1.   About The East Africa Communications Organisation (EACO)

The East African Regulatory, Posts and Telecommunications Organisation's (**EARPTO**) Memorandum of Understanding (**MoU**) was executed in Kampala in 2005. Subsequently, at the **EARPTO** Assembly meetings held in Nairobi in 2006, members expressed concerns such as the need for a broader forum to address issues of common interest to the communication industry, which necessitated review of the **EARPTO MoU**. Pursuant to the decision of the Congress, the review process was accomplished and the **16th EARPTO** Congress held in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania resolved to rename **EARPTO** as **EACO** (East Africa Communications Organisation) in order to accommodate all communications operators; the need to introduce an Assembly of Broadcasting Operators among others. The Congress further resolved to maintain the numbering of its meetings in a continuing fashion.

2.   Recent Past Event:
(17th EACO Congress Meeting; Kampala, Uganda 3rd - 7th May 2010)

The 17th **EACO** Congress meeting was held on 7th May 2010 in Kampala, Uganda. Before the Congress, from 3rd to 5th May 2010, a pre-Congress Workshop on ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities and meetings of the Assemblies of Regulators, Telecommunications Operators, Postal Operators, and Broadcasting Operators as well as the Working Committee for Human Resources Development and Training took place at the same venue.

The event which was officiated by the Minister of ICT, **Hon. Aggrey Awori**, who was the Chief Guest, was attended by **five** National Regulatory Authorities, **23** Telecommunications and Broadcasting Networks Operators, **five** Postal Services Providers and **32** Observer Organisations from within East Africa Region and beyond.

The Minister welcomed the delegates to Uganda on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Uganda.

He informed the Congress that he was delighted to see the big regional gathering converged in Uganda to shape up the communications industry for the East African region. He underscored the importance of the Congress which was to crystallise and consolidate the views on ICT development strategies ahead of the full regional integration of East Africa. He expressed his expectations that **EACO** would eventually transform all sister states into a regional digital village linked to the global Information Society.

He further said that the region had already benefited from **EACO** initiatives such as the introduction of the underground sea cable, other regional communications

infrastructure and ICT networks, like **TEAMS** and **EASSy** projects, which had made communications services cheaper, affordable and accessible to majority of the people. In addition, the reduction of local tariffs and abolition cross-border roaming arrangements had gone a long way to ensure that people can communicate with each other so easily at pocket-friendly costs.

He called upon stakeholders in the communications industry to support **EACO** and other initiatives so that they address the communications needs of the people. He assured the continued support of the Government of Uganda to make it easy to implement **EACO** proposals.

He concluded by expressing his gratitude to the **ITU**, development partners and stakeholders for the support they had rendered to **EACO** and the region in general. He then declared the **17th** Congress of the East Africa Communications Organisation officially open.

Thereafter, the Congress deliberated on the reports of various Assemblies as well as subjects around Designated Short Code for Emergency Rescue Operations in Lake Victoria; Harmonised Regional Short codes; Regional Interconnection Guidelines; Definition of the Terms "Subscriber"; Progress of implementation of East African Internet Exchange Point (EAIXP); Management of country code Top Level Domains (ccTLDs); Cyber Security Issues; Infrastructure Access and Connectivity to High Capacity Cable systems in East Africa; Consumer Issues and Common Standards for Broadcasting services in the region.

Normally, in EACO meetings issues of participation in ITU-T SG 2, ITU-T SG 3, ITU-SG 5, ITU-T SG 13, ITU-T SG 17 activities are reported and discussed. Mr. James Kilaba, the Vice Chair of ITU-T SG2 presented a report on ITU-T SG2 and country report on Emergency & Disaster Relief Management which can be found on the web at http://itu.int/en/ITU-T/others/rg2eaco/Pages/default.aspx.

The full report of the 17th **EACO** Congress is available at http://itu.int/en/ITU-T/others/rg2eaco/Pages/default.aspx

3. Recent Event:
(18th EACO Congress Meeting; Kigali, Rwanda, 23rd - 27th May 2011)

The 18th **EACO** Congress meeting was held on 27th May 2011 in Kigali, Rwanda. Preceded the Congress were a workshop on national backbones and regional broadband networks and services; the Assemblies of Regulators, Telecommunications, Postal and Broadcasting Operators; and the meeting of Working Committee for Human Resources Development and Training (HRDT/WC) all of which took place from 23rd to 26th May 2011.

The Director General of Rwandan Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA) who officiated the kick-off for the Workshop and the Assemblies meetings, highlighted

the importance of the issue of connectivity to the submarine cable and saluted the joint effort of EACO on regional fibre backbone connectivity, cross boarder frequency coordination and harmonization of legal and regulatory framework.

The 18th EACO event was attended by **49** member institutions and **23** Observer Organisations from within East Africa Region and beyond.

The Assemblies of Regulators and Operators, issues relevant to ITU-T were presented and shared amongst the participants. Again participation in ITU-T SG2, ITU-T SG3, ITU-SG5, ITU-T SG13, ITU-T SG17 activities were reported by respective Vice Chairs coming from the region and discussed. Mr. James Kilaba, the Vice Chair of ITU-T SG2 presented a report which is available at http://itu.int/en/ITU-T/others/rg2eaco/Pages/default.aspx. Other papers of interest are also attached for information.

The 18th EACO Congress opening was blessed by the Minister in the Office of the President in charge of ICT, Hon. Dr. Ignace Gatare. The highlights from the speech were as follows:-

- Emphasis was made on the importance of ICT in the economic development and therefore believed that the Congress would provide recommendations and action plans that would ensure lower and affordable prices, higher service quality and better penetration levels and new levels of consumer choices for ICT services.

- The migration strategies in terms of Governmental roles, the mandate of the regulators in the whole process and the value chain that was being created for digital broadcasting in East Africa must enable the region to reap the benefits of digital broadcasting.

- The region was to take note that running parallel broadcasting systems (analogue and digital) was very costly for both operators and the Governments. It was encouraged that clear strategies should be established for the switching of the analogue system without unnecessarily prolonging the simulcast period.

- The dynamism of the ICT sector and the pace of globalization, which make service development to be a complex issue, required the need to develop long-term strategies, which the industry, consumers, regulators and policy makers should share, and have a common vision of where East Africa was heading to.

- The need to use EACO platform to share ideas, experiences for passing on necessary skills and knowledge that would help EAC to keep pace with emerging trends in telecom development.

- As EAC countries complete their national backbones, they need to find ways on how to attain their maximum utilization and recoup the cost within shortest possible period of time.

The 18th Congress then deliberated on the workshop recommendations and the reports of various the Assemblies of Regulators, Telecommunications, Postal and Broadcasting Operators; and the meeting of Working Committee for Human Resources Development and Training (HRDT/WC). Interesting issues on Numbering Resources management, Number Portability implementation reviews as well as Emergency Telecommunications were deliberated on.

4. Next Event

The next EACO Congress meeting will take place in May 2012, in Bujumbura, Burundi. The Congress will be preceded by a series of Assemblies, specialized Task Forces and a one day long Workshop with a selected Theme.

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