

COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

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The Executive Secretary
World Summit on Information Society (WSIS)
International Telecommunications Union
Place des Nations
1211 GENEVA 20
Switzerland



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RECEIVED on

09 SEP 2003

CEC

Dear Sir

CONTRIBUTION OF THE ASSOCIATION OF REGULATORS OF INFORMATION FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA TO DISCUSSION ON WSIS ISSUES

The Association of Regulators of Information and Communications for Eastern and Southern Africa (ARICEA) was launched on 24th January 2003. The overall objective of the Association is to harmonise ICT regulatory issues in Eastern and Southern Africa.

The Association consists of Regulators of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Services in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa region. Associate membership is open to a variety of organisations in the ICT sector, including regulators of other utility services, and ICT operators and service providers.

At its General Meeting held on 30th July 2003 the Association decided to make a contribution to the discussion on WSIS issues in the form of the attached declaration.

Association of Regulators of Information and Communications for Eastern and Southern Africa (ARICEA)

Declaration

We the representatives of regulators in COMESA member States who met in Cairo, Egypt on 30th July 2003, declare our commitment to have an information society and to support the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS).

We recall the objectives of ARICEA, which are:

- Development of common policy guidelines and regulations on ICTs;
- Promotion of efficient, adequate and cost effective ICT services;
- Facilitation of the implementation of the common policies and model legislation in COMESA member States;
- Enhancement of capacity building of all ICT stakeholders; and
- Encouragement of ICT sector liberalization and private sector participation.

We are aware that Africa is lagging behind in ICT and that joint efforts need to be made to bridge the digital divide between Africa and the rest of the world. The digital divide between urban and rural areas is one of the major obstacles towards development of ICT services in Africa. Access to information is still very limited in African urban areas and not available in many rural areas. We are also aware that information and communications is one of the major tools for regional integration and socio-economic development and that E-application is a tool for access of information for all stakeholders.

We recognize that establishing clear policies, legislation and regulations is necessary in providing a proper environment for investment in the ICT sector and the private sector has to be encouraged to participate in ICT development and transfer of technology.

We wish to declare that we as a regional organization are committed to playing a major role in developing and implementing the resolutions of the Summit.

Hence, we request the organizers of WSIS to consider our contribution which is as follows:

1. Capacity Building is urgently required for regulators and other stakeholders in the areas of policy, regulation, legal, technology and education in schools and in special training centres. Exchange of information and experience is a key element in human resource development;
2. The development of infrastructure nationally and regionally is a backbone for providing ICT services and making information available for all. Concerted effort has to be made to bridge the digital divide within Africa and between Africa and the rest of the world;
3. Innovative ways and means of mobilizing resources for investment for the countries which are far behind in ICT development need to be put in place; and
4. Raising the awareness of the people's rights to communicate and the promotion of access to ICT services especially for rural areas in Africa should be an integral part of the programme for ICT development.

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If required, the declaration will be submitted by a representative of its Chairman, the Ethiopian Telecommunications Agency or the Vice Chairman, the Uganda Communications Commission. The COMESA Secretariat is the Interim Secretariat of the Association.

Yours sincerely,

Amos Marawa
Director Infrastructure Development

/attach.

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