSF with the assistance required for the immediate take-off of the regional office" said Obasanjo who is also the chairman of the African Union.

The regional office for the DSF in Africa will be based in Nigeria's capital, Abuja. Obasanjo said he had held discussions on the operation of the office with Mr. Guy Olivier

Segond, President of the DSF during his visit to Nigeria last week.

The office would mobilize support for the DSF in Africa when it goes operational.

"I am confident that the Digital Solidarity Fund will be a catalyst to help achieve the goals and objectives we have set for ourselves at the Geneva and Tunis phases of the WSIS," said the Nigerian leader.

Obasanjo said support for

the DSF had been increasing, adding that there was need for the board of governors to be constituted early. He said more information on the objectives, funding sources, disbursement and management of the DSF, had to be made available to the public.

Delegates at the panel session observed a minute's silence in memory of Chief Mrs. Stella Obasanjo, Nigeria's late first lady who recently passed away.

African Voices at the ECA Stall

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has been showcasing recently published works documenting policy developments on information and communication technologies in Africa.

Several books on ICTs in Africa are on display at the ECA stall at the PalExpo Kram, Tunis as part of the ICT 4 all Exhibition. Several new publications were also launched here at the World Summit on the Information Society, (WSIS).

ECA and International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) on Tuesday launched a joint publication called iConnect Collected.

Aida Opoku-Mensah, Officer-in-Charge at the ECA in Ethiopia said the book was

produced as part of efforts to get more southern voices into the current global ICT discourse.

The publication includes articles from African journalists on the impact and use of ICT for development in their respective countries.

Other publications on display at the ECA exhibition stall include:

Africa Speaks

A book articulating views from diverse voices on the continent concerning internet governance.

Benchmarking, the plan of Action of WSIS in Africa

Prepared under the guidance of Aida Opoku-Mensah, the publication documents some achievements of the



The ECA stand with its books on display.

WSIS Plan of Action, highlighting areas for further action.

ECA member states reflected in the analysis include:

Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, DRC, Gambia, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Zambia, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Tanzania and Nigeria.

African Delegates showcase ICT success stories

Several African delegations at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis, have been outlining steps taken toward using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for development in their respective countries.

Augusto Nune Junior, infrastructure and applications advisor for the Mozambique ICT policy commission says his country has just embarked on an e-governance project.

"Our way of seeing e-governance is in the government's ability to deliver services to the people at the most convenient level to them. So, we have started an ICT project with

direct impact to citizens – the government electronic network," he says.

As of March this year, 500 computers in 15 ministries were linked to each other, through internet, email and government portal services. Government officials, including ministers are being trained in basic computer literacy.

Health, education, and parliamentary governance are sectors currently benefiting from various ICT projects in Rwanda.

Lydie Kalisa, a senior analyst with On The Frontier (OTF) a consultancy firm working with the Rwandan government, says the e-health project, has

enabled patients in Kigali city to access medical consultancy and treatment from Belgium without leaving their country.

Members of the Rwandan Parliament, have electronic devices installed in their houses to enable them to vote quickly, efficiently and secretly. The process also facilitates the counting of parliamentary votes.

Sudan adopted an e-strategy in July 2001. Sixteen of the country's 26 states are already linked to the internet. The other ten are expected to be connected next year.

According to Ahmed Abdugadir Salih, general manager of the National Information Cen-

tre, the government is carrying capacity building programmes on computer literacy to public servants. Civil servants in 27 ministries already have basic computer knowledge.

Tanzania boasts of some notable achievements in ICT application. With an ICT policy in place, the country has seen the growth of community telecentres, rural mobile phones, open source content and nationwide e-government.

According to Professor Mark Mwandosya, minister for communication and transport, the country has established an ICT infrastructure that has become the foundation for e-government and other applications.

'One Laptop per child' comes closer to reality

"Inspiring in many ways" said Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General, describing the "\$100 laptop" which was officially unveiled at a press-conference held during the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Wednesday evening.



Senior MIT laptop project team unveil the \$100 laptop. Left to right: Prof. Nicholas Negroponte, Allan Kay, Mary Lou Kelden.

The project is the brainchild of Professor Nicholas Negroponte, founder and director of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Media Lab. His esteemed team of inventors includes Allan Kay who invented the first laptop in 1968.

"This is an educational project, not a laptop project," declared Negroponte who expressed delight at being part of improving access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) in developing countries, especially for children.

"We believe we can make hundreds of billions of these machines which will drive costs further down," he added.

The UN is supporting the initiative which Secretary General Kofi Annan believes is a step towards "protecting the greatest natural resource... our children."

