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Third Meeting of the Committee
on Development Information (CODI)

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**Report on the follow-up activities
of
CODI 2 Recommendations**

Report on the follow-up activities of CODI.2 recommendations

The Committee on Development Information (CODI) Sub-committee on Information and Communication Technologies and Library (CODI-ICT) had held its second meeting from 4 to 7 September 2001. The Sub-Committee considered the following issues:

1. Briefing on ADF'99 and the follow-up of the recommendations of the first meeting of the CODI sub-committee on Information and Communication Technologies
2. Report of the African Technical Advisory Committee on the African Information Society Initiative (AISI)
3. Progress Report on NICI implementation: evaluation of the impact of NICI in Africa – the Scan-ICT Project
4. Presentation and evaluation of ICT applications against the initiatives of ADF'99: ICT applications in education, health, commerce and trade
5. New trends in library automation: report of the expert preparatory meeting on knowledge management and the African Virtual Library and Information Network Initiative (AVLIN)
6. Report on ECA Programme of Work in ICT and Libraries

The sub-committee gave emphasis to the promotion of ICTs in the development of the continent. It also examined in depth ECA's work programme in information and communication technologies. Participants presented reports on the status of ICT in their countries and organizations to the Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee adopted its report and made recommendation for the consideration of the plenary.

A list of recommendations by the sub-committee and the actions taken to address them so far is presented.

1. The need for a coordinating mechanism on ICT projects within the continent

In order to develop an effective coordinating mechanism on ICT projects within the continent, the ECA, in addition to its network of Partnership for Information and Communication Technologies in Africa (PICTA), is working closely with the UNICT Task Force - African Stakeholders Network (ASN), the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD.)

2. The use of the AISI electronic list for discussions on issues of information society in Africa

Following the recommendations of CODI 2 and in preparing various African stakeholders for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) the ECA has been using its AISI electronic discussion list as well as new lists. An online discussion on e-governance/government in Africa was held between 15 July and 30 September 2002. Since October 2002 the AISI list has been used in a regular manner primarily by the civil society in preparation for the ICT Policy and Civil Society workshop held from 6 to 8 November 2002, and the WSIS PrepCom2 held from 17 to 27 February 2003. The discussion list has been instrumental in the preparation of the civil society for both events. Currently, a discussion on the role of the African Diaspora is ongoing. Electronic discussions planned for 2003/4 include the academia and parliamentarians.

3. Impact Analysis on the use of ICTs by Africans

Scan-ICT pilot studies have been undertaken in six African countries, namely Ethiopia, Ghana, Morocco, Mozambique, Senegal and Uganda. The Scan-ICT initiative has been implemented as collaboration between the Acacia program of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the ECA with financial support from the European Union and the Norwegian

Development Agency (NORAD.) The purpose of the Scan-ICT Project is to build support for the phased development of a comprehensive African capability to collect and manage key information on the penetration and impact created by ICT in development, and make the information available for decisions on the growing ICT investment in Africa. All the pilot studies are completed and the reports submitted.

4. Establishment of a good marketing strategy to sensitize African users on the potential of ICTs

In response to the CODI 2 recommendations, ECA has launched the AISI Outreach and Communication programme to support awareness creation activities on ICT for development issues and promote the goals of the information society. The programme entails a series of activities aimed at supporting the AISI goals, and it involves all societal actors in addressing the continent's quest for an information society. The major outreach products so far are the PICTA Bulletin, iConnect Africa, AISI Radio Series, AISI Media Award Programme, NICI Maps and Graphs, AISI Briefing Papers, Web Sites and e-discussions.

The Information Technology Center for Africa (ITCA) has organized two main workshops focused to raise the awareness of policy makers on the role of ICTs for development – one for African Ambassadors residing in Addis Ababa held in June 2001 and the other is the ongoing seminar series on ICT awareness for Ethiopian parliamentarians. A training in ICT issues and Internet use has been provided for participants of different meetings that took place at the UNCC. ITCA has also successfully conducted the Cisco Internet networking training for African women, in collaboration with Cisco systems inc. and InfoDev of the World Bank. Twenty-five women from English speaking African countries took part in the first training while 19 women from French speaking African countries attended the second one.

