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13th Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE)
Mahe, Seychelles, 27-29 April 2009

**Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting : "Harmonization of ICTs Policies and
Programmes in Eastern Africa subregion and Prospects"**



AIDE-MEMOIRE OF THE AEGM ON ICT



Access to information and knowledge is a prerequisite for reducing poverty and offering health care and basic education, all these elements being taken into account for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In October 2007, in Kigali, the African Heads of State had set five main goals for achieving MDGs:

1. Interconnect all African capital and major cities with ICT broadband infrastructure by 2012;
2. Connect African villages to broadband ICT services by 2015;
3. Adopt key regulatory measures that allow access to broadband ICT services and international Internet connectivity;
4. Develop skills (ICT Centres of Excellence in each sub-region- Suggestion of the extension of the Proposed Legal Framework to other African sub-regions and establishment of training centres in each country);
5. Adopt e-strategies for developing e-government, e-education, e-commerce and e-health services applications, etc.

1. Background

UNECA is convinced that regional co-operation is vital for economic development of its 13 Member States. To this end, Member States have made steady progress towards the economic integration and development of a common market. And all RECs recognize the input of Information and Communication Technology in accelerating economic growth. The development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and the establishment of a common sector policy have therefore been given high priority in the subregion by various RECs and are considered as essential building blocs of regional economic integration.

Despite many achievements, the RECs in the sub-region are faced with major challenges, including the maintenance of undertaken policies by adapting and harmonizing national policies, taking into account Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Against this backdrop, UNECA, through the African Information Society Initiative (AISII), intends to create a legal and regulatory environment as a priority as it reads hereafter:

“The AISII cannot be realized without the appropriate institutional, legal and regulatory framework and mechanisms at the national level as well as at the regional level. It is essential to address the legal, regulatory and institutional practices in African countries which inhibit the development of national information services and connectivity to the global information infrastructure”. To ensure smooth implementation of the national information and communication infrastructure in African countries, it is needed to address the legal and regulatory issues which constantly constrain the use of these new technologies. This requires modification of laws and regulations in different

areas such as communication, intellectual property, privacy and free flow of information.

Mindful of the urgency of harmonizing e-communication regulations and implementing the Connect Africa Goals from the Kigali Summit that recommended deepening the reform of telecommunications/ICT sector and harmonizing the policy framework and regulation at regional level, the UNECA Subregional Office for Eastern Africa will organize from 27-28 April 2009 an Expert Workshop as part of the 13th Meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts to discuss ICT legal and regulatory regimes and national institutional frameworks in each of the 13 Member States and compare the performance of their sector in relation to international best practices.

2. Objectives

The objective of the workshop is to provide a clearer picture of the situation in ICT sector in East Africa and provide concrete recommendations for the effective creation of a harmonized legal framework conducive to ICT development in various RECs. UNECA will help member countries and RECs by conducting a study in order to propose a harmonized legal framework in East African countries. The workshop will try to propose a harmonized ICT legislation and an institutional framework to advance the Information Society goals in East African countries. An ICT-harmonized framework in East Africa will create a secure environment to facilitate ICT development activities and the implementation of the Information Society, by simplifying the processes and procedures, while attracting foreign direct investment in the subregion. It will also help Member States that have not yet developed such a framework.

This will involve, inter alia:

- Developing a harmonized legal framework in priority areas: e-commerce, electronic data interchange, e-payments, protection of private data, etc.
- Creating a secure environment to facilitate ICT development activities and the implementation of the Information Society, by simplifying the processes and procedures, while attracting foreign direct investment in the subregion.
- Helping Member States that have not yet developed such a framework.

Target public

- RECs
- Regulation authorities
- NICI focal points

- Telecommunications operators
- Governments
- Private sector
- Civil society

3. Discussions

Discussions will be focused on:

- A documented analysis of national, regional and international activities on developing an ICT legal framework (Cyber law):
- Presentation of existing legal frameworks in East African countries
- Trends in the reforms of the regulatory framework: Telecommunications- ICT in East Africa and Presentation of approaches and activities existing in other sub-regions of Africa
- Consultation with representatives of RECs and Member States to collect information on current activities and needs, and identify challenges and opportunities in the development of cyber laws.
- Review of international standards, recommendations and frameworks that are relevant both for the sub-region and for the WSIS and PARAES decisions
- Identification of priority sectors
- Documented recommendations on the implementation of the proposed legal framework at the country level.

4. Expected outcomes

- Analysis of the current regulatory framework
- Definition of a logical framework and identification of priorities
- Propose a harmonized regulatory framework to avoid increasing the digital divide
- Proposal for the establishment of partnerships for ICT development and attracting investors
- Proposals for the extension of the Proposed Legal Framework to other African subregions.

For any further information related to this meeting, you may contact:

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