

**REPORT ON A 2-DAY ROUNDTABLE CONFERENCE
ORGANIZED BY
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS
TO DISCUSS A DOCUMENT
"THE ICTs, TRADE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH STUDY"**

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1.0

INTRODUCTION

The Ghana Roundtable Conference was the fourth in the series of Roundtable on ICT, Trade and Economic Growth conferences being piloted in six African countries namely Ghana, Egypt, Kenya, Ethiopia, Senegal and South Africa. The idea was mooted at a forum hosted by the ECA, under the auspices of the Africa Node of the ePol-NET + CePRC in March 2006. Subsequently a meeting of Experts on ICTs, Trade and Economic Growth was held from 29 – 31 May 2006 as a follow up to the Forum that led to the launching of the country studies on ICTs, Trade and Economic Growth.

The Ghana Conference was organized to discuss the report titled “ **the ICTs, Trade and Economic Growth Study: The Ghana Report**” prepared by the Ghana Country Research Team. In all 46 participants from the Ministries, Departments and Agencies and the Private Sector attended the roundtable conference. The Deputy Ministers of Communications and Trade, Industry, Private Sector Development & President’s Special Initiative gave their remarks during the opening session. Prof. Clement Dzidonu, Fellow of the International Institute of Information Technology and the Chairperson, African Technical Advisory Committee (ATAC) to the African Information Society Initiative (AISI), chaired the two-day Roundtable Conference.

The main report on the study contains the recommendations resulting from the major presentations by the Ghana Country Research Team as well as by the two breakout sessions and the discussions that followed during the Plenary Session. For clarity the report has been serialized chapter-by-chapter according to the set pattern of the presentations. However, the recommendations are those not contained in the Ghana Country Report but are of interest to using ICT to facilitate trade.

The report, which is divided into three chapters, contains recommendations and comments made after the presentations by the country team and the various breakout sessions and the discussions that followed during the Plenary Session.

CHAPTER I

Section 1: Welcome Remarks by Prof. Clement Dzidonu

Section 2: Opening Statement by Mr. Afework Temtime, ECA

Section 3: Opening Statement by Mr. Frederic Nolin from Industry Canada

Section 4: Opening Statement by Hon. Deputy Minister of Communications: Dr. Benjamin Aggrey Ntim

Section 5: Statement by Hon. Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry, PSD and PSI: Kwadwo Afram Asiedu

Section 6: Overview of the ICT, Trade and Economic Growth Forum by Mr. Afewerk Temtime

CHAPTER II

Presentation on ICTs, Trade and Economic Growth Study: The Ghana Report

Part 1: Supporting Ghana's Trade with ICTs. Issues and Options

Part 2: Assessing the National Capacity to utilize ICT services to facilitate Trade & Economic Development

CHAPTER III BREAKOUT SESSION

Breakout Session 1: The role of ICT and trade in Ghana's growth strategy (Economic impacts of ICT)

Breakout Session 2: Readiness of Ghanaian Enterprises for e-business and ICT facilitated trade with focus on SMEs

Proposals

Next Steps

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Concluding Remarks

List of Participants

2.0

CHAPTER I

2.1 Welcome Remarks by Professor Clement Dzidonu

In his brief opening remarks, Prof. Clement Dzidonu welcomed participants to the 2-day Ghana Roundtable Conference being hosted by the Ministries of Communications and Trade, Industry, Private Sector Development & PSI to discuss the findings of the ICTs, Trade and Economic Growth Study: The Ghana Report. He then requested Mr Afework the ECA representative to give his opening statement.

2.2 Opening Statement by Mr. Afework Temtime, ECA

On his part, he thanked the Ministry of Communications for collaborating with ECA in this very important exercise whose output is aimed at reviewing the status, challenges and opportunities of the application and utilization of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in trade and economic growth in Ghana.

He said that organizing this very important event demonstrates Ghana's commitment in promoting the Information Society, and indicated that this Roundtable marks a great beginning to a number of exciting tasks ahead of us.

He mentioned that with support from partners such as the Governments of Canada and Finland, ECA has been working very closely with the Government of Ghana in the implementation of ICT for Accelerated Development Programmes. He added that they are committed to continuing this partnership, as demonstrated in their cooperation in implementing the ICTs, Trade and Economic Growth study.

