



Economic  
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Ministry of  
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Swiss Agency  
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Association



## **The African Regional Preparatory Conference for the WSIS**

### **“Africa Civil Society to strengthen an inclusive Information Society at national, sub-regional and continental levels”**

Break out session

30.-31 January 2005

#### **I. Background**

Africa Civil Society participation in the Information Society is crucial for promotion of sustainable and balanced development. This includes the promotion of human development that is equitable; sustainable; holistic; inclusive of all sectors of society; gender responsive; participatory; people centred and Afro-centric. The Civil Society can provide leverage to influence policy and ensure that strategies and plans enable the development and the building of an Information Society based on social justice and human development.

Recognizing these critical roles African Civil Society should play, the ECA has been assisting in raising awareness and building capacity of civil society organizations within the framework of AISI. In order to raise awareness on the importance of the issues related to ICT Policies, strategies and plans, as well as clarifying the roles of each stakeholder, two forums were organized:

- Bamako, Mali 2002 (26th to 27th May): The African region representatives of civil society and non-governmental organizations gathered for a consultation meeting on the Civil Society role in the preparation process and participation in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).
- Addis Ababa, Ethiopia 2002 (6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> May): The Association for Progressive Communications (APC), and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) held a five-day information and communications technology (ICT) policy and Civil Society workshop.

Furthermore, the African Civil Society has been very active on the AISI electronic discussion list in preparation for the PrepCom2 and the WSIS process. One of the outcomes of the electronic discussion has been the active participation of Africa Civil Society to the first phase of the World Summit on Information Society and the identification of sub-regional representatives who will be promoting the African Civil Society Network at country level.

The second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society presents a unique opportunity to consolidate the efforts of Africa Civil society in implementing the Action Plan of the first phase of the World Summit on Information Society and promoting involvement in e-strategy formulation at national and sub-regional levels, while also presenting an opportunity for them to make an evaluation and fine tune the action and projects that they started so far.

## **II. Forum objectives**

The specific goals of the Forum are:

- To reinforce mobilization of the Civil Society at the national and regional levels towards a viable, strong, and active Information Society derived at grass-root level;
- To formulate a strategy to apply best practices and lessons learned in implementing an inclusive Information Society at the national and regional levels;
- Design a realistic and coherent ACS agenda of activities to support the success of the second phase of the World Summit on Information Society - Tunis 2005.

## **III. Expected Outcomes**

In line with the above-mentioned objectives, the following outcomes are expected:

- Formulation of an action plan to implement e-strategies at national levels;
- Adoption of policies and strategies to develop and share information and knowledge on best practices;
- Adoption of a comprehensive agenda of activities to support the success of the second phase of WSIS.

## **IV. Participation**

Africa Civil Society ICT4D Network national, sub-regional and global coordinators will be invited for the Forum.

## **V. Forum content**

### **Session 1: To develop Africa Civil Society policy in implementing an inclusive Information Society**

Effective contribution of Civil Society organizations to the ICT policy cannot be achieved without transformation and development of their ICT capacities. Institutional information policy, capacity for information management and technical and information literacy of staff of the civil society organization would be important to enable CSOs to be well informed of ICTs and to be part of the ICT policy formulation process at national, regional and global levels. Digitally literate Civil Society can make intelligent use of a mix of ICT tools to provide information to others on policy issues, engage citizens and government in policy processes and increase participation in national, regional and global ICT governance issues.

The contribution so far rendered to policy and strategies formulation by the Africa Civil Society will be highlighted.. The session will review the progress from the first regional meeting in Bamako, and present the Accra meeting as a turning point in the process of charting the course of moving from policy to action. . The requisite policies and strategies of involving Civil Society in implementing National Information and Communication Infrastructure plans will also be formulated in this session.

**Session 2: Hindrances to Africa Civil Society –full participation in an inclusive information Society** |

This session will examine the conditions under which the Africa Civil Society can optimise its contribution to the WSIS process and also consider the various bottlenecks to effective Africa Civil Society participation in the various activities and reflect on ways of reinforcing its autonomy.

**Session 3: To Implementation of the Geneva Action Plan** |

Roles and responsibilities of the Civil Society in contributing to the implementation of the Geneva Action Plan.