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BUSINESS

New African airline close to reality

A plan to have a new airline operating between West and Central Africa before the end of the first half of 2008 is steadily coming to fruition, announced the Association of SADC Chambers of Commerce and Industry (ASCCI) on Tuesday.

The proposed airline is in line with the objectives of NEPAD concerning the reinforcement and upgrading of infrastructure on the continent.

The creation of the airline is not only aimed at filling the vacuum left by the collapse of Nigeria Airways, Ghana Airways and Air Afrique, but also to increase the traffic volumes between the various regions of the continent. It is expected to contribute to the development of trade in Africa.

ASCCI is negotiating with potential financial and technical partners, and drawing up the list of existing air traffic agreements and traffic rights currently granted by the states. Also a committee of Francophone and Anglophone legal experts has been put in place to prepare the constitutive acts of the airline.

Source: Primedia Online: www.iafrica.com, 19 September 2007

Britain boosts African enterprises fund with US\$20 million

The British government, through its Department for International Development (DFID), has contributed some US\$20 million to boost the African Enterprise Challenge Fund (AECF), set up to support innovative business ventures in the continent's agriculture and finance sectors.

According to the New NEPAD official bulletin, other donors who have already supported the fund include the African Development Bank, the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

AECF will provide matching funds for business innovations and improve the economic prospects of most excluded Africans employees, entrepreneurs or consumers. It will give grants of about US\$1.5 million to businesses that give innovative proposals particularly in the areas of finance and agriculture aimed at improving people's economic activities.

"The fund will go a long way towards supporting the CAADP agenda, more particularly in the development of public private partnership and business to business alliances as well as both regional trade and access to international markets by African farmers," NEPAD'S Agriculture Advisor, Richard Mkandawire, said while reacting to the DFID donation.

Source: Pan African News Agency, 16 September 2007

ECA calls for mass mobilization of Africans behind NEPAD

In a panel discussion on an SABC program, African Views, Prof Nnadozie, Chief of the NEPAD Support Unit of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), said the abundant political will in Africa needs to be matched with necessary capacity building drivers to make a difference. Such drivers include mobilizing African people behind NEPAD, utilizing existing African Diaspora skills mix and matching Africa's capacity gaps with existing local human resources, he said.

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Nnadozie said the African Union (AU) vision and the NEPAD initiative, which emphasize capacity building, were an indication that African political leadership understands the need to build capacity at all levels on the continent. He emphasized that apart from capacity building, African countries need to pay attention to capacity retention because “you can produce thousands of nurses, for example, unless you figure out a way to keep them at home, then you’d have a problem.”

ECA has been assisting in implementing NEPAD by coordinating the efforts of various UN agencies through the regional consultation mechanism and as a strategic partner of the NEPAD Secretariat and the APRM Secretariat. He said ECA had assisted in developing the “Capacity Development Strategic Framework” as well as the 10-year capacity building program of the African Union to enhance AU’s capacity to achieve peace and security and foster social and economic development in Africa. Within the framework of NEPAD, ECA had also contributed to capacity building in ICT, trade negotiations, agriculture and infrastructure, said Nnadozie.

Source: ECA website, www.uneca.org

Report released on NEPAD e-school project

A monitoring and evaluation report highlighting lessons learned from the NEPAD e-school project with regards to public-private partnership in introducing ICTs in education, has been released. The report is titled “The NEPAD e-Schools Demonstration Project: A Work in Progress”.

The NEPAD e-Schools Initiative is a multi-country, multi-stakeholder, continental initiative, which aims to impart ICT skills to young Africans in primary and secondary schools and to use ICT to improve education in schools. During the first stage of the initiative, the “NEPAD e-Schools Demo” is being implemented in six schools in 16 countries across Africa through partnerships that involve private sector consortia, the country government and the NEPAD e-Africa Commission (eAC), which is responsible for developing the NEPAD ICT program and implementing its projects.

The report examines the achievement of the specific objectives that were set for the Demo, key assumptions that have impacted the implementation of the project, constraints and challenges faced during implementation, project impact on participating schools and project impact on ICT in education policy developments.

Its most noteworthy finding is that participation in the “Demo” phase of NEPAD e-Schools has had a catalytic effect on education sector policy development, particularly in countries where the Demo has been fully implemented and where an “ICT-in-education” policy process had not been under way before the Demo was introduced.

The “NEPAD e-Schools Demo” is meant to inform the subsequent rollout of the broader NEPAD e-Schools Initiative which aims to wire 550,000 schools by 2020.

Source: *Information for Development Programme (InfoDev)*: www.infodev.org

UPCOMING EVENTS IN SEPTEMBER:

25-27 September: Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) Pillar III Reference Group Meeting, Midrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

27-28 September: NEPAD Mutual Review working session, Johannesburg, South Africa.

27-28 September: Forum Africa 2007, Organized by NEPAD Business Group, The African Business Round Table (ABR) and Afrique Expansion Mag (AEM), in partnership with Canadian Council for Africa (CCAfricque), Montreal, Canada.

28-29 September: CAADP Partnership Platform meeting, Midrand

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DID YOU KNOW? A pilot project has started the use of state of the art mobile phones to increase reporting. It is an attempt to empower local journalists and citizens especially in rural areas to document, blog, podcast and tell their stories to the world in an effort to improve the quality and diversity of African content available on the internet. For more: <http://allafrica.com/stories/200709130793.html>