He further indicated that ECA, with support from Industry Canada through the Canadian ePolicy Resource Center (CePRC), is implementing the Africa

node of the ePolicy Resource Network (ePol-NET), which will provide African policy makers with development assistance services and information products and services.

He concluded that, it was ECA's hope that this Roundtable will result in a better stakeholders' understanding of the status, challenges, and opportunities of ICTs, Trade and Economic Growth in Ghana and provide valuable inputs to improving and developing the country study

2.3 Opening Statement by Mr. Frederic Nolin

He thanked the Government of Ghana and all the organizations that have contributed to the organization of this event.

He indicated that ICTs are rapidly evolving worldwide and are becoming big social and economic factors that need to be embraced. He said it is in this regard that the Government of Canada through the Canadian center for Cyber Policy and the Economic Commission for Africa are supporting both the study and roundtable.

He mentioned that the discussions would be beneficial and provide concrete results that will move the process of developing an innovative ICT economy in Ghana. He also stated that outcomes of activities such as the roundtable would help in defining future Canadian funding to support ICT4D activities in Africa.

2.4 Opening Statement by Hon. Deputy Minister of Communications: Dr. Benjamin Aggrey Ntim

In his opening statement, the Hon. Deputy Minister mentioned that UNECA sponsored a study to assess the use of ICTs to facilitate Domestic and International trade and stated the goal as to assess Ghana's ICT and trade policy environment and as well as demonstrate the potential for economic benefits of ICT utilization in the enhancement of trade to promote growth and economic development.

According to him, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has increasingly become a powerful tool for promoting development in the global market and ICTs have redefined the way various activities are carried out at national, regional and international levels.

He further submitted that the digital economy is radically changing international trade, affecting business practices and introducing new business intermediaries, leading to an emerging e-trade environment.

It is in this regard that government is committed to taking advantage of the opportunities it will offer the country in the socio-economic development.

He said in the developing world and in particularly Ghana, e-Trade can offer new opportunities to export-oriented companies, especially Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as a result, be strategically repositioned in the international marketplace.

He intimated that establishing a favourable e-trade environment will greatly facilitate activities by enhancing trade efficiency and facilitating the integration of African countries into the global economy.

He stressed that a number of initiatives need to be undertaken by Ghana to fully benefit from the positive impacts of e-Trade. An important component is ICT policy support geared towards creating the appropriate enabling environment for e-Trade to flourish, as well as other activities such as capacity building and research in pilot initiatives to support the process.

He mentioned that the commitment of Government to improve upon ICT/Telecom deployment in Ghana is indicated by the rapid growth

achieved within the telecom sector within the past 5 years following the development of pro-investment policy blueprints.

In this regard, to promote a wider penetration of ICT services, the Ministry of Communications is facilitating the transformation of Voltacom's Fibre Optic assets into a national Communications Backbone Infrastructure network to provide open access broadband connectivity nationwide.

2.5 Statement by Hon. Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry, PSD and PSI: Kwadwo Affram Asiedu

The Hon. Deputy Minister acknowledged that technology has become so pervasive that it is becoming increasingly difficult for companies to compete effectively in the world market without adequate ICT infrastructure.

He mentioned that the Internet has provided the platform for the development of e-commerce, which has a lot of potential for companies that engage in international trade in terms of:

- Easy entry into regional and global markets
- Reduction of transaction costs in relation to distance as compared with traditional marketing channels
- Removal of intermediaries as companies can establish one-on-one on-line trading relationships
- Faster, more convenient and costing-saving advertisement and information sourcing on goods and services

He emphasized that the Internet has the potential of improving customer-management relationship and enables firms to customize their services to meet specific needs of their clients.

He asked the following questions:

- To what extent are Ghanaian and African enterprises utilizing the potential of ICTs to enhance their competitiveness in both domestic and international markets?
- What are the challenges businesses have to confront to ensure better utilization of ICT services?

He intimated that ICT has transformed the way we interact with each other and share knowledge but we have not taken full advantage of the massive opportunity it presents. He then appealed to the private sector to

partner with Government to develop ICT to drive trade and development of the economy.

2.6 Overview of the ICT, Trade and Economic Growth Forum by Mr. Afework Temtime

Mr. Afework Temtime, Information Officer, ICT and Science and Technology Division of the Economic Commission for Africa gave an overview of the ICTs, Trade and Economic Growth Initiative.

