

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FORUM FOR AFR SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

1. Introduction

The ITU Regional Development Forum for the AFR region (RDF-AFR) was organized by the Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in Accra, Ghana, on 1 October 2013, at the kind invitation of the Government of Ghana (Minister of Communications, Ghana).

This meeting was held on the eve of the ITU Regional Preparatory Meeting for the AFR region (RPM-AFR) with the main goal to consider key trends in the development of telecommunications/ICT over the past year. Its main objective was to have an open and interactive exchange of opinions and discussions among participants to improve telecommunication/ICT in the AFR countries. Outcomes of the meeting will serve as an input to the RPM-AFR and preparatory process for the WSIS+10 High-Level Event.

The meeting was chaired by Minister H.E. Dr. Edward K. Omane Boamah, Minister of Communications, Ghana and it was attended by around 350 participants from 35 Member States of the AFR region and 6 other Member States, 3 scientific or industrial organizations; 1 other entity dealing with telecommunications and 6 regional and international organizations. The list of participants can be found [\[here\]](#).

The opening ceremony benefited from contributions by several high-level representatives of African administrations, including the following ICT Ministers: H.E. Mr Edward K. Omane Boamah, Minister for Communications, Ministry Of Communications, Ghana, H.E. Mr Moses Kunkuyu Kalongashawa, Minister, Ministry of Information, Malawi, H.E. Mr. Karmelo Martin Modou, Deputy Minister of Transports and Communications, Equatorial Guinea and H.E. Mr. Joe Bando, Assistant Minister for Telecommunications, Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, Liberia, as well as H.E. Mr. P.V. Obeng, Senior Presidential Advisor & Chairman of National Development Planning Commission, Ghana. Mr. Brahima Sanou, BDT Director, provided the opening speech on behalf of ITU.

This report provides a brief overview of issues discussed including some of the challenges identified during the meeting. The meeting's agenda can be found in [here](#).

IDEA ONE: Enhancing Broadband Sustainability: multi stakeholder Roundtable

For the promise of ICT and broadband as one of its pillars to be sustainable as an enabler of the Development and Empowerment of Africa, the roundtable discussed broadband policies, strategies and legal and regulatory frameworks, human and institutional capacity building, accessibility and inclusiveness for persons with disabilities and disadvantaged groups, localization of access through multi-lingual Internet and the funding strategies for these formidable tasks the smart sustainable development models were discussed. Session concluded with additional input on WSIS+10 process.

During this session, a wide range of issues, emerging trends, challenges and opportunities relevant to the Africa region were discussed. The following presents set of recommendations that were put forward:

- Bridging digital divide still remains valid for Africa and should be prioritized in the future work.
- Governments were encouraged to prioritize development and implementation of national broadband policies, strategies and regulation as well as facilitate sharing of best practices across Africa. ITU continues to accompany administrations in this respect. Countries were invited to request for assistance, if needed.
- Further work should be done in the field of harmonization of policies and regulatory frameworks at the regional level to foster development of global market.
- All stakeholders were encouraged to continue promoting multistakeholder approach as it is essential to ensure continuous progress in the development of information society.
- With popularisation of the Internet, the ICT sector will continue to grow in the region. In this context it was proposed to foster development of appropriate enabling environment, including ICT specific policies and regulatory frameworks to be translated into ICTs development on the ground later on.
- Governments and stakeholders were encouraged to join forces and focus on education and developing skills that are necessary to foster broadband development.
- It was recognized that broadband is an important enabler for development. Statistics have shown that 10% increase in penetration results in 1.2 to 1.4 GDP growth. In this context to leverage socio-economic development across Africa, stakeholders were encouraged to prioritize development of infrastructure, services and affordable access.
- Governments were encouraged to develop balanced and smart regulation, clear ICT policies, stable and transparent regulatory frameworks conducive for investment in ICTs.
- ITU initiative on Smart Sustainable Development Framework is the way to address existing synergies between emergency telecommunications and sustainable development. World still experiences significant loss because of natural disasters, which may be minimized thanks to the mainstreaming effective disaster management. In this context all stakeholders were encouraged to invest in emergency communication systems.
- It was recommended to place the ICT in the centre of human evolution; otherwise to give a human face to ICT.
- Countries were encouraged to share their practices related to broadband development. ITU should play a catalyst role in this respect.
- It was recommended that the development of broadband infrastructure should go in parallel with development of local content, services and applications that will increase demand for broadband access.
- Stakeholders were encouraged to set up additional national and regional IXPs that will help minimize costs of access to the internet in middle term.

