

**Association of Regulators of Information and Communications
for Eastern and Southern Africa (ARICEA)**

Objectives, Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities

A Presentation to the Informal Meeting of Associations of Regulators

Geneva 7th December 2003

Introduction

As its name suggests, the Association of Regulators for Information and Communications for Eastern and Southern Africa (ARICEA), is an association of regulators in the ICT sector in the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) area. This paper outlines the aims, challenges, achievements, opportunities and future prospects of the Association.

Background

ARICEA was launched in January 2003 under the auspices of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). COMESA is an economic grouping whose current member states are Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Uganda, the Union of Comoros, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Its overarching aim is sustainable growth and development through trade and regional integration. Efficient information and communication technology (ICT) services are essential for the achievement of this aim. Therefore ICT infrastructure development, policy and regulatory harmonization are among the important components of the programmes of COMESA

As will be seen subsequent paragraphs, the aims of ARICEA bear close similarity to those of COMESA. It is on this basis that COMESA facilitated the establishment of ARICEA and works closely with it.

Objectives

There is no regional ICT regulator in the COMESA sub-region yet, although the establishment of a regulatory authority is a long-term goal of regional integration. It is against this background that the Association was established as a consultative and collaborative forum with the following aims, namely to:

- Exchange ideas, views and experiences among members on all aspects relating to facilitating and regulating the development and application of ICTs;
- Promote the sustainable development and application of efficient, adequate and cost-effective ICT networks and services in the ESA sub-region
- Coordinate cross-border regulatory issues on ICTs
- Contribute to the achievement of sub-regional and regional integration;
- Promote the maximisation of the utilisation of scarce resources in the ICTs sector.

Membership

ARICEA has taken cognisance of the emerging convergence of broadcasting, computing, and traditional telecommunication technologies. As a result of historical circumstances, currently some of the telecommunications and communications regulators in the ESA sub-region regulate postal services. Based on these factors the core membership of ARICEA, named “regulatory membership” is open to all the autonomous regulators in the ICT sector including the postal and broadcasting sub-sectors in ESA.

Government ministries in the ICT sector or sub-sectors in which autonomous regulators have not yet been established have an automatic right to participate in all the activities of the Association as “ministry members”.

The Association recognizes the need for working closely with other stakeholders in the ICT sector especially those involved in the provision of services as well as the regulation of other utilities. Therefore, ARICEA has created a category of associate membership, which is open to:

- Regulatory authorities in the ESA sub-region that are eligible for regulatory membership but opt for associate membership. -Operators, service providers and consultants, or their associations, in the ICT sector in ESA; regulators of other utility services in ESA; and
ICT Regulators or associations of ICT regulators in other sub-regions of Africa.

Associate members are entitled to participate in all the activities of the Association but they have no right to vote or to be members of the Executive Committee. Similarly, associate members have lighter obligations than regulatory members, for example, concerning membership contributions.

Organisational Structure

In order to achieve its objectives ARICEA has established the following organisational structure:

- a) The General Meeting, which is the highest decision-making organ
- b) The Executive Committee which oversees the operations of the Association
- c) Technical Committees mandated to carry out studies in specialised areas of regulation, develop guidelines and make recommendations pertaining to the harmonisation of regulatory practices.
- d) The Secretariat, which provides administrative and technical support to the Association.

The Executive Committee comprises five (5) members, namely, a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, and three other members. The Executive Committee members serve for a maximum of two (2) consecutive terms of one year each. The Chairmanship rotates annually. The current members of the Executive Committee are:

The Ethiopian Telecommunications Agency- Chairman
The Uganda Communications Commission--Vice Chairman
Burundi, Sudan and Zimbabwe (Broadcasting Authority)-Members.

Relationship with other Organizations and Resource Partners

ARICEA has a close relationship with COMESA. It shares common objectives with COMESA with regard to regional integration and to the development of ICTs in particular. As indicated earlier, COMESA facilitated the establishment of ARICEA. The COMESA Secretariat is the Interim Secretariat of ARICEA.

Also, ARICEA has a close relationship with the Telecommunication Regulatory Association of Southern Africa (TRASA). Some TRASA members are also ARICEA members or participate actively in the activities of ARICEA. Given this overlap in membership and the fact that the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and COMESA harmonize their programmes, ARICEA and TRASA have started a process for cooperation. For instance, they have agreed to undertake a number of activities jointly.