The Forum on ICTs, Trade and Economic Growth

- Hosted by the ECA, under the auspices of the Africa Node of the ePol-NET + CePRC from 14-16 March 2006
- Supported by:
 - The Canada Fund for Africa
 - Industry Canada
 - Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)
 - the Swiss Development Cooperation
 - Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)
- Assessed the significance of ICTs, trade and economic growth on African countries with case studies
- Addressed five important issues
- A National Forum on e-Payment
- Served to launch the African ICTs, Trade and Economic Growth Initiative

Issue 1: The International e-Environment: Global Economic Trends

- Focus: the economic dimensions of international e-trade
- Question of e-trade in goods and services
- Global trends

- Significance in the African context
- Globalization and International Trade
- Need for better management of globalization to position e-Trade within the broader context of economic development, socio-economic culture and growth
- The telecom sector in the global context
- Need to address the limitations ICT infrastructure
- African Perspectives on Globalization: Focus on International Trade

Issue 2: The International e-environment: Trade policy trends and issues

- **Focus: international trade and policy issues in e-commerce**
 - Insight on the current Global e-Trade from international trade experts
 - Analysis of global trends in trade
 - Impacts of the electronic environment
 - Assessment of implications for African countries
- **Global e-trade environment: implications for global e-policy**
 - Need for enabling environment
 - Policies on skills development
 - Transforming businesses into innovative ones
- **The impact of ICTs on economic growth and trade**
 - ICT policy review framework for the information economy
- **African Perspective on Policy Trends and Issues**
 - Increased African participation in multilateral trade negotiations
 - Gender, Trade and the Role of ICTs and need for gender mainstreaming in ICTs for economic growth

Issue 3: Enabling Environment

- **Legal and regulatory telecom environment**
 - Security of networks
 - Authentication and certification issues
 - Skills/capacity building, including facilitation, awareness raising and skills upgrading
- **Assessment of the threats and opportunities for Africa**
- **Legal and regulatory environment for Electronic Trade**
- **IPV6, with perspectives for e-trading**
- **Emerging issues in the e-trade environment**
- **Success stories of e-trade initiatives in Africa**

Issue 4: Network, Security, Trust and Confidence

- Global perspectives of security of networks and applications African perspectives on e-security
 - Lack of security planning and legislation on cyber-security
- The Status of African Infrastructure
- Authentication and Certification
 - Standards and policies for certification authorities to ensure a high level of trust
- Opportunities and challenges of e-finance in the WAMI sub-region
 - Financial reform and the introduction of common e-payment systems have helped the region achieve automatic transactions
 - Greater security, and better e-collaboration between WAMI banks at the national level

Issue 5: Enabling Environment: ICT Skills/Capacity-Building

- African governments should put in place programmes to develop the human resources to allow SMMEs to pursue e-business initiatives
- ICT education and e-trade

- ❑ SME “skills” development process
- ❑ E-Trade and Youth Development
- ❑ Open Source Software and Trade
- ❑ Enterprise Development Facility and Capacity Building for African Women Entrepreneurs
- ❑ Community Capacity Building

National Forum: E-Payment in Ethiopia

- ❑ E-Payment: challenges and opportunities in Ethiopia
- ❑ Academia and ICTs – R&D
- ❑ The Experience of Genuine Leather Craft PLC
- ❑ Challenges:
 - Lack of regulatory or legislative framework in place for e-commerce and e-payment
 - Need for e-business and skills development to be supported in the ICT curricula
 - Need for improved export procedures
 - Need for reduced ICT costs
 - Need for shared registration costs

Recommendations of the Forum

- ❑ **Policy, legal and regulatory framework**
 - a long term vision to accelerate trade and economic growth through the use of ICTs;
 - Create an enabling environment that will result in full-fledged e-business
 - Define regional policies on e-Commerce
 - Strengthen and harmonize institutional and legal frameworks

- **Assessing policy readiness**
 - Measuring ICTs for development should be seen as an integral component of the policy formulation process
 - Need for a multi-stakeholder approach in developing ICTs, Trade and Economic Growth activities

- **Ensuring e-Security**
 - African Union and the RECs to coordinate and promote regional initiatives in order to build a trusted and harmonized e-Commerce space in Africa to boost economic growth
 - Incorporate national information security plan to ICT strategies
 - Need to include cyber crime prevention and fighting in national laws