Funding for the project came from One Laptop Per Child (OLPC), an independent non-governmental organisation aimed at providing a portable internet-ready computer to every child in the developing world.

The cost of the laptop which will start at around \$100, is

expected to be available in the fourth quarter of 2006. It will be distributed through local government ministries. Governments will however, not be allowed to sell them to end-users.

MIT is currently in talks with five computer companies to licence production of the laptop and make it commercially available to governments.

The first batch of machines will go to six larger countries from developing nations. Nigeria and Egypt are likely to be the

first beneficiaries of the scheme in Africa, with smaller countries to follow within a year.

Dubbed the "green machine" by the MIT team, the laptop has a 500 MHz chipset, 128MB DRAM, 8" SVGA display, extended WiFi, manual crank powered battery and a 1Gig flash memory hard drive.

It will run on an open-source operating system such as Linux.

More information on the project can be found online at: <http://laptop.media.mit.edu/>

East Africa Boosts Internet Exchange Points

East African delegates attending the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis have warned that unless developing countries committed themselves to the outcomes of the summit, they risked broadening the 'digital divide' instead of bridging it.

Speaking at different parallel events at the Summit, the East African delegation said their commitments to some of the WSIS targets like the creation of

Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) in the region would reduce the challenges faced by the region in developing internet infrastructure.

Tanzanian Minister of Communications and Transport Professor Mark J Mwandosya, speaking at yesterday morning's plenary session said Tanzania was working on establishing an IXP point by 2006.

Mwandosya said Swahili being the official language in the

East African region, Tanzanians had already developed software written in Swahili called Jambo Open Office. He added that Tanzania would be managing its own country top level domain by January 2006

An IXP interconnects Internet Service providers (ISPs) within a region or country, allowing them to exchange domestic internet traffic locally.

Mwandosya said developing countries like those in East

Africa needed to develop IXPs in order maintain low cost and improve the quality of service.

Speaking at the Exhibition Hall of the Summit, Kenyan Permanent Secretary for Information and Communication James Rege said, "Kenya IXP is the facility which keeps Kenyan internet traffic in Kenya."

Uganda's delegation to the WSIS has showcased the country's plans to link its local IXP to existing ones in the region.

WSIS Missing 'Gender'

The gender caucus has observed with disappointment that the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) documents do not pay enough attention to gender issues.

Reflecting on the WSIS process, Conchita Ponchita, Congo Committee on the Status of Women, said she had been going through the documents and that it was disappointing to see that the only reference to gender in the document was 'gender disaggregated data.'

"We will never have gender equality in the economy because in the World Trade Organisation women are considered as social expenditures. We are not social expenditure but producers. The unpaid work of women is not considered as an economic value," said Conchita.

"We have to put that in the information society. Are women really connected?," She

asked.

"Over fifty percent of women in the world do not have telephones and some of them do not even have electricity. We have to look at it from the human rights approach because in Vienna it was said that women's rights are human rights. It is being said that women are victims. And we say that women should be protected and that women are in war just as victims but they can also be elements of social change," observed Conchita.

On WSIS and the private sector, Conchita pointed out that human resource management was supposed to be for both women and men, but women do not have the right education.

"There is discrimination direct and indirect. The reproductive role of women is not taken into account. If she is absent, it is her fault because she is taking care of children," said Conchita.

She also observed that some women in decision-making positions have forgotten where they come from and are following the male model.

"We have women who think differently and there is always a mask covered by the so called

"We will never have gender equality in the economy because in the World Trade Organisation women are considered as social expenditures."

director generals."

Conchita also noted that women in WSIS are not organised and urged them to organise themselves properly.

"We are just coming here to listen. We are producers. We are not producing at the international level," she said.

Dr Heike Jensen, Member of the steering committee of the WSIS gender caucus told participants that negotiations at the WSIS process had been frustrating. This resulted in gendered language not being captured in the documents.

Jensen said in lobbying and advocacy, the gender caucus had been using gender language as a bargaining tool.

"We have supported old wording, new concepts and tried to remain on the UN level. These issues do not capture what new information communication technology (ICTs) have to do for women," said Jensen.

Freedom of expression essential for the info society

President of ORBICOM, Alain Modoux believes that the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) has been largely successful. He says the Summit has overcome numerous obstacles in that it had to build something out of nothing. "The difference between the WSIS and other Summits is that the other Summits had something when they started, but for the Information Society Summit, there was not even one page. We started from scratch and all the documents came from the PrepComs"

The International Network of UNESCO Chairs in Commu-

nication - ORBICOM - yesterday released two reports, the ICT Opportunity Index and the Digital Opportunity Index. The reports have been made possible through the hard work and dedication of 60 researchers from all corners of the globe. The Digital Opportunity Index report will be released, provided funding is made available, every two years.

