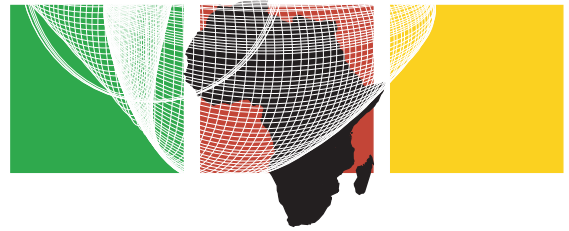


International Workshop on
African Research & Education Networking

September 25-27 2005 CERN - Geneva, Switzerland



1 INTRODUCTION

As part of the efforts to implement the outcome of the first WSIS Summit, and as a follow up to a presentation made by the United Nations University (UNU) and the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) during the WSIS Summit in Geneva, in December 2003, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in collaboration with the United Nations University/GRID-Arendal and CERN organized a workshop on “African Research & Education Networking” with the aim of enhancing capabilities of African academic and scientific institutions to take advantage of the opportunities associated with the emergence of the global information society.

2. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED

2.1 Ownership

2.1.1 It was emphasised that the momentum for improved networking must be driven by research and education institutes which must take ownership of the challenge.

2.2 Passing the Message to Governments

2.2.1 Governments should adopt conducive policy and regulatory environments to promote investment in broadband network infrastructure for use by the African research and education institutes.

2.2.2 Good networking underpinned education at all levels. Governments, Regional Economic Communities and the African Union, and NEPAD should understand and pursue this vision.

2.3 National Organizations

2.3.1 National Research and Education Network (NREN) should be created in each African country as a key enabler to coordinate networking efforts.

2.3.2 NRENs do not carry commercial traffic and never wish to become ISPs. Governments and industry should be aware of this. A well-defined Accepted Use Policy (AUP) is needed for a NREN.

2.3.3 The European Commission has supported formation of NRENs in Europe, Latin America and North Africa. The NREN model is time tested but could be adapted to local conditions.

2.4 Long-Term Infrastructure Solution

Satellite may be the only technology today for delivering networking to most of Africa, but land-based optical fibre infrastructures is the only long term solution. Development partners should consider optical fibre infrastructure investments in Africa.

2.5 Regulatory Issues

National policies and regulations including preferential rates for education and research users would facilitate easy and affordable access to communications services and infrastructure.

2.6 Governance/Administrative Structure

Effective coordination between institutes and relevant ministries as well as regional and pan-African bodies such as SARUA and the AAU is needed for development of strategies for improved access to bandwidth and lobbying for improved infrastructure and regulatory policies. Support by networking consortia and development partners is encouraged to engage with these coordinated African efforts at all appropriate levels.

2.7 Content

Africa, with its wide range of unique information and knowledge should start addressing content issues, including its management and digital libraries.

3 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The key issues identified at this workshop will be addressed further at parallel sessions during the WSIS, in particular at the AAU, AUF and EU events in Tunis.

In the quest to address African connectivity challenges, as expressed by the continent’s leadership and echoed by the African participants in the workshop, a number of developments and initiatives are ongoing which may make the present time a turning-point. While it is evident that improving networking in Africa will bring many benefits to citizens of Africa, it will also bring major benefits to the rest of the world, by integrating Africa into the Global Information Society.



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