- **Skills development**
 - Governments and the private sector to strength their partnership in providing enabling environment conducive to continuous awareness raising and capacity development on the benefits of e-commerce
 - Need to promote national, sectoral and sub-regional capacity
 - Build policies on the e-Economy

- Support for the network of women entrepreneurs to make better use of ICT skills in business

He summed up with details of the main activities to be undertaken by the six pilot countries as:

- Undertaking a policy review process of existing documents
- Analysing gaps in the legal and regulatory frameworks of the selected countries
- Assessing trade facilitation processes
- Assessing the capacity of the private sector with particular attention to SMMEs (export category) to engage in ICTs in trade opportunities – (including knowledge, skill and access to capital)
- Identifying key target areas and sectors for focus to demonstrate that ICTs can support trade facilitation, improve competitiveness and harness economic growth
- Developing mechanisms for evaluating or measuring ICT in trade and where possible, evaluating the impact

CHAPTER II

3.0 PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY – ICTS, TRADE AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN GHANA

3.1 Part 1: Supporting Ghana's Trade with ICTs. Issues and Options

This section covers the presentation of Mr. Kofi Larbi of the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Private Sector Development and President's Special Initiative on the Ghana Country Report.

The presenter indicated that the current rapid global developments spurred on by the process of globalization continue to alter the context of international economic relations and that one of the major drivers of globalization is Technology.

He mentioned that in February 2004, Ghana launched a new Trade Policy that addresses all aspects of trade and mindful of Private Sector as the engine of growth.

He stated that the Trade Sector Support Programme (TSSP) is a 5-year programme, aimed at facilitating improvement in the economic regulation of business as well as enhancing Ghana's competitiveness in international and domestic markets.

With regards to industrial policy he said the process of formulating a new industrial policy based on previous policy documents, the changing global economic environment and best practices has been initiated and that the new policy will be anchored on export-led and domestic-led industrialisation.

On environmental policy, he said it was essentially to achieve a balance between economic activity and natural resource conservation ie sustainable development.

The presenter mentioned that the issue of competition received official attention since 1992 to address unfair and monopolistic practices.

He further mentioned that there are two institutions that administer intellectual property issues in Ghana. These are the Registrar-Generals Department and the Copyright Administration.

He intimated that the Industrial Property is administered by the Registrar Generals Department, and the Copyright office oversees issues relating to Copyright.

He said commercial imports are subject to Destination Inspection Scheme, which was introduced in 2000 to bring it in line with the WTO Customs Valuation Agreement.

With regards to tax regime he said Ghana's current import tariff structure consists of four ad valorem. He however indicated that in order to encourage the use of ICT for socio-economic development the import duty on ICT equipment has been reduced to zero.

Under the vat policy reform he said ICT as a broad area has no specific provision granted but added that depending on the nature of the ICT equipment, some exemptions are granted if they are related to communications.

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Under the vat policy reform he said ICT as a broad area has no specific provision granted but added that depending on the nature of the ICT equipment, some exemptions are granted if they are related to communications.

In respect of legal and regulatory environment, he indicated that the main law governing trade in Ghana is the Export and Import Act, 1995 Act 503 and that the Act categories exports into two; traditional and non-traditional

On the assessment of Ghana's readiness to promote trade and economic growth through ICTs he said the study aimed at **Identifying SMEs needs with respect to ICT, Assessing their capacity in terms of ICT usage and Encouraging SMEs to take advantage of ICT in expanding their trade opportunities.**

3.2 Part 2: Assessing the National Capacity to utilize ICT services to facilitate Trade & Economic Development

The second presentation was made by Dr. Frempong and in his submission, mentioned that ICT can be considered in two categories namely: as a sector that can be traded and as an enabler. He mentioned that Ghana's ICT for Accelerated Development dealt with the dual role.

On Ghana's e-readiness, the presenter mentioned the assessment of services to facilitate ICT in trade and said Business Processing Outsourcing are providing new ways of doing business and intimated that it is a strategic market that Ghana can take advantage of.

He further indicated that business portals are a source of business opportunities for the local people to invest in. Other services such as e-trade information and business advisory services, e-tax information and compliance services, e-customs services were mentioned as areas that could be developed to support trade in Ghana.

Under the legal and regulatory environment he said the overarching objective of the National Communications Act is to regulate communications by wire, cable, radio, television, satellite and similar means of technology for the orderly development and operation of efficient communications services in Ghana and to provide for related purposes.