Modoux has been involved in the WSIS process from the Geneva phase through until Tunis. He says that in the current phase, ORBICOM has made three contributions, two of which are very important: "First I would say the contribution to

promote freedom of the press, independence of the media and the role of the media in the information society. To that end, (we have) the adoption of the Marrakech declaration in Marrakech (Morocco) November 2004. Secondly, we repeat our conviction, there's no real effective information society without freedom of expression and for media, freedom of the press, so that's the main message."

According to Modoux, people often think that the digital divide is merely an issue of technology: "The digital divide is not only a problem of technology; it's also a problem of knowledge. If

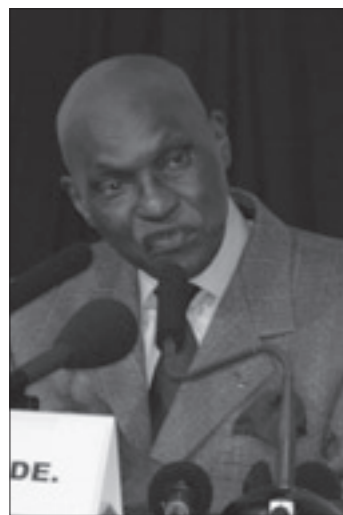
you don't have the knowledge, you don't go far with ICTs. The criteria in the report allow you to measure where your country is year after year in relation to the digital divide. In this report what is very interesting is that you have also an important chapter on women because nobody speaks about the digital divide affecting women."

The publication of the report will however not come without challenges. "The problem is that the research at the world level with 60 researchers, it costs a lot of money. It's about half a million dollars for this operation," said Modoux.

ALPHA OUMAR KONARE

«Il y a une volonté des Africains d'être de leur temps»

Président de la Commission de l'Union africaine, Alpha Oumar Konaré est à Tunis pour les besoins du Smsi. Par-delà ses fonctions politiques, son intérêt pour les questions liées à la communication ne surprennent pas, pour quelqu'un qui a été un des promoteurs de la presse privée dans son pays au début des années 1990. Notre reporter l'a rencontré au moment où il visitait les stands africains au Smsi. Ses attentes pour cette rencontre rejoignent celles exprimées par Koffi Annan, pour que Tunis 2005 aboutisse à des actes concrets.



Comment voyez-vous la participation africaine à ce Smsi ?

J'ai beaucoup de plaisir à voir l'Afrique en mouvement, en train de s'accrocher. Il y a une volonté des Africains, non pas de rattraper les autres, mais d'être de leur temps et d'essayer d'apporter des réponses aux mille problèmes qui se posent à eux. Et en même temps ils ressentent le besoin d'inventer leur patrimoine. C'est sur ce patrimoine et sur les hommes que nous allons fonder les

stratégies de demain.»

De quelles stratégies s'agit-il ?

Nous sommes dans la situation où nous voulons d'abord que les Africains se retrouvent, mettent en commun leurs potentialités, assurent un partage et ensemble voient les divers problèmes qui se posent pour trouver des réponses collectives. Car il n'y a pas de réponses individuelles aujourd'hui.

Avez-vous des attentes particulières pour ce sommet du

Tunis ?

Il faut des actions plus concrètes. Il faut que les gens s'engagent aux côtés de l'Afrique pour que la fracture numérique se réduise et que l'on comprenne que le problème du contenu est important. Dans ce cadre, je pense que l'adoption de la Convention sur la diversité culturelle est un pas important. Il faut que les pays africains ratifient rapidement cette convention pour qu'elle entre en oeuvre. Bien sûr, le problème de la gouvernance d'Internet est posé, mais je pense qu'un pas a été fait.

STRATEGIES DU NEPAD

Sillonner l'Afrique avec la fibre optique

Articulées à plusieurs secteurs prioritaires comme l'éducation, la santé, la croissance économique et la bonne gouvernance, les stratégies du Nepad le sont tout autant aux technologies de la communication. Et sur ce dernier chantier, souligne le ministre sénégalais chargé du Nepad, M. Aziz Sow, «beaucoup de percées ont été réalisées». Même si elles sont encore à l'état de projet, comme la fibre optique qui permettra de relier les pays de l'Afrique

austral côtière et ceux de l'hinterland, pour des communications moins coûteuses et de meilleure qualité.

