



Economic Commission  
for Africa



Ministry of  
Communications  
Government of Ghana



UN ICT Task Force



Canada Fund for  
Africa

## **The Africa Regional Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on Information Society**

### **“Capacity Building for Policy Makers”**

28 - 29 January 2005

#### **Introduction**

The role ICTs play for socio-economic development is regarded as being vital in today's world and it has become obvious that those countries that lack the commitment to harness ICTs will have difficulties in achieving their desired development goals. One of the constraints in the quest for bridging the 'digital divide' is the low awareness by policy makers on the role of ICTs as development engines.

It has now become evident that Africa cannot simply ignore to embrace the opportunities provided by ICTs to harness its development. To a large extent, the future of African countries in the global economy depends on how they respond to this phenomenon. As many experts on Africa have emphasized, if Africa does not join the global information infrastructure, its economic marginalization will even be more severe in the present century than it was in the last. Lagging behind in information technology will cause another vicious cycle of increasing economic inequality.

In order to effectively harness the immense potential of ICT to boost development programmes and activities, there must exist a national capacity in African countries in the areas of policy making related to ICT for development, as well as capacity to participate in and contribute to international policy-making bodies and processes in a meaningful, effective and systematic manner.

ECA has been supporting several member States in developing comprehensive and sustainable national ICT policies and strategies that are effectively integrated into the overall national development programmes and strategies of the member States. Through the process, ECA has learned of the existence of an urgent and pressing need for a focused, comprehensive and sustained programme of awareness raising, capacity building and training in ICT policymaking, harnessing the development potential of ICT and familiarization with the range of available ICT tools. Without such a programme in place, all initiatives and programmes aimed at bringing the digital divide and, in particular, ensuring meaningful participation of African countries in global decision-making on ICT matters will have no desired development impact.

## **Objective**

The main objective of the workshop is to increase the awareness and understanding of African policy makers on ICT for development issues in the continent. Additionally, the workshop aims at establishing a network of ICT actors among African policy makers.

Specific objectives are:

1. To engage policy makers on discussions regarding the AISI vision and framework
2. To discuss the why and how of national e-strategies
3. To expose policymakers to issues regarding the ICT component of NEPAD and other regional initiatives
4. To discuss on the WSIS process, the outcome of the first phase and Africa's preparation for the Tunis phase
5. To discuss on multi-stakeholder partnerships for ICTs in the continent
6. To present and discuss on issues related to e-government
7. To address the issues of local content development
8. To discuss on ways of networking among policymakers and facilitating the establishment of an online discussion forum

## **Participants**

The participants include selected NICI focal points, WSIS focal points, Regulators and MPs.