On the part of the National Media Commission, it was indicated that the Act gave the Commission the mandate to promote and ensure the freedom and independence of the media for mass communication or information; take all appropriate measures including the investigation, mediation and settlement of complaints made against or by the press or other mass media to ensure the establishment and maintenance of the highest journalistic standards in the mass media and insulate the state-owned media from governmental control.

With regards to the National ICT For Accelerated Development Policy, he said the objective is aimed at facilitating an ICT-led socio-economic development process with the potential of transforming Ghana into a middle income, information-rich, knowledge-based and technology driven economy and society. In addition, the strategic focus of the policy is to simultaneously target the development of the ICT sector and industry as well as use ICT as a driver of developmental goals.

He also indicated that the Ghana ICT4D policy identified 14 priorities, which it dubbed as 14 Pillars.

He said the Ghana ICT4D Policy addresses a number of issues which could help the development of ICT as a sector - to trade in ICT goods and services and that these measures form part of the 14 Priority Focus Areas

The presenter, enumerated some areas that ICT could be developed as a sector as:

- Facilitating the development of the Private Sector
- Developing globally competitive export-oriented value added services and regional business service and ICT Hub
- Developing an export-oriented ICT products and services Industry

He indicated that the measurement of the impact of ICT on trade is critical and said this measure of ICT in development including trade has featured prominently in many international discourses on ICT contributions to economic development

Recommendations

The following were suggested to complement the Ghana Country Research Team recommendations.

- ❑ There is the need for a competition policy to be place to ensure a healthy market
- ❑ It was suggested that as much as possible the tax regime should have some checks and balance
- ❑ There is the need for WTO to have a second look at the General Agreement on Telecommunications services
- ❑ It was recommended that ICT companies should determine what constitute ICT equipment
- ❑ There was the need to reorganize the recommendations and themes in the two major presentations

- ❑ There is the need to know how many professionals do we need especially programmers
- ❑ Need for dissemination of information on programmes, incentives
- ❑ Need to address the high entry cost of Business Process Outsourcing
- ❑ There is the need for special incentives for ICT companies
- ❑ Need to utilize every available data/information in this era of knowledge economy
- ❑ Need to have interoperability
- ❑ There is the need to develop skills and build capacity
- ❑ The issue of gender should be incorporated into the report

3.3 Post-Presentation Comments

Participants:

On the report the query was raised as to if Ministry of Trade, Industry, PSD & PSI's ICT Policy document was taken into account during the study. Similarly the issue came up that the Gender dimension component was reflected in the report. In addition, clarification was sought on the following:

- ✓ How are all these trade policies linked up and how it comes to bear on the use of ICT?
- ✓ What contributions have the legal and environmental laws made to the promotion of trade?
- ✓ Who is a software developer?
- ✓ How do we intend to ensure ICT is not considered as an auxiliary?
- ✓ When was the report written?
- ✓ Where will the consultants place the high entry cost of business process outsourcing in Ghana?

- ✓ How are the 14 pillars being addressed?
- ✓ No strategy on Education?

With regards to a competition policy, it was noted that the policy was not being enforced and that to create a healthy market for the Internet Service Providers there is the need for a competition policy to be in place.

It was noted that the tax regime lacked clear processes and was therefore suggested that some checks and balances need to be incorporated.

The question was also asked as to why the Immigration forms filled at the airport cannot be used by the Ministry of Trade. It was then indicated that in a knowledge economy, information should not only be used by Immigration but that other organizations could make use of it.

On the issue of redundancy, it was noted that there is no extra fibre apart from the SAT 3 being operated by Ghana Telecom. It was therefore suggested that there is the need to have additional cables should the SAT 3 break down.

There was concern that too many agencies acted as investment promotion centres and that it does not augur well for trade. It was suggested that there is the need for effective coordination.

CHAPTER III

4.0 BREAKOUT SESSION

4.1 Breakout Session 1: The role of ICT and trade in Ghana's growth strategy (Economic impacts of ICT)

Participants in breakout session 1 dealt with "The role of ICT to enhance trade in Ghana's growth strategy" [i.e Economic impacts of ICT]

The group noted that ICT obviously is a key element in the enhancement of every business today and that there is virtually no business sector that is not directly or indirectly affected by ICT. They acknowledged that from the market woman to the top executive officer's business, ICT plays a vital role in their business transaction be it in the production level in the case of the market woman in her produce/ware by farmers or whoever her suppliers are will make use of some form of ICT technology.

