



[Economic Commission for Africa](#)



[Ministry of Communications  
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## The African Regional Preparatory Conference for the WSIS

### **Evaluation of the Implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action and Information Society Indicators**

31 January – 1 February 2005

#### **1. Introduction**

Reliable statistical data and indicators regarding readiness, use and impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) help policy makers formulate strategies for ICT-driven economic growth, social development and the prevention of a new form of socio-economic exclusion, referred to as the “digital divide”.

#### **2. Background**

ECA has been coordinating the implementation of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI)<sup>1</sup>. The Initiative was adopted by the ECA’s Conference of African Ministers of Social and Economic Planning in 1996, adopted the same year by the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity and supported by the then G7+1 as Africa’s major ICT initiative in its 1997 Denver Summit.

AISI’s major focus is on analysing and evaluating ICTs and content trends in Africa. With regard to this, the Scan-ICT initiative was implemented in November 2000 as a collaborative project between the Acacia programme of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and UNECA, with financial support from the European Union (EU) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (NORAD). It monitors the penetration, impact and effectiveness of ICT applications across Africa, providing added value to the AISI implementation at the national, regional and global levels.

The goal is to create a pan-African ICT network, connecting all levels of ICT-related issues, that will be co-ordinated and supported by an observatory/research institute. In order to monitor progress made in implementing the national policies developed under the AISI initiative, it has been recognised that the development of ICT indicators and baseline studies is a prerequisite for better understanding the current situation and setting the benchmarks.

In the pilot phase of the project, Scan-ICT baseline studies were carried out in six African countries, namely, Ethiopia, Ghana, Morocco, Mozambique, Senegal and Uganda. The pilot phase concerned the setting up in the participating countries of institutional structures and organisational mechanisms for the collection of reliable indicators in ICTs, according to the harmonised methodology. Minimum and common areas identified for data collection

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.uneca.org/aisi/>

included infrastructure, sectoral applications (education, health, public administration, private sector) and information economy.

The SCAN ICT project was reviewed and assessed in March 2004 by statisticians, regulators, researchers and policymakers who recommended its continuation and extension in more African countries. This is currently being undertaken with the support of the Government of Finland and IDRC.

The first phase of the WSIS that took place in Geneva from 11 – 13 December 2003, created a common vision and action plan on how to deal with the new challenges of the Information Society, specifically identifying ways to help bridge the digital divide. The action plan adopted 10 objectives to be achieved by 2015. A questionnaire attempting to measure the current level of implementation of these objectives in the African countries was distributed to all African WSIS focal points in October 2004.

One of the issues agreed upon during the first phase of the WSIS was: *“All countries and regions should develop tools so as to provide statistical information on the Information Society, with basic indicators and analysis of its key dimensions. Priority should be given to setting up coherent and internationally comparable indicator systems, taking into account different levels of development.”*

Also, at its first meeting held in Addis Ababa from 10 to 11 May 2004, the Advisory Board on Statistics in Africa (ABSA), recommended that *“ECA should cooperate with the National Statistical Systems to begin the collection of statistics on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) using a harmonized framework.”* This pre-conference workshop is therefore responding to both worldwide and regional calls for Information Society statistics.

### **3. Botswana Workshop on Information Society Indicators**

In response to the above recommendations, a workshop on ICT indicators was organized by ECA and ITU in Botswana from 26-29 October 2004. The workshop adopted core Information Society indicators to be further discussed in Accra and presented to the African Regional Preparatory Conference for the WSIS for approval by the African ministers. These would then be submitted to the Thematic Conference on Information Society Indicators to be organized in February 2005 in Geneva by the UN Regional Commissions, ITU, OECD, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNSD and UN ICT Task Force. Another output of the Botswana recommendations was the establishment of a Task Force on Information Society statistics composed of National Statistical Offices from the following seven African countries: Democratic Republic of Congo, Mauritius (Rapporteur), Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal (Chair), South Africa and Uganda.

### **4. Objectives**

The aim objectives of this pre-conference is to evaluate the implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action in African countries and to further create awareness on the need for Information Society statistics and prepare African member States to participate successfully on PrepCom-2 where the issue will be discussed.

The specific objectives will be to:

- undertake stocktaking of the implementation of the WSIS Plan of Action by governments and all other stakeholders

- present the core indicators on Information Society statistics adopted by the Botswana workshop;
- discuss implementation of the SCAN ICT phase 2 project; and
- prepare a common position on Information Society indicators to be presented to the African Regional Preparatory Conference.

## **5. Key Participants**

- Members of the WSIS Africa Bureau
- WSIS focal points
- Members of the Regional Task Force on Information Society statistics
- National Statistical Offices
- Regulators
- Representatives of Ministries of Communication and other government institutions
- Scan countries
- Interested experts
- Representatives of the private sector

Bi-lateral and multi-lateral development agencies and donors such as IDRC, ORBICOM, ITU, PICTA members, etc.

**6. Proposed Date: 31 January - 01 February 2005,**

**7. Partners: ECA, IDRC**