

African Union, African Regional Bodies

Recommendation on the information and communication technologies (ICT) sector in Africa

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African Union

Recommendation on the information and communication technologies (ICT) sector in Africa

Published on 17 May 2018

Commenced

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THE PAN-AFRICAN PARLIAMENT,

CONSIDERING Article 17 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union, which establishes the Pan-African Parliament to ensure the full participation of African peoples in the development and economic integration of the continent,

CONSIDERING Article 3 of the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to the Pan-African Parliament, and Rule 4 (a) of the Rules of Procedure of the Pan-African Parliament,

CONSIDERING FURTHER Article 4 (2) (a) of the 1991 Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community (AEC), which envisions the advancement of continental integration through the strengthening of the existing Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as building blocks to continental solidarity and integration,

RECALLING the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) officially launched in 2011, in Kampala, and endorsed by the African Union Assembly in Addis Ababa, in January 2012, together with the institutional architecture for its implementation and the PIDA Priority Action Plan (2012-2020), which is a continental initiative, based on regional projects and programmes designed to address the infrastructure deficit that severely weakens Africa's competitiveness on the world market,

RECALLING also that the African Union overall vision for the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) sector is to "build in partnership with all stakeholders, the soft and hard infrastructure that will enable the continent to participate and lead the fundamental changes of the 21st century namely the building of a strong digital economy",

RECOGNIZING that ICTs are critical infrastructure for regional economic integration and that the Digital Revolution and Digital Economy offer a unique opportunity for Africa to transform itself and to catch up with the rest of the world in all areas, notably education, health, good governance and intra-Africa trade,

NOTING that Africans have greater access to mobile phones than to clean water and electricity and that mobile platforms have offered new opportunities for delivering information to the general public such that they can no longer be ignored,

NOTING also that cybercriminals are increasingly targeting developing countries, first and foremost because of lax enforcement of the relevant legislation in those countries and that the lack of cyber technical expertise, and inability to monitor and protect national networks make African countries vulnerable to cyber espionage and incidences of cyberterrorism and leave them widely exposed to cybercrime compared to other economies,

ACKNOWLEDGING the notable work of the African Union Commission and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) since 2002 in terms of developing and implementing ICT policies and plans,

MINDFUL OF Rule 5 (b), (c) and (d) of the Rules of Procedure of the Pan-African Parliament, which empowers the PAP to, inter alia, organize debate, discuss, express an opinion, advise, make recommendations and pass resolutions on African Union objectives and on any matters relating to the African Union and its organs, Regional Economic Communities, Member States and their organs and institutions,

NOW HEREBY RECOMMENDS:

1. That African Union Member States should:

- i. Urgently sign, ratify and domesticate the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection adopted in June 2014;
- ii. Build an information society that respects values, rights and freedoms and guarantees equal access to information while encouraging the creation of authentic knowledge which can build confidence and trust in the use of ICTs in Africa;
- iii. Put in place necessary policy, legal and regulatory mechanisms to control cyber criminality, and this requires the full involvement and support of the political leadership at the highest level;
- iv. Establish dedicated national infrastructure network that connects government, industry and the research community and thus promotes open knowledge engagement, an open data system for researchers, innovation, synergy between end-users and researchers as well as information technology development;
- v. Establish an ecosystem for national computer emergency readiness and response teams to promote national synergy on cybersecurity, knowledge-sharing and intelligence gathering on actions taken by cybercriminals to counteract preventive efforts by governments and individuals;
- vi. Set up effective mechanisms and strategies for reporting cybercrime to ensure adequate protection and assistance to cyber victims and witnesses. As part of the broader cybersecurity strategy, call centres should be established and staffed by sufficiently trained and knowledgeable personnel and be equipped with a website and a toll-free number for easy reporting of cybercrime incidents by victims and witnesses.

2. Regional Economic Communities should:

- i. Maintain the momentum in the implementation of various ICT projects;
- ii. Promote and support the development of continental and regional ICT strategies to pave way for development of national strategies.

Midrand, South Africa

17 May 2018