Concept Note

Online Webinar to Discuss the Draft Report

"Digital Public Infrastructure in Africa: Harnessing Digitalization for a Sustainable and Equitable Future"

Date and time: Nov 30, 2026 – 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm (UTC+3)

Theme: From evidence to action: advancing inclusive, interoperable and sustainable Digital Public Infrastructure in Africa

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), the interoperable systems of digital identity, payment platforms, data exchange frameworks, connectivity and, increasingly, artificial intelligence, is becoming a foundation for inclusive economic growth, service delivery and governance across Africa. However, substantial gaps remain: the continent's average internet usage stands at only 36 per cent, the lowest of any ITU region and far below the global average of approximately 75 per cent,[1] with pronounced urban-rural and gender divides (43 per cent of men online in Africa compared to 31 per cent of women in 2024).[2] Roughly 542 million people, about 35 per cent of the continent's population, still lack official identity documentation,[3] while the continent faces an estimated USD 100 billion digital infrastructure financing gap by 2030 alone.[4]

To respond to these challenges, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has prepared a report entitled "Digital Public Infrastructure in Africa: Harnessing Digitalization for a Sustainable and Equitable Future." The report assesses the state of digital infrastructure across the continent, examines the core components and cross-sectoral opportunities of DPI, reviews governance frameworks and financing mechanisms, and sets out recommendations for national governments, regional bodies, international partners and the private sector.

To finalize the the report, ECA will host an an online webinar to present the draft findings, gather feedback and country perspectives from policymakers and technical experts, and translate the report's recommendations into a practical implementation agenda.

Objectives

- Present the key findings, evidence bases, and recommendations of the draft report in a concise, policy-oriented format.
- Gather feedback from policymakers and technical experts to finalize the report.
- Discuss practical approaches for advancing the report's five continental priorities: universal digital identity, affordable and reliable broadband access, regional interoperability, trustworthy AI and data governance, and sustainable domestic financing.
- Strengthen cross sectoral coordination among ministries of ICT and digital transformation, finance, health, agriculture and education, together with regulators, national statistical offices, regional economic communities and African Union institutions.
- Agree on priority follow-up actions, including country diagnostics, technical assistance needs, investment priorities and peer-learning opportunities.

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[1] ITU, Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2025 (Geneva: ITU, 2025), p. 3. https://www.itu.int/dms_pub/itud/opb/ind/d-ind-ict_mdd-2025-3-pdf-e.pdf

[2] ITU, State of Digital Development and Trends: Africa (Geneva: ITU, April 2025), p. 8. https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/wp-content/uploads/sites/5/2025/04/2500037E_SDDT_2025_Africa_FINAL.pdf

[3] UNECA, 12th StatsTalk-Africa Webinar: Digital Identity and Economic Value (Addis Ababa: UNECA, February 2024).

[4] African Union Commission, Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030) (Addis Ababa: AUC, 2020), pp. 3, 39. https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/38507-doc-DTS_for_Africa_2020-2030_English.pdf

Target Participants

The webinar is primarily intended for government officials and technical experts, who are expected to contribute actively to the discussion. These include senior officials from ministries responsible for ICT and digital transformation; ministries of finance; digital identity and civil registration authorities; ICT and telecommunications regulators; data protection authorities; cybersecurity agencies; and national statistical offices, as well as representatives of regional economic communities and African Union institutions. Other stakeholders are invited to join the call and enrich the discussion with their perspectives, including telecommunication operators, mobile money and fintech providers, research and academic institutions, civil society and digital rights organizations, and development partners.

Proposed Agenda

Time	Session	Purpose
3:00 – 3:10	Opening remarks	Set the policy context, welcome participants and outline the objectives and expected outcomes of the webinar.
3:10 – 3:30	Presentation of the draft report	Present the report's key findings on connectivity gaps, the core components of DPI, challenges to implementation, governance frameworks and financing needs.
3:30 – 4:00	Panel discussion: From evidence to action – country experiences and priorities	Exchange country and regional experiences on digital identity, instant payment systems, data governance, cybersecurity and open-source DPI approaches; surface priority challenges and enabling conditions.
4:00 – 4:20	Open discussion and feedback on the draft report	Gather participants' comments, gaps and country-specific perspectives to inform the finalization of the report; discuss the recommendations addressed to governments, regional bodies, international partners and the private sector.
4:20 – 4:30	Closing	Summarize key messages, commitments and next steps, including the timeline for finalizing the report.

Expected Outputs

- Shared understanding of the draft report's key findings and recommendations, and their relevance for national and regional implementation.
- Consolidated feedback and country perspectives to inform finalization of the report.
- Initial mapping of country and regional priorities across the report's five focus areas: digital identity, connectivity and affordability, interoperability, AI and data governance, and financing.
- Practical recommendations and next steps for national governments, regional bodies, international partners and the private sector.
- Short post-webinar summary of the key messages, proposed actions and areas requiring further analytical support.

Proposed Follow-up

Following the webinar, the report will be finalized to reflect participants' feedback and published for wider dissemination.

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