Les priorités et stratégies du Nepad en matière de Tic étaient hier au centre d'une conférence, dans le cadre du Smsi, et selon le président de la Commission e-afrika du Nepad, Henry Chasia, la réalisation de ce projet de fibre optique permettra à terme de relier tout le continent africain. «Nous avons besoin de 250 millions de dollars pour le câble littoral», a-t-il

laissé entendre au cours de la conférence d'hier. De quoi connecter huit pays d'Afrique australe côtière et onze autres de l'hinterland. «Notre souhait est que le réseau qui va relier les pays de l'Afrique australe soit lancé le plus tôt possible, car les mêmes systèmes et câblages sont déjà installés en Afrique de l'ouest», ajoute M. Sow.

A l'origine, le projet actuel avait été porté par certains pays de façon séparée, dans le cadre de leurs plans nationaux de développement, et le

Nepad est venu fédérer ces énergies qui existaient déjà. Mercredi soir, les représentants des pays concernés ont rencontré les responsables de la Banque africaine de développement pour soumettre le projet, dans le cadre de la recherche de financements. Depuis les années 1990, les infrastructures technologiques de communication ont été financées pour la plupart par le secteur privé. Mais avec la synergie créée par le Nepad, les gouvernements s'engagent de plus en plus.

ABDOULAYE WADE

«Nous avons accroché l'Afrique à la société de l'information»

L'Afrique n'entend pas rester à la traîne de la société mondiale de l'information, a affirmé hier le président sénégalais Abdoulaye Wade. «Nous avons accroché l'Afrique au monde de la communication depuis Genève», et il n'est pas question, pour lui, de se mettre en marge du processus. Mais il reste encore du chemin à faire pour se retrouver à la bonne. Car, souligne le président séné-

galais, «l'Afrique était et reste toujours déconnectée». Si les investissements à effectuer, pour une mise à niveau, lui paraissent importants, M. Wade ne trouve pas l'effort vain. «L'Afrique est gagnante» dans ce qui se passe pour la mise en place de la société de l'information, clame-t-il. Car «les technologies de l'information et de la communication constituent un secteur entraînant pour la santé, pour l'éducation, etc.». Le président

sénégalais tient tout de même à noter : «Nous ne prétendons pas que les Tic vont résoudre les problèmes de la pauvreté».

Pour lui, la paupérisation de l'Afrique est une question complexe qui ne doit pas être envisagée en fonction des statistiques, mais du point de vue de l'accès à l'eau potable, à un habitat décent ou à l'accès aux soins de santé. Et l'informatisation ne suffit pas à cela, quand la volonté politique

ne suit pas.

Au cours du face-à-face avec les journalistes, Me Wade a estimé que le partenariat entre l'Afrique et le secteur privé est à encourager, dans la mesure où il relève du «win-win», du gagnant-gagnant. Pour dire que «ce que nous achetons booste leurs activités».

Sur la question de l'absence de certains «grands de ce monde», le chef de l'Etat a été peu prolixe : «Je n'ai pas la réponse», a-t-il laissé entendre.

PARTICIPATION AU SMSI

Le secteur privé africain peu présent

Du secteur privé africain on ne voit pas grand monde à Tunis. Une absence qui inquiète, quand on sait le rôle que ce segment peut jouer dans le développement et l'appropriation des Tic en Afrique. Les raisons qui l'expliquent ne manquent pas.

L'un des grands absents de ce sommet de Tunis reste le secteur privé africain. Pas étonnant quand on sait que dans la plupart des pays du continent « le sommet demeure une affaire de l'Etat. Le secteur privé est très peu présent », note le chef d'entreprise sénégalais Karim Sy, au cours de la conférence organisée hier au Smsi par l'Institut Panos Afrique de l'Ouest.

Les raisons de cette faible présence des privés africains sont multiples. D'abord l'information circule mal. Le secteur privé demeure peu informé sur les participations aux manifestations en rapport avec les Tic, note M. Sy. Au Sénégal, par exemple, 90% des chefs d'entreprise ne sauraient rien du Smsi. Une situation due en

partie au manque de dialogue entre secteurs privé et public. Les autorités officielles disposent souvent d'informations qu'elles ne partagent pas ; pas plus qu'elles ne sollicitent le privé dans l'élaboration de leurs plans d'actions en matière de Tic. En plus de cette mauvaise circulation de l'information, le fait demeure que «les entreprises privées africaines ne sont pas toujours à même de supporter le coût de leur participation au sommet. L'investissement est lourd. Ce qui est différent pour les privés du Nord», ajoute Kouferidji Ramanou du Groupe Africa broadcasting installé au Bénin.

