



[Economic Commission for Africa](#)



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[The African Regional Preparatory Conference for the WSIS](#)

Pre-Conference Workshop on Internet Governance

28 – 29 January 2005

1. Background

The first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva in December 2003 and the ongoing heated debate on Internet Governance (IG) show the complexity of the matter as well as its broad implications in national and global ICT policy making processes. The vision - stated in the 2003 WSIS Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action- of ensuring an “open” and “inclusive” Information Society requires an in-depth understanding of global policy frameworks for all stakeholders to actively participate and contribute to the process.

Africa is affected by the current IG system in many ways. Technical administration/coordination of Internet, un-preparedness of most African countries as far as Internet Governance is concerned, lack of awareness of what is at stake at the national as well as the international level, lack of institutional and human capacities, problems related to the domain names management and the unavailability of local registrar in Africa are some of the most urgent issues that need to be addressed by African decision makers and stakeholders.

2. E- consultation on Internet Governance in Africa¹

With the view to promote debate on Internet Governance issues from an African perspective and within the framework of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI)² aiming at ensuring meaningful and effective participation of African countries in this process, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with the UN ICT Task Force,³ organized an online discussion forum on Internet governance in March 2004. Policy makers as well as a broad range of AISI stakeholders interacted and exchanged views on the challenges of the global Internet & ICTs governance in Africa, not only from a technical perspective, but also from an ethical, societal and legal context.. The discussion and recommendations focused on the global dimension, the African context, and the WSIS process.

Recommendations made during the online discussion include:

¹ <http://www.unicttaskforce.org/perl/documents.pl?id=1326>

² www.uneca.org/aisi

³ www.unicttaskforce.org

- The ASN should ensure continuation of the consultation process in order to provide the forum for stakeholders to share their experiences/views/comments and consolidate concrete recommendations and solutions on the way forward
- Internet governance issues should be mainstreamed in national ICT policies and strategies
- The preparatory work to WSIS II should assess the ICT governance in Africa
- Africa should hold a continental meeting on Internet governance in particular and ICT governance in general before Tunis 2005, whereby all stakeholders should be able to voice concerns and share best practices on making Internet governance a reality within specific countries and sub regions.

3. Objectives

It is on the basis of these recommendations that the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in collaboration with the UN ICT Task Force African Stakeholders Network is organizing the pre-conference on Internet Governance.

Main areas for consideration include:

- The WSIS phase I negotiations on Internet Governance
- Public policy issues in Internet Governance with a particular emphasis on those affecting Africa
- Domain name management and technical issues
- Institutional and human capacity building issues
- Opportunities and challenges of the current IPR regime
- The role of stakeholders in national and global ICT policy making processes affecting Internet Governance
- Inputs and recommendations to the Working Group on Internet Governance
- Internet Governance and WSIS phase II: the way forward

3. Outcomes

Representatives from governments, private sector, civil society organizations, academia, IT engineers, regional and international organizations, ICT experts will exchange their views and visions on the technical, ethical, societal and legal dimensions of the global Internet Governance with a particular focus on its implication to Africa.

The outcomes of the meeting will feed into the plenary session of the Regional Conference for WSIS as well as in the activities of the Working Group on Internet Governance

4. Proposed Dates

The proposed dates of this pre-conference are 28 & 29 January 2005