The participants further indicated that ICT can effectively improve a business input/output when current information especially in dealing with international business partners can be accessed at a timely and critical time line; without this it will be difficult to compete successfully both on the international and local markets.

Opportunities:

During the plenary discussion, it noted that another opportunity that can be exploited is agriculture which can be enhanced in the marketing, production and sales area by using automated harvesting machinery, and irrigation aided devices such as the "drip-irrigation" methodology. In the area of marketing a web based marketing facility such as the tradebase.net can be utilized among others which government can support the ICT industry to develop and research into creative ways in which ICT can be further used to enhance the agriculture sector of this country.

Recommendations

It is recommended also that the focus of marketing should not concentrate solely on the international market alone, but also the promotion of the local market via the use of ICT should be encouraged by making sure that required information is easily and readily available to the

customer and client to facilitate trade and cut down on travel expenses by both the manufacturers and clients by the use of ICT related technology to enhance trade.

It was suggested that the handicraft sector should employ the use of ICT to help in better finishing of their products. The use of scanning devices can also enhance trade between a carver and off-production site customer to still be able to do business by having scans of the interested objects sent to him via electronic mail for his supervision and recommendation before consignments are shipped to avoid frequent rejection of exported goods by the clients; minimizing cost of production, delays and losses to the manufacturers.

Policy and implementation:

The participants also discussed the issue of Policy and Implementation gaps.

There was a general consensus that clearance procedures encounter considerable delays and incompetence; this seem to be one great hindrance to the facilitation of ICT products being imported into the country since the cost of production is extremely high on most ICT equipments currently.

In this regard, participants indicated that ICT companies will continue to rely heavily on imports until such trend is reversed when components needed for the manufacturer of computers like Processors, memory modules, related adapter cards, monitors, etc can be obtained/produced locally. It was further noted that until then importing is the best cost effective solution.

Recommendations

There was agreement that custom officials should be advised to remove the act of delaying "unnecessarily" custom procedures with ICT equipments.

It is further recommended that Government set up a committee or agency that can seek prompt redress for ICT investors who have problems with custom irregularities.

It is also petitioned that licensing for the installation of ICT communication devices should be reviewed to encourage investors in this area.

There is the need for customs procedures to be made more ICT friendly.

Consideration should be given to local ICT investors by offering them tax holidays.

Training/Human Resource Capacity Building:

Participants agreed that clear-cut policies need to be implemented to speed up implementation of policies in the ICT sector. It was agreed and wholly accepted that policies have been put in place, but much need to be done in the proper ***implementation*** of those policies.

Recommendations

It is therefore pleaded that government put up a team to enhance the proper implementation of its ICT policies.

The need for **policy and law** related to **Cyber Crime**.

That Driver Vehicle & Licensing Agency (DVLA), GHANA POLICE, National Health Insurance Levy/Value Added Tax and other Government agencies should be encouraged to outsource their data analysis to private ICT companies thus enhance a centralized pool of data for all the agencies, to minimize/eliminate duplication of data entry as one example.

It was suggested that ***scholarship schemes*** for re-training of ICT specialists should be implemented; including the establishment of a research fund for ICT related researches; this can be in the form of travel arrangements for ICT specialists to attain higher training or specialized training to enhance the implementation of ICT to promote economic growth in the business/trade arena of Ghana.

There is the need for human resource development in ICT to enhance the job creation market and to boost the ICT field in anticipation of producing a pool of high skilled ICT professionals.

Challenges:

- High cost of ICT setup
- Real estate availability and costing
- Human resource, training and maintenance
- Bandwidth reliability and cost
- Best practices: this includes efficient process adaptation from elsewhere.

Other comments:

Public institutions are developing standalone systems, which have become very expensive for the government. Some of these systems have the potential of being applied to other state institutions.

Therefore, there is a need for government policy to encourage the pooling of resources to establish common ICT services to be shared by other public institutions. The sharing of these facilities has the following:

1. Cost effectiveness
2. Eradication of duplication
3. Effective usage of capacity.

4.2 Breakout Session 2: Readiness of Ghanaian Enterprises for e-business and ICT facilitated trade with focus on SMEs

The breakout session 2 focused on five (5) areas ICT relates to SMEs activities. These are Production, Quality Assurance and Evaluation, Sales, Marketing, Distribution and Storage, Financing and Personnel Management.

