

DOCUMENT FOR ccTLD WORKSHOP

Source: African Telecommunications Union (ATU)

Title: Perspectives for Coordination and Evolution of ccTLD issues

1 INTRODUCTION

It is a great privilege and honour for the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) to have been invited to this very significant and timely workshop on ccTLD.

On behalf of the ATU Secretary General, Mr. Jan Mutai, may I express our deep appreciation for having been accorded the opportunity of participating and interacting with so many experts in this field present at this gathering.

We should hasten to recognize the important role of the Director of TSB, Mr. Hulin Zhao for his unfailing support to enhance awareness about the internet in general, especially during the recent reform process. As a regional telecommunications organization, ATU maintains close cooperation with the ITU and our combined efforts at the Marrakesh conference resulted in decisions that made this workshop possible. We have also established good working relations with ICANN/GAC. In the same vein, we extend similar compliments to Dr Stuart Lynn for his visionary paper on the ICANN reform. As he will shortly be stepping down from the leadership of ICANN, may I take this opportunity to wish him every success in his new endeavour.

2 THE INTERNET

It cannot be gainsaid that the Internet in its widest dimensions, is pivotal to the economic and social well being of nations. This is even more so for the developing countries. In spite of its relatively recent introduction as compared to common carrier services, it has moved by leaps and bounds to the extent that it now encompasses almost every human activity. The email service has transformed both at national and global level, the traditional form of business and social interaction. Significantly also, it has brought about economic levels of tariffs unseen before in the telecommunications sector and thus giving impetus to heightened utilization.

There are multiple benefits arising from this technology most importantly in opening up of access to education, through tele-education, telemedicine, internet cafes in urban and rural areas,

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environmental monitoring, to mention only a few. The benefits to the emerging information society, a subject of current and topical interest cannot be too strongly emphasized.

In recognition of the advantages of internet to populations, various initiatives both regional and global have been initiated by Governments and Organizations at various levels. In this regard let me just mention a few which include the UN ICT task force, the G8 ICT initiative and the African Union's NEPAD strategy.

3 GOVERNANCE PLATFORM

The management of the internet domain names is the responsibility of ICANN with its associated entities and constituencies. However, for a successful internet service to emerge, these stakeholders need to engender effective and mutual cooperation within a well regulated environment. We believe the ICANN reform process, as mentioned by key speakers yesterday, holds significant promise. The enhanced recognition of the GAC role, should help bring to the fore public domain issues which without doubt will assume greater importance in this era of the information society.

4 ccTLD

Turning to the work of this workshop, ATU and indeed the countries of our region, feel that this meeting could not have come at a more appropriate time. We say this for the following reasons:-

- § The advanced ICANN structural reform including the rationalization and reinforcement of the GAC structures.
- § The evolution of outreach programs by ICANN and GAC in particular, aimed at enhancing awareness in the developing countries.
- § The demonstrated interest by our Member States in addressing the multiple issues concerning: -
 - Re-delegation of the ccTLD current management arrangements, where necessary.
 - Involvement of government and regulatory agencies to assume their rightful role in the policy formulation pertaining to public domain interest issues in general and ccTLD in particular.
 - Evolving strategies and programs including the possible establishment of regional libraries to enhance awareness strategies.

We would like to bring to the attention of the workshop that as of the current status, the ccTLD constituency in Africa is to a large extent marginalised. In order to correct this situation, ATU has engaged with ICANN/GAC and ITU in regard to a number of initiatives. We also contributed to the adoption of Res. 102 on the Internet at the last Marrakesh ITU Plenipotentiary Conference. We have now begun issuing of regular briefs to our Member States on matters relating to the internet and ICANN/GAC. Based on the ATU Member State and Regulators database, GAC will, in due course, be able to establish contact with the relevant authorities in the various countries.

In addition to the above efforts, work will need to continue almost immediately on evolving strategies to ensure a smooth re-delegation process. Consequently, our presence here should provide benchmarking experience that can be shared within our region.

The workshop will also give us tremendous opportunity to create an effective network that will help our aims and objectives in this regard.

5 **ATU**

Mr. Chairman, kindly permit me to make a few remarks about ATU.

ATU is a Specialized Agency of the African Union with a mandate of promoting rapid development of information and communications technology in Africa in order to achieve universal service access in addition to full inter-country connectivity. The Union envisions an Africa that is empowered as a full and active participant in the global information and knowledge society.

ATU is a member of the ICANN Intergovernmental Advisory Committee (GAC).

Our Strategic Plan adopted recently at the ATU Plenipotentiary conference Nairobi, 2002, highlights the following as ATU's Core Activity areas for the year 2002-2006 time frame.

- § **Global decision-making:** Coordinating Africa's contribution to the work of global decision-making conferences for treaty-making, standards-setting and policy-formulation with the aim of ensuring Africa gets an equitable share of globally allocated resources.
- § **Regional market integration:** Fostering policy and regulatory harmonization to create larger common markets for ICTs based on Regional Economic Communities increasing private sector participation.
- § **Infrastructure investment promotion:** Promoting initiatives for investment in access and back-bone cross-border information infrastructure through smart partnerships between public, private and volunteer sectors in order to achieve universal access and full inter-country connectivity aspirations.
- § **Institutional capacity building:** Facilitating institutional and human capacity building in fields / disciplines of treaty-making, standards-setting, policy-formulation, regional integration and investment promotion.
- § **Membership decision-making:** Enhancing and re-engineering the decision-making processes of Union's organs in order to meet the changing needs and expectations of the membership in an efficient, effective and sustainable manner.

In conclusion, I wish this Workshop every success in its deliberations.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your kind attention.