5. African representation at high level and the need for an African Common Voice in international fora

The ECA, with support from key development partners, organized the African preparatory meeting of the WSIS in Bamako, Mali from 26 to 30 May 2002. Africa was the first continent to organize a regional conference in line with the framework of the WSIS. In addition to the main preparatory conference, pre-conference events were held on the following topics: NICI Strategies in Africa, African Languages and the Internet, the Media and ICT Forum, ICT financing mechanism, Evaluation and analysis of ICT impact: the SCAN-ICT project, and ICT Business Forum and Free Software: The African Intake. The meeting discussed what the information society brings to Africa and the vice versa, what Africa wants to preserve in the information society and how the continent can benefit from the information society. The results of the conference were the Bamako Declaration and establishment of a taskforce (Bamako 2002 Bureau, with ECA serving as a secretariat) to carry out the major recommendations and work with the WSIS secretariat. The meeting has elicited interest among African governments and other stakeholders on the WSIS and the information society in general. This is reflected by subsequent participation in the preparatory meetings (PrepCom-1 and PrepCom-2) of the WSIS, including heads of state, as well as country preparations for the first summit.

ECA has also submitted an African input to the WSIS Draft Declaration of Principles and Draft Action Plan based on the Bamako Declaration. It is also planning to present an African e-government action plan based on the discussions on "Information and Governance" of CODI 3. An African position on e-commerce will also be prepared in conjunction with the UNCTAD during the latter's upcoming regional conference for Africa to be held under the theme Electronic Commerce

Strategies for Development, to be held in Tunis, Tunisia from 19 to 21 June 2003. The UNCTAD African regional meeting will also involve discussions on trade issues related to policies and regulatory aspects of e-commerce applications including the governance process of e-commerce initiatives in Africa.

6. Strengthening of the UN ICT Task Force and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)

The African Stakeholders Network (ASN) of the UN ICT Task Force was set up at the end of a two-day meeting in Addis Ababa (21 - 22 January 2002) organized by the ECA with support from the UN ICT Task Force secretariat. The consultative meeting brought together over 60 representatives from governments, development agencies, donors, private sector, civil society and non-governmental organizations. The meeting ended up by setting up of an ASN, electing the Interim Steering Committee of the ASN, endorsing the role of the ECA as the Secretariat for the ASN and agreeing to develop a work plan for the Interim Steering Committee.

The fourth annual regional consultation of UN agencies working in Africa was held from 24-26 October 2002 in Addis Ababa. ECA prepared a report on the WSIS activities, the ASN and NEPAD. The meeting was attended by all the UN organizations operating in the continent. The UN Regional Agencies Working Africa mandated the ECA to be the convener and coordinator for the implementation of the ICT Cluster, the priority programme of which deals with projects on infrastructure deployment rollout facilitation.

7. Strengthening of ECA's work in promoting ICT for development in Africa and getting the commitment of member states

As a follow up to CODI 2 and in order to review ECA's work in promoting ICT for development in Africa and getting the commitment of member states, a study has been undertaken in 2002 on the status and impact of national information and communication infrastructure plans (NICI). The paper reviews progress and advances made in formulation of national ICT strategies, in the development of sectoral policies and identifies gaps in African capacities based on the works of the Economic Commission for Africa. It highlights the key challenges in promoting ICT for African development during the millennium.

There has been a heightened awareness by member states on the need to put in place an enabling policy and regulatory environment. More countries have now embarked on projects aimed at the formulation of NICI plans. These include the Central African Republic, Djibouti, Lesotho and Niger. In addition to these, countries that have launched their NICI process before September 2001 are now in the stage of finalizing either the policy or the implementation plan document.

8. Activities in the field of sensitization of policy-makers and donors

ECA, in its effort to sensitize policy-makers and donors on ICT for development issues and promote the goals of the information society, has launched an AISI outreach programme described in (4.) above. The outreach programme targets both policy-makers responsible for designing and implementing information society related policies and plans as well as donors involved in assisting the implementation of ICT plans. Donor support to ECA's work in promoting ICTs for African Development through the implementation of the AISI has continued. In addition to the traditional partners, ECA is now working with new ones since CODI II.

The Information Technology Centre for Africa (ITCA), an information and communication technology (ICT) focused exhibition and learning centre to demonstrate to African policy makers

and planners the value of ICT for development, has been involved in preparing ICT issues sensitization programmes to various stakeholders including policy-makers. It has also designed and staged web portals and exhibitions during various events.