Production

Under Production the group considered the starting and finishing processes and indicated that the production of pineapples for instance

involves a lot of time. They agreed that as perishable commodity, the use of ICT is very valuable in saving time.

Recommendation

ICT can be used tremendously in pre-production process, which leads to sales and marketing.

Quality Assurance and Evaluation

It was made clear that using ICT can facilitate the acidity and sugar level of pineapple and that of market research thus leading to effective quality assurance and evaluation.

Sales, Marketing, Distribution and Storage

Here again the group gave the experience of a cheese factory in Netherlands where ICT was used to record the temperature for production in which all information was placed on a server and accessed through front-end software. It was further noted that Ghana lacks a national quality assurance benchmarks to motivate the industry.

Recommendations

There is the need to develop standards to test and evaluate the quality of the software.

That there is the need for tailor made software

There is the need to move from market made or customized software to standard software.

Financing

It was indicated that accounting software is a major representative of the area that ICT plays a role and that accounting softwares are extremely very expensive.

Recommendation.

There is the need for cost-effective accounting software to assist management in generating information for tracking.

The concentration is now on open software and that this needs to be customized to make them usable.

Personnel Management

On personnel management, the group mentioned that ICTs are critical in such areas as storage of personnel records for further processing, knowledge management with respect to human resource; leave management and time management of employees.

Categories of SMEs

The categories of SMEs were also indicated as follows:

- Sole Proprietors
- Partnerships
- Limited Liabilities
- NGOs

Challenges

The challenges facing the SMEs were spelt out as:

- Access to funding
- Low management level
- Infrastructure (accessibility and reliability)
- High cost of borrowing
- Very low official support
- Start up companies
- Bureaucracy in the implementation of policies
- No lobby groups for ICT
- No commitments on policy makers
- No legal backing for the policies

Recommendations

There is the need for public awareness for ICT Pressure groups

There is also the need for strong stakeholders consultations

It was suggested that there is the need for Tax incentives with respect to ICT build up in the country

More clarity on the granting of Tax exemptions by Ministry of Finance, Internal Revenue Service and Customs Excise and Preventive Service.

There is the need to extend infrastructure services to the rural areas because

It was suggested that there is the need for more bandwidth

Ministry of Communications to ensure universal access is affordable and reliable

There is the need to encourage more public private participation for the implementation of infrastructure.

Need for trust centres and research funding

There is the need for human resource training and job creation in ICT

4.3 Proposals

The conference agreed that Ministry of Communications, ICT Companies and Ministry of Trade, Industry, PSD & PSI should consult the Ghana Investment Promotion Council about how to operationalize section 25 that relates to special incentives for ICT companies

It was also agreed that with the involvement of the Ministry of Communications, stakeholders and Trade, Industry, PSD & PSI it is important that a case be made for the determination of what exactly is ICT equipment.

The conference further acknowledged that Ghana has been taking steps to participate in e-business and that all efforts should be taken to address the challenges to enable Ghana participate in effective International and domestic e-business.

4.4 Next Steps

Report and Recommendations

National ICT Committee

Forward report to:

- Ministry of trade to study report and relate the issues to the TSSP
- National Development Planning Commission

- Executive Director of State Enterprises Commission for onward transmission to relevant stakeholders
- Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
- Ministry of Finance
- ECA by 3rd week of July 2007

Appendices

Concluding Remarks

Concluding Remarks by Mr. Frederic Nolin

In his concluding remarks, Mr. Frederic Nolin of Industry Canada indicated that he was happy for instance, that participants have come up with a list of recommendations that are practicable and that there is the need to develop an action plan for implementation.

Concluding Remarks by Mr. Afework Temtime

On his part, Mr. Afework Temtime said he was happy that after these two productive days the output and the expectations of the conference have been met. He indicated that ECA is committed in following this up and that it will not be limited to only the six piloting countries. He assured the participants at the conference of the continuous support of ECA to these activities.

He concluded by thanking the participants for their contributions as well as the chairman for the wonderful work done.

Chairman's Concluding Remarks

The chairman, Prof. Clement Dzionu also thanked participants for the commitment they demonstrated and for contributing to the fruitful deliberations. He concluded his remarks by announcing that similar conferences would be held in future and expects them to participate.

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