

INTERNATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATION UNION (ITU)

Support to NEPAD

Period of Report: July 2007 to June 2008

The ITU Plenipotentiary Conference (Antalya, 2006) and World Telecommunication Development Conference (Doha, 2006) renewed its commitment to addressing the needs of Africa in the field of Information and Communication Technologies for Development.

Bridging the standardization gap

The ITU's Telecommunication Standardization Sector, in association with the Telecommunication Development Sector, has launched an initiative of capacity-building measures to assist Africa, and other regions, in bridging the standardization gap. In the period of July 2007 to June 2008, the activities of relevance to Africa, and specifically NEPAD, included:

- A three-day regional forum, on 2-4 October 2007, in Kigali on "Bridging the Standardization and Development Gaps". The Forum, which attracted some 160 participants, including Ministers, CEOs and Regulators, adopted a declaration on the importance of standardization for development. The declaration was submitted to the Connect Africa Summit, also held in Kigali, on 29-30 October 2007.
- A call for voluntary contributions to create a fund for bridging the standardization gap in a letter to the ITU membership, sent on August 30, 2007.
- A background paper on the topic, which was discussed at the 2007 session of the ITU Council.
- A decision to hold the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (WTSA-08), for the first time in Africa, on 21-30 October 2008, in Johannesburg, South Africa, preceded by a Global Standards Symposium on 20 October 2008.
- In preparation for WTSA-08, a regional development forum on bridging the standardization gap, and a WTSA-08 preparatory meeting, was held in Accra, Ghana, on 26-30 May 2008.

Telecommunication/ICT Development Activities

Further to the adoption of the report "Partnership Framework for ICT Infrastructure Development in Africa" by the African Ministers of Telecommunication and ICT in Abuja in 2005, the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) continues to implement the recommendations of this report in support to NEPAD. Those implementation activities include:

- A feasibility study on mobile phone roaming for West Africa was completed and the report was made available to countries for implementation.
- A Network Management System (SIGTEL) was implemented for the 15 member states of ECOWAS in West Africa under a cost sharing funding scheme by BDT and the ECOWAS Secretariat.
- A feasibility study on cross-border broadband connectivity was completed for East African Community (EAC) member states (Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda).
- A feasibility study to include Angola and DRC in the SRII (SADC Region Information Infrastructure) was completed.
- The design of an IP Intelligent Nodes Platform for SADC countries was completed in partnership with SATA (Southern Africa Telecommunication Association), the association of telecommunication operators of SADC countries.
- Contribution through fellowships and in-house expertise to the e-Africa Commission led NEPAD ICT infrastructure programme during a workshop on regulatory environment of the EASSy (now UHURUNET and UMAJONET) stakeholders
- A joint ITU-UNECA study on the impact of ICT on employment and poverty reduction in Africa is about to finalized

The most important event for 2007 was the Connect Africa Summit which took place in Kigali, Rwanda, on 29-30 October 2007, and gathered some 1036 participants from 54 countries, including six heads of state and government. 43 countries in Africa were represented, including 23 at the ministerial level. Some 20 industry leading companies also participated along with development banks, international organizations and other stakeholders.

The Summit was held under the patronage of the President of Rwanda, Mr. Paul Kagame, as well as the Chairman of the African Union and President of Ghana, His Excellency, Mr. John Kufuor, represented by Professor Alpha Konaré, Chairman of the African Union Commission. It was organized by the International Telecommunication Union, the African Union, the World Bank Group and the United Nations Global Alliance for ICT and Development, in partnership with the African Development Bank, the African Telecommunication Union, the UN Economic Commission for Africa and the Global Digital Solidarity Fund.

The following goals were endorsed by African experts and ministers:

- Goal 1: Interconnect all African capitals and major cities with ICT broadband infrastructure and strengthen connectivity to the rest of the world by 2012.

- Goal 2: Connect African villages to broadband ICT services by 2015 and implement shared access initiatives such as community tele-centres and village phones.
- Goal 3: Adopt key regulatory measures that promote affordable, widespread access to a full range of broadband ICT services, including technology and service neutral licensing/authorization practices, allocating spectrum for multiple, competitive broadband wireless service providers, creating national Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) and implementing competition in the provision of international internet connectivity.
- Goal 4: Support the development of a critical mass of ICT skills required by the knowledge economy, notably through the establishment of a network of ICT Centres of Excellence in each sub-region of Africa and ICT capacity-building and training centres in each country, with the aim of achieving a broad network of inter-linked physical and virtual centres, while ensuring coordination between academia and industry by 2015.
- Goal 5: Adopt a national e-strategy, including a cyber-security framework, and deploy at least one flagship e-government service as well as e-education, e-commerce and e-health services using accessible technologies in each country in Africa by 2012, with the aim of making multiple e-government and other e-services widely available by 2015.

To help achieve these ambitious but attainable goals, many participants from public, and private sectors, regional and international organizations and development finance institutions announced major commitments on the occasion of the Summit, totaling approximately \$55 billion. The implementation of this collective action by ICT stakeholders in Africa will certainly help to make the difference in the ICT landscape in Africa in order to assist other economic sectors meeting the MDGs.