9. The African Virtual Library Network (AVLIN)

The specific recommendations made at CODI2 regarding AVLIN were:

- “A Steering committee should be set up immediately to drive the process of its development and implementation;
- ECA should provide the seed money for the immediate take-off of the project;
- During the first phase of AVLIN, efforts should be made to identify and coordinate related activities being undertaken on the continent to avoid duplication of efforts and resources;
- AVLIN should be a sustainable project and therefore it should not depend entirely on donor funding. Participating libraries should, as much as possible, be supported with national and institutional budgets for their AVLIN related activities;
- Participation in AVLIN should be on a voluntary basis and institutions intending to join AVLIN will be expected to meet basic requirements that will be formulated later;
- AVLIN should lay emphasis on the development of relevant professional competencies as its success will depend on the technical and managerial capacities of information professionals in the participating institutions;
- ECA should initiate knowledge management activities to leverage the knowledge assets of the institution and serve as a training ground for African institutions;
- AVLIN project activities need to commence with capacity building in the field of knowledge management through appropriate awareness raising, training, policy analysis and advocacy, and development of institutional projects; and
- Implementation of AVLIN should be regarded as an integral part of the infrastructure for enhancing access to development information available on the continent and elsewhere.”

Actions already taken are:

- Last year, a number of university and research libraries in Africa were surveyed by ECA in order to determine institutional capacity and availability of requisite information and knowledge infrastructures at potential AVLIN sites. Findings of this survey will help to avoid duplication of efforts and resources of similar activities in the region.
- Since CODI.2, ECA has started putting in place a Knowledge Management strategy as part of its wider institutional strengthening programme. Early indications show that the initiative will benefit AVLIN.
- Members of the AVLIN Advisory Committee (AAC) have been appointed based on expertise; gender; linguistic and geographic representation. The draft terms of reference have been prepared and will be reviewed during the inaugural meeting of AAC.
- Guidelines for AVLIN membership have been drafted and will be endorsed by AAC during its first meeting.
- Efforts have been made to promote awareness of AVLIN among several potential stakeholders and participating institutions, for example the presentation of a paper: to the 68th IFLA Council and General Conference, Glasgow, August 2002; preparation and dissemination of *AVLIN in brief*; and the design of the AVLIN web-site.

- On the fundraising side, the ECA has provided seed money to kick-start the operations of AVLIN, and a business plan has been prepared in readiness to seek funds and support from interested donors and partners.
- The organization of a Technical workshop on digital libraries and electronic information is planned for May 2003 for some 40-50 participants from major African libraries. This will be the first in a series of workshops/seminars intended to enhance professional competencies at participating institutions.

The future development of AVLIN will depend very much on support from development organizations and active collaboration from participating institutions. Participating institutions should have the appropriate capacities in terms of institutional commitment, human resources, equipment, and other physical resources in order to contribute and benefit from participation in the activities of AVLIN.

The second meeting of the Sub-committee on Geoinformation of the Committee on Development Information was held from 4 to 7 September 2001. It considered the following issues:

1. Country and regional reports on progress made.
2. Policy issues with special attention to (i) the future of GI activities in Africa; (ii) a geographic data facility for Africa; and (iii) matters related to the economics of Geoinformation
3. Technical issues with special attention to new trends and developments, in particular the establishment of Spatial Data Infrastructures (SDIs)
4. Case studies where examples of GI development and applications in Cote d'Ivoire and Ethiopia were presented and discussed. The meeting also received a presentation on the African-German cooperation in the context of GI.

Major recommendations made were on policy issues, on infrastructure and on capacity building, as follows:

1. On policy:

Mechanisms to be immediately set in motion by African countries to develop the national GI policy as an integral part of the National Information and Communication Policies; they should follow, properly adapted, the model policy guidelines presented by ECA Ad-Hoc Group of Experts' position paper on the "future orientation of GI in Africa".

2. On infrastructure

Priority be given to establish National Spatial Data Infrastructures (NSDIs) with all the necessary components (standards, metadata, clearing house, national database).

For regional applications, a Regional Spatial Data Infrastructure (RSDI) be established with an African Regional Database as a component, based on a unified African Reference System;

A permanent committee on Spatial Data Infrastructure for Africa be established to:

- promote the coordinated establishment of SDIs in African countries,
- facilitate the establishment of RSDI and the African Regional Database.

3. On capacity building

Educational and training institutions must be encouraged to modernize their curricula to keep pace with modern technology and SDI issues; the curricula should be modular, to give room for short term training and retraining, and where possible, web-based distance learning should be introduced;

An African network of GI education be established to coordinate the standardization of GI education and training programmes and share resources;

ECA's activities in response to the recommendations made:

The implementation of the work programme was geared to promote and facilitate the realization of the above issues. The activities focused on three fronts: (i) capacity-building in modern Geoinformation resources management and applications, in particular NSDIs; (ii) policy advocacy for geo-spatial information; and (iii) developing an in-house facility that would make possible the search and discovery of spatial data collections on Africa for use by all researchers and decision-makers, and that would provide member States with means to publicize their spatial data holdings. It has further fortified its partnership and networking with international, regional and national initiatives and institutions involved in the advancement of GI in Africa.