ARICEA collaborates with other national, regional, continental and global ICT associations and organizations including the East African Regulatory Postal and Telecommunication Organization (EARPTO), the West African Telecommunications Regulators Association (WATRA), the African Telecommunication Union (ATU), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). It has also a working relationship with the United States Federal Commission (FCC) and the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC). ARICEA will be happy to collaborate with more organizations interested in ICTs.

To-date ARICEA has depended heavily on financial support from resource partners, notably USAID. ARICEA has also benefited from financial assistance the USAID Leland Initiative, the Commonwealth Telecommunication Organization (CTO) and the Development Bank of Southern Africa.

Achievements

During the period 2000-2002 the then potential ARICEA members made contributions to implementation of the COMESA ICT Policy and Regulatory Programme, comprising, among others:

- Consensus-building on an ICT Policy and a Model Information and Communication Bill that were adopted in March 2003 by the COMESA Policy Organs;
- Elaboration of regulatory guidelines on Interconnection, Licensing and Universal Service/Access; and
- Adoption of a capacity building strategy and the creation of a Network on Capacity Building.

Building upon this experience, coupled with great enthusiasm by the members, ARICEA has been able to move quickly to consolidating itself. Among the accomplishments of ARICEA since its launch in January 2003, are:

- Adoption of a 5-year business plan framework and some basic rules and procedures;
- Contribution to the implementation of the Network on Capacity Building in collaboration with other stakeholders such as academic institutions, regional & international organisations and resource partners. Initial course modules on ICT policy and regulation based on the Network on Capacity Building and Knowledge Exchange in the Telecommunications Sector in Africa ([NetTel@Africa](#)), were tested at a workshop held in Kampala, 22-28 November 2003.
- Commencement of consensus-building on Competition (Fair-Trading and Pricing Guidelines);
- Conclusion of arrangements on collaboration with TRASA. As a result joint workshops (ARICEA-TRASA) on Telecom Sector Performance Review and Consumer Protection were held in Johannesburg during 17-21 November 2003
- Contribution to the WSIS discussion issues.

Challenges and Opportunities

ARICEA has benefited from substantial resources that a cooperating partner made available during the process leading to its establishment but which are not likely to continue at the same level in future. ARICEA members have made preparations for own funding of a small secretariat starting from 2005. But the Association will not be in a position to raise enough funds from members to undertake the actions envisaged in its action plan. (Refer to Annex-Elements of Action Plan).

ARICEA members operate under lean organizational structures. It might not be possible for some of them to participate in the Association's activities, including committee work, as fully as would be desirable.

Notwithstanding these challenges the future is promising. ARICEA members have committed themselves to supporting their organization as much as possible. In addition, there is willingness from present resource partners to continue to a measure of support to the Association. There are also a number of new initiatives, including NEPAD and Catalysing Access to ICTs in Africa (CATIA), that are quite promising in terms of support for the type of activities that ARICEA will be undertaking. ARICEA looks forward to working with more resource and technical partners.

Conclusion and future plans

ARICEA has started well. Thanks to resources that were available in the run up to its launch and immediately afterwards, a number of important actions have been implemented. In the short-term the Association will focus on completing the actions that have been initiated, for example, activating the Technical Committees; mobilizing more members and finalizing the development and adoption of the guidelines on Interconnection, Licensing, Universal Service/Access, Competition (Fair-Trading), Pricing and Consumer Affairs. If resources will be available ARICEA's long-term plans encompass developing regional guidelines on radio frequency planning pricing and monitoring; numbering; licensing of satellite services, broadcasting and content regulation as well as regulation of postal services. ARICEA also plans to design regional performance indicators and carry out a study on benchmarks that could be useful to its members. Convergence issues like licensing of multimedia services and managing of competition in general are other areas to which attention will be directed.

Capacity building is vital for regulators and other stakeholders. Therefore, the Association will also seek to consolidate the gains that have been made in this area. Finally, the Association will endeavour to cement existing relationships with other organizations and resource partners as well exploring new ones new opportunities for collaboration.