In regards to the WSIS+10 review process, and preparatory process leading towards the WSIS+10 High-Level Event, the following has been addressed during discussion:

- WSIS+10 High-Level Event will be an extended version of the WSIS Forum to address the progress made in the implementation of the WSIS outcomes related to the WSIS Action Lines under mandates of the participating agencies, while providing a platform for multi-stakeholder coordination of the implementation of the WSIS outcomes, with involvement and participation of all WSIS action line facilitators, other UN agencies and all WSIS stakeholders.

- The WSIS+10 High-Level Event will review the WSIS Outcomes (2003 and 2005) , in particular, related to the Action Lines with a view to developing proposals on a new vision beyond 2015, potentially also exploring new targets. The meeting will be organized taking into account decisions of the 68th Session of the UN General Assembly.
- An open and inclusive consultation process has been set up in order to develop Draft Outcome Documents for consideration by the WSIS+10 High-Level Event, by 1st March 2014, i.e. Draft WSIS+10 Statement on Implementation of WSIS Outcomes as well as Draft WSIS+10 Vision for WSIS Beyond 2015 under mandates of the participating Agencies
- All stakeholders have been encouraged to contribute to the preparatory process for WSIS+10 High-Level Event.
- Preparatory process towards the WSIS+10 High-Level Event offers a unique opportunity to create synergies between two major review processes of UN, i.e. Post 2015 Development Agenda (MDGs review) and WSIS+10 Review. In this context all stakeholders have been encouraged to use this opportunity to reiterate importance of ICTs for socio-economic development in the future framework.
- It was recommended that WSIS beyond 2015 should focus mainly on issues that were not addressed sufficiently, in particular infrastructure, access, affordability, building capacity, development of e-skills and provision of education.
- Meeting noted that since 2003, Geneva Phase of WSIS, significant efforts have been made by the governments to develop ICT infrastructure in the region. It provided several opportunities for private sector and became a source for growth. Further efforts are necessary to address the challenge of infrastructure and it is necessary that private sector share this responsibility.
- Encourage provision of infrastructure. We need to address affordability. Private sector needs to address this. Private sector did not make much in this to address African needs. We need to have shared responsibility with private sector to address quality of service and affordability.

IDEA 2 – Broadband Applications for Development and Empowerment

Under the guidance of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS 2005) and the subsequent Connect Africa Summit (CAF 2007), Africa took significant steps to build and enhance broadband infrastructure. In order to leverage this infrastructure and positively impact the lives of Africa's citizens, the panel discussed innovative ways and initiatives to bring broadband applications and services to the people in the areas of governance, health, commerce, agriculture and education. Given the increasing access to mobile phones, the panel paid particular attention to the ITU m-Powering Development initiative and the potential for mobile applications to change lives. Session was followed by a presentation on migration from analogue to digital broadcasting and the use of consequent digital dividend for broadband will also be discussed.

During this session, a wide range of issues, emerging trends, challenges and opportunities relevant to the Africa region were discussed. The following presents set of recommendations that were put forward:

- Promote ICT enabled transformation of African countries, from agriculture to service driven economies, while creating new opportunities for youth's employment. In this context promote e-education, distance learning, online post-graduate curricula development.
- While developing the infrastructure and access, more emphasis needs to be paid to the quality of services and consumer protection.
- Foster multistakeholder initiatives like ITU m-Powering Development Initiative for a better tomorrow, on which the philosophy is to harness the potential of mobile connectivity to enable all global citizens realize their full potential and bring a lot to the peoples' lives and well-being.
- Promote public private partnership building, through bringing together all champions in their constituencies to support the initiative with their strengths and efforts, and to avoid effort duplication.