Modalities of implementation were conducted through conferences, seminars and workshops; studies on policy and technical matters; information dissemination; advisory services; and international cooperation and partnership. They are summarized below:

Capacity building and advisory services seminars and workshops

The secretariat co-organized, supported and participated in various seminars and workshops, in several countries of Africa, in different capacities, addressing advocacy, and policy, technical and institutional issues of SDIs, AFREF, and spatial access policies. (2 in Kenya, Eritrea, Zambia, South Africa, Namibia, Ethiopia, Botswana, Nigeria).

The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigerian, through the National Space Research and Development Agency (NASRDA) requested ECA to review proposals it had received for an Integrated Resource Management and National Geographic Information System (IRM/NAGIS). ECA reviewed the projects documents and made appropriate recommendations. The advisory service also included planning of a stakeholders' workshop on NGDI, which was held in February 2003.

The secretariat co-organized – jointly with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (OOSA) – and hosted from 1 to 5 July 2002 a United Nations Regional Workshop on the Use of Space Technology for Disaster Management for Africa. It.

International cooperation and liaison

In this context, ECA liaised with and supported a number of relevant initiatives valuable to Geoinformation advancement in the continent.

It is an active member of the UN Geographic Information Working Group (UNGWIG), whose main objective is to establish a UN geographic database to support the operations of the UN at various levels. This database would also serve the development of the African geo-spatial database recommended by CODI.2. One of the projects under this database initiative is the creation of

digital datasets of the Second Order Administrative Boundaries (SALB) and ECA has the task of editing and harmonizing those of African countries.

The Commission has accorded great importance to the Inter-agency annual meetings on Outer Space Activities, to which it always reported and participated. Its participation in 2002 was instrumental for the joint organization of the UN Regional workshop on space-based technologies, mentioned earlier.

ECA also became an active member of the African Environmental Information Network (AEIN) under the purview of UNEP. Its main objective is to establish the essential data foundation and information management framework needed to support country-level integrated environmental assessments and reporting. The Commission participated in the two stakeholders forums (2002 and 2003), where it was made clear that AEIN possesses close similarities to NSDIs and RSDIs and care should be taken to build close links and synergies between AEIN and existing information structures and networks.

During the period under purview, the secretariat continued to liaise with the Regional Centre for Training in Aerospace Surveys (RECTAS) and Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD), as well as with the African Organization for Cartography and Remote Sensing (AOCRS), to mutually support activities of common interest and explore new ways of cooperation.

Technical studies and publications.

The secretariat is engaged in compiling an African SDI implementation guide as a major step in responding to the recommendations of CODI.2 and of other regional and sub regional forums which have made appeal for the establishment of national spatial data infrastructures. This publication is a cooperative effort of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Association (GSDI) and EIS-Africa, with the collaboration of the International Institute for Geoinformation Science and Earth Observation (ITC). It is targeted to all those that have a key role to play in promoting, adopting, developing or implementing spatial information infrastructure in their home countries. These include administrators and managers of topographic and resource mapping departments and agencies, legislators and policy-makers, and major users of Geoinformation products.

Databases and technical material for outside users

With the financial support of the Government of Korea, the Development Information Services Division is setting up a standard-based Geo-information clearinghouse gateway, with the main objective to deliver geoinformation tools, techniques and products to member States. The project will facilitate the search and discovery of spatial data collections on Africa, including those held outside Africa, for use by all researchers and decision-makers working on issues related to the continent.

The project offers the following direct benefits to member States: (i) enables them to publicize their data holdings through ECA's clearing house node; (ii) provides "country spaces" on ECA's server for countries that do not have the capability to serve their metadata collections. While ECA will provide general maintenance, the country will own and administer their metadata as a separate database; (iii) provides advice and training on metadata tools and clearinghouse services, (iv) assist in organizing training and awareness workshops at regional, sub-regional and national levels; and (v) provides easy access to catalogues of data on Africa. ECA worked closely with the

implementers of the Ethiopian Natural Resources and Environmental Meta-Database (ENRAEMED) during the development of the metadata software and has reached an agreement with the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to host the meta-database, under the country space programme.

All member States that are interested in benefiting from this project are invited to get in touch with the Development Information Services Division, Geoinformation Team.