La formule idéale entre tous les acteurs des Tic, note Gaston Kaboré du Burkina Faso, devrait être « Private-public : pater-

nership for win-win » (privé-public : partenariat gagnant-gagnant). L'essentiel, pour le privé, étant de percevoir ce qu'il peut gagner en participant à ces manifestations, de comprendre que les Tic sont un moyen pour renforcer l'économie. Afin de pallier son manque de visibilité, Karim Sy préconise sa structuration à travers des organisations professionnelles. Et l'urgence d'y parvenir est d'autant plus importante, pour Kouferidji Ramanou, que «la visibilité intelligente et durable au Smsi passe par un partenariat entre secteur public et privé africain».

La situation actuelle dans le monde, Pierre Dandjinou, fonctionnaire du Pnud Afrique en poste à Dakar, la schématise ainsi : «Pour les Américains,

le Smsi est une opportunité d'affaires, alors que les Européens ne savent pas trop quoi faire. Les Asiatiques, par contre, observent, se réunissent puis réagissent. Les Africains eux parlent de développement, mais ne sont pas encore organisés. Il faut qu'ils le fassent. C'est le lobbying et le réseautage qui ouvrent et offrent les marchés».

Malgré cette faible présence du secteur privé africain, les Etats s'impliquent de plus en plus dans le Smsi. «La mobilisation va croissant», souligne Karim Sy, mais certains pays du continent se mobilisent plus que d'autres, dont treize identifiés comme les plus impliqués, avec des leaders comme la Tunisie, l'Afrique du Sud, le Nigeria, le Sénégal et le Mali.

PALOP procuram parceiros para desenvolver sociedade de informação

Os Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa (PALOP) presentes na cimeira de Tunes - faltou apenas a Guiné-Bissau - não se deslocaram a Tunes somente para discutir os grandes temas relacionados com a sociedade de informação (SI) nomeadamente a governação da Internet. Exceptuando São Tomé e Príncipe, provavelmente pelas limitações actuais do país, Angola, Cabo Verde e Moçambique vieram à segunda fase da Cimeira Mundial sobre a Sociedade de Informação para apresentar o quadro das respectivas sociedades de informação e procurar parceiros para o seu financiamento.

Tal como os restantes países em desenvolvimento, os PALOP consideram essencial a questão do financiamento da SI. É, por

exemplo, o caso de Angola. "Até este momento, foram investidos mais de três milhões de dólares nas tecnologias de informação. Nós queremos fazer com que essa conferência contribua para o aumento dessa cifra", afirmou Jeremias Timoteo, vice-governador da província do Zaire.

Segundo Jeremias Timoteo, um dos próximos passos no desenvolvimento da SI em Angola prende-se com a transformação numa Agência da actual Comissão Nacional das Tecnologias de Informação. "Com essa transformação, espera-se um impacto maior no sector", referiu, precisando que Angola está apostado em subir no ranking mundial da SI. Entre as realizações, destaca-se a massificação das tecnologias de informação nas escolas. As comunidades são a próxima etapa.

Depois da sua aprovação em Outubro último, Cabo Verde também apresentou os seus dois programas para o sector com o intuito de angariar as parcerias que forem necessárias para sua implementação, segundo o chefe da sua delegação, Jorge Lopes. Os dois documentos são o Programa Estratégico para a Sociedade de Informação (PESI) e o Plano de Acção para a Governação Electrónica (PAGE). O PESI, cuja elaboração havia sido recomendada pela primeira fase da cimeira, tem um horizonte temporal de quatro/cinco anos e está orçado em cerca de 70 milhões de euros. Este programa propõe um desenvolvimento em nove pontos, um dos quais é designado por PAGE e aposta numa governação mais próxima do cidadão.

Também Moçambique pretende aproximar o Estado dos

cidadãos através das tecnologias de informação e comunicação. "Criamos o chamado balcão único de atendimento onde o cidadão pode resolver problemas administrativos. Neste momento, esses balcões estão a atender questões ligadas ao licenciamento de empresas mas a ideia é estender a outros sectores", referiu o engenheiro Kauxique Mangalal, do Ministério da Educação de Moçambique.

São várias as iniciativas lançadas naquele país, entre elas a implementação de centros comunitários multimédias, no quadro de um projecto piloto levado a cabo em três estados africanos. Graças aos centros, jovens de uma dezena de localidades são formados ao mesmo tempo que as comunidades locais são informadas através da Internet e de uma rádio comunitária.

EYE AT WSIS



1: Adama Samassékou, President of the WSIS Preparatory Committee for the Geneva phase. 2: The media room captured on deadline. 3: Traditional costumes on show at the ICT 4 All exhibition.