- Continue to implement strategic ICT infrastructure projects, for instance connectivity to submarine cables.
- Further promote e-applications as a driver for development for economic communities, in particular those for mobile phones.
- It was suggested that sub-regional laws should be enacted and transposed in national legislations, in particular in the field of e-commerce, data privacy protection and cybercrime, those leading to better citizens' protection.
- Emphasis needs now to be put on rural connectivity, universal access, reduction of terminals costs, development of local content, set up of IXPs and address power to allow ICT equipment to function properly.
- It is recommended to dedicate efforts to IXP deployment to promote broadband connectivity as it can help ISPs to interconnect their networks for mutual benefits allowing international transit costs reduction, incentives development, transit delay decrease and increase of security.
- The need occurs to develop local contents and liberalize ICT sector for a safer competition and enhance ISPs development
- On the analogue to digital transition which the deadline is fixed to 17 June 2015 countries need to implement their respective roadmaps seizing new opportunities related to improved TV signal, more channels, increased competitiveness in the ICT sector, additional spectrum availability for new broadband services development.
- There is a need for establishing an appropriate legislative framework in order to roll out infrastructure and to provide affordable terminals for end-users: e.g. STB (Set Top Boxes) and to develop local content.
- Investigate opportunities offered by innovative solutions fostering efficient use of spectrum resources, like for instance TV whitespaces that can be used to empower communities through broadband applications development.

IDEA 3: Creating a safer cyberspace

Broadband has made access to the Internet faster and easier, facilitated online applications and services for business, health care, education, emergency response and others. Unfortunately, it has also facilitated cybercrime and increased cyber threats and the panel will discuss mitigation and how to create safer cyberspace, including Child Online Protection (COP), Computer Incidence Response Teams (CIRT), Electronic Transactions, Personal Data Protection and other cyber security challenges.

This session addressed key challenges to be faced in establishing secure ICT infrastructure, networks and services and in building/enhancing citizen confidence in the use of broadband Internet and its content. It was recalled that over the last 5 years, African countries have increased investments in broadband Infrastructure and have taken measures in view of creating citizen confidence in the Internet. Several countries reported on their national Cyber-security policies, strategies, regulations and institutional capacity building. The ICANN representative reported on issues/challenges related to the Domain Name Space (DNS) and to DNS Security. Open discussion led towards identification of series of key challenges faced by African countries in securing the cyberspace.

The following are some of issues discussed:

- Cyber-laws and regulations related to personal data protection, electronic transactions and cyber-criminality;
- Institutional and technical capacity of countries (establishment of CIRTs/CERTs, participation to ITU-T, relevant study groups (SG 17, etc.)
- Capacity building of all police and judiciary personnel in charge of cybercrime investigation;
- Security of Internet critical resources (name space) and their security;

- Rising of Stakeholders' awareness in view of making them aware of opportunities as well as pitfalls that come with being online.

In perspective, it was strongly recommended to:

- Promote the adoption of harmonized policies and strategies at regional and international levels that will protect children in cyberspace and provide safer access to all opportunities and resources that are available online;
- Adjust national regulatory and judiciary frameworks;
- Ensure child access control to Internet websites and contents at home and in each cyber café or each public access point;
- Raise awareness and ensure capacity building of policy and law makers, child population, parents and educators and public in general;
- Promote/adopt DNS Security in Africa;
- Encourage Africa to develop a DNS market;
- Ensure technical capacity building in network security;
- Deploy CIRT/CERT at local, national and regional levels.

In conclusion, it was recognized that there is no safer cyberspace or cyber-security without strong and active involvement of all stakeholders at national level and International cooperation between States.
