

**Communauté Economique  
Des  
Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest**



**Economic Community  
Of  
West African States**

**No.49/2006**

**12<sup>th</sup> May 2006**

### **ECOWAS MINISTERS ADOPTS GUIDELINES FOR HARMONISED TELECOMMUNICATION MARKET IN WEST AFRICA**

ECOWAS Ministers of Telecommunications and Information Technology (ICT) have adopted the guidelines to facilitate the harmonization of the telecommunications market in the region by 2007. The 82-page document, which was adopted at the end of the sixth meeting of the ministers in Abuja, recommends the objectives, principles and institutional framework for national information technology (IT) policy.

It also defines the legislative framework for ICT in Member States, recommends approaches to spectrum management, competition policy, inter-connectivity tariffs, infrastructure sharing and licence fees.

The guidelines, which were approved at the one-day meeting recommends that operators strive to ensure national and international roaming at rates that are competitive and affordable.

At the opening of the meeting, the ECOWAS Acting Deputy Executive Secretary for Integration Programmes, Dr Monisoye Afolabi said the ICT sector has an important role in economic growth, describing it as the driving force for development in economic and social sectors, particularly in the areas of education, training, health, transport, government, and industries.

Dr Afolabi expressed optimism that the guidelines presented to the ministers for adoption would facilitate the realization of the planned liberalization of the regional telecommunication market by 2007. Among its many benefits, he added, were its capacity to promote the integration of the economies of Member States and establish conditions that will allow telecommunications operators within the community to provide cross-border services among many.

Nigeria's Minister of Communication, Chief Cornelius Adebayo, acknowledged the urgent need for the region to advance to a technological level where it can reap the full benefits of information technology by promoting communication and information technology in the region.

"There is no doubt that ICT has the great potential for creating wealth in Africa and in ridding our countries of the vestiges of poverty, hungry, diseases and other elements of underdevelopment," he argued.

The minister expressed optimism that the meeting would adopt a policy that would increase ICT penetration in Member States by precipitating a universal access regime that will ensue that ICT facilitates and services were affordable.

He urged the ministers to help promote ICT development in their countries by creating and expanding the required infrastructure on which networks could be deployed for the use of the citizens. This, he added, should be complemented by strengthening the ICT human resource base so that it could sustain technological developments.

The minister said ICT also holds the potential for contributing to the integration process by helping to forge unity and alliances as well as eliminating the artificial barriers "that obstruct the flow of information and frustrate transactions within and between our respective countries."

He also said that a liberalized regional telecommunications market was crucial in the realization of West Africa's aspiration for the deployment of Regional Broad Band infrastructure as well as regional roaming and cross border connectivity.

With its adoption by the ministers, the guidelines, which were prepared with the support of the International Telecommunications Union, will be presented to the Council of Ministers for consideration prior to its approval by the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS for implementation.