



NEPAD Council Report on NOVATECH The ICT Africa Market Place



Summary

NEPAD Council's 2008 ICT Africa event was organized as an integral part of NOVATECH - The ICT Africa Marketplace in collaboration with Pro-Invest - www.proinvest-eu.org. Pro-Invest is a common initiative of the European Commission (EC) and Institutions from the ACP States (Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific) to stimulate Euro-African cooperation.

The conference successfully ended on the 15th of February in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Over 300 participants came from more than 40 countries in Africa and abroad to meet and greet, teach, and learn, make connections and move business forward. Dozens of new ideas on ICT development in Africa, business opportunities and lessons learnt from other regions of the world were shared. With technical tutorials, peer reviewed technical presentations, demonstrations, industry exhibitions, business to business meetings, and networking during lunch and dinner events, *NOVATECH – The ICT Africa market place* was a memorable event.

More importantly, NEPAD Council came out of the conference with concrete action items to address some of the most important issues discussed at the conference. Partnerships with other organizations were forged during the conference to facilitate the execution of identified programs.

Organizers and Supporting Partners

			
			

Sponsors

			
			
			

Conference Programming:

The cooperation between Pro-Invest and NEPAD Council which resulted in bringing together NOVATECH and NEPAD Council's ICT Africa into a single conference provided the participants with a rich variety of programming addressing a very wide range of ICT related topics. The program included opening and closing sessions, plenary sessions, peer reviewed technical sessions, technical tutorials and one-on-one business meetings. Topics discussed included ICT infrastructure projects, networks, Internet connectivity, business trends, ICT financing and outsourcing.

The opening and closing panelists included:

- Ü Mr. Babs Adenaike – Programme Manager Pro-Invest
- Ü Hon. Dino Sinigalia – European Commission Ambassador to Ethiopia
- Ü Hon Bernard Zoba – African Union Commissioner of Infrastructure and Energy
- Ü Hon Abdoulie Janneh – Under UN Secretary General and Executive Secretary of Economic Commission for Africa
- Ü Hon. Tefera Waluwa – Ministry of Capacity Building, Ethiopia
- Ü Dr. Jabulani Dhliwayo – NEPAD Council Acting President
- Ü Mr. Debretsion Gebremichael, Director General of Ethiopian ICT Development Agency

Ü Ms Aida Opoku-Mensah – Director of ICT, Science and Technology Division, UNECA

The opening ceremony set the stage for the three day deliberation with speakers identifying some of the challenges facing the continent in ICT development and the progress being made to address these challenges. They called for stronger cooperation between Africa and the West, especially Europe. During his opening remarks, Ethiopia's Minister of Capacity Building, Honorable Tefera WALUWA, stated that Ethiopia is committed to the development of ICTs to promote its poverty alleviation and economic development programs. The Minister said, *"ICTs would help in consolidating the gains of the ongoing State transformation with a special emphasis on improving service delivery and creating a sense of accountability and transparency, which are the bedrocks for the flourishing of democratic institutions and the establishment of good governance."*

During the closing ceremony, the conference proceedings were summarized and speakers mapped the way forward. The following were some of the issues reviewed during the closing session:

- Ü The need to change the regulatory environment in Africa and make it more conducive to ICT business development
- Ü The need for ICT training – Africans may not be able to take part in the large infrastructure projects being rolled out because of lack of skills
- Ü The development of inventive e-applications which do not necessarily require heavy infrastructure
- Ü There has to be a willingness to closely involve the private sector and to strengthen the public-private dialogue
- Ü Innovation is possible in Africa especially given mobile and wireless technologies
- Ü The need to deploy satellite and optical fiber (terrestrial and sub-marine) as a possible solution to address the lack of infrastructure.

In his remarks, Dr. Jabulani Dhliwayo, NEPAD Council's acting president said, *"NEPAD Council had taken the action item to start discussions with the AU, through its Washington, