

ICT Best Practices Forum

Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

7-9 June 2007

Draft Ouagadougou Declaration

More than 350 participants, including three Heads of State, Ministers, Heads of IT Agencies of 17 African countries, International Financial Institutions: the World Bank, the African Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); bilateral donors: the European Union, JICA, SIDA; international Organisations: the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Union Commission, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU); Regional Economic Communities (RECs): ECOWAS and UEMOA; as well as local and international private sector, Academia, Media, Youth, Women and Civil Organisations met in Ougadougou, Burkina-Faso from the 7th to 9th of May 2007 to discuss strategies and practical solutions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector institutions through the use of information and communications technologies to create the enabling environment for Africa to increase its competitiveness. The forum provided a practical platform for high-level officials from different regions of Africa and other developing countries to share their experiences and demonstrate examples of successful use of information and communications technology solutions in their respective countries. The Forum was organised jointly by Microsoft Africa, the Government of Burkina Faso, the African Development Bank and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

At the end of three days of deliberations the following were agreed upon:

1. The Forum Recognized:

- The importance of 'good governance' to promote sustainable development as highlighted by various international debates and declarations , mainly *United Nations Millennium Declaration*.
- That good governance is needed for equity, poverty alleviation and enhancement of the quality of life of all the citizens. It promotes democratic principles like justice and honesty and this is an important element in the developmental process.
- That Access to information is essential to the health of democracy and to the consolidation of the process of democracy it ensures the citizens are responsible, and make informed choice.
- That a sizeable portion of the society does not have access to information or do not have the skills to use ICT effectively.
- That e-government, which holds huge prospects to make governments efficient, responsive, transparent and legitimate, is a technical, economical and social and legal challenge.

2. Recalling

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Declaration and Action Plan, the Tunis Commitment and the African Information Society Initiative (AISI) which recommended the need for governments to implement e-government systems to facilitate their administrative activities and service delivery to their citizens.

Acknowledged;

- That many initiatives are already in progress in various countries. The key is to learn from these and design best practices that are affordable and likely to be replicated nationwide to improve on the life of our citizens.
- That successful e-governance Policy formulation and implementation have demonstrable and tangible impact on improving the participation of citizens in governance, the democratic process as well as on the quality of life of citizens.

3. The Forum recommended that:

African governments:

- Develop appropriate e-governance policy and strategies, supported by legislation for e-governance that are linked to strategic development objectives of countries and National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI) Policies.
- In conjunction with the private sector and civil society, should develop sustainable strategies for ensuring that all citizens can reap the potential benefits of e-government by ensuring that public information and services remain accessible to all.
- Support start-up initiatives implementing e-governance solutions through appropriate incentives.
- Enact specific procurement law to promote e-government systems.
- In partnership with the private sector, put in place innovative and affordable broadband security infrastructures, as well as technical hardware, software and associated reception facilities with easy access to all ICT infrastructures.
- In collaboration with the private sector and academic institutions, provide financial incentives for innovative ICT applications which add value to social and economic development in Africa.

Regional and International Development Organisations:

- Develop and adopt international core list of e-governance indicators with data collection methodology and analysis.

- In collaboration with Regional Economic Communities at sub-regional level, support the development of an ICT Best Practices portal and the establishment of an e-government observatory.
- Act as facilitators in the exchange of Best Practices between countries as well as at sub-regional level.
- Base their overall support to e-governance initiatives on partner countries' national development strategies.
- The 'Technology in Government Award' (TIGA) is an important African initiative which should be continued and further supported. ECA and other partners such as ADB, Microsoft and CEPRC should be involved in supporting and financing such initiatives and best practices and ensure sustainability.

Other stakeholders

- Full involvement of women in the operationalization of all aspects of e-governance taking into account organizational culture, structures and processes that may conflict with women's empowerment goals. E-market portals should be developed to support SME and women entrepreneurs.
- The active participation of the youth in e-governance decision-making processes in Africa and in the African Union Institutions. Young entrepreneurs should be encouraged to develop innovative applications to solve social and economic problems of the citizens with regard to the delivery of public services, based on sustainable economic models.
- Civil society should bring their perspectives in promoting equity, transparency and participation goals. They should and must continue to play a major role in development. They must continue to bring knowledge, experience and grass roots organization support required to integrate ICT into existing and planned projects to ensure innovative use of ICT.

4. Participants in the Forum:

- Wish to thank most sincerely the Government of Burkina Faso for accepting to host this Meeting.
- Thank partners who organized this Forum, particularly Microsoft, ADB, ECA.
- Request that the conclusions of this forum be submitted by the Government of Burkina Faso to top level bodies of RECs and African Union.

Adopted in Ouagadougou on 9 June 2007

The Forum