



**Statement by the Secretary General Mr. Soumaila Abdoukarim during the Pre-conference event to prepare for The Ten-Year review conference of the Almaty Program of Action 2014**

**UN Office, Nairobi – 31 October 2013**

***Partnerships and Solutions to enhance ICT Development in order to accelerate the Development of Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs)***

This is a very important topic to us in Africa in particular, because half of our countries are affected by being landlocked or being Small Island Developing States (SIDS) thereby requiring access to submarine cables. In either case, this has been a challenge for them because transit arrangements are cumbersome, require goodwill from neighboring countries, there is a high failure rate of connectivity of submarine in coastal countries and charging practices; all these contribute to the disadvantage of the LLDCs.

An emerging challenge specifically with fibre cable is the no man's land where in a number of countries, no clear framework has been developed to ensure seamless connectivity across the border. Where this is happening, operators are often the incumbents and at one point the other country. Multi-entry point to provide redundancy has not been developed. A good example is the link between Mombasa and Kigali in Rwanda where there is no alternative route. This put together, present a significant challenge to LLDCs.

A study carried out by HIPSSA Project of ECOWAS States on access to submarine cables by the landlocked countries in 2011 analyzed this challenge in detail but specifically highlighted the high cost such countries have to carry. For example, the wholesale price of international fibre connectivity for a purchasing level of capacity on E1 (2MB) in Niger is about US\$ 900 per MB per month whereas a coastal country will enjoy relatively lower international bandwidth prices where the prices remain two to five times lower than the landlocked countries. The price difference doesn't necessarily mean that landlocked countries have not benefited from price reductions in international capacity as experienced by some coastal countries. The higher price paid by landlocked countries for international capacity is linked to the transit costs that they have to pay to coastal countries to route their traffic across the terrestrial network of the coastal country.

Some sub marine cable operators take cognizance of this and have gone further and established the Point of Presence (POPs) at coastal landing points and at LLDC (inland) by taking over the challenge of connectivity at considerably low cost thus overcoming the issue of cost

Other agencies have similarly been very vocal on cross border connectivity in addressing these challenges. For example Internet Society (ISOC) due to poor internet connectivity at the border (no man's land) has put this in their agenda for direct connectivity. NEPAD is addressing the inland fibre at the policy level and a telecom private sector company is championing its implementation.

We at ATU strongly support these initiatives and continue working with all these partners to ensure that telecommunication challenges facing the LLDCs are addressed so that they do not remain disadvantaged. As maybe recalled, ATU worked with the African countries during the ITU World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT) held in Dubai in 2012 to push for a resolution on special measures for landlocked developing countries and small island developing states for access to international optical fibre networks. In this regard, we commit to continuous search for solutions. Further, guided by the Almaty Program of Action, we commit to bringing together our members to report on progress over this matter to the next review progress in 2014. On partnerships, we commit to working with other stakeholders like ITU, AUC/NEPAD, ECA, and all the Regional Economic Communities in forging issues that are of interest to the continent. Specifically, we are hopeful that the discussions within ECOWAS and SADC on the issue of fiber access by LLDCs will result in regional policies favorable to LLDCs. Should this happen; such policies could in turn be discussed within other regional blocks in order to have a continent harmonized policy and approaches to the issue of fiber access by LLDCs. Since information is now a basic right, it would be crucial that access to essential ICT infrastructure is on an equitable basis as far as possible.

As you know, to plan is good but to implement is better. This is why gatherings such as this one meant to evaluate progress in the implementation of various planned activities is crucial. We at ATU remain committed to using the assessments from this meeting to seeing how our activities can be improved to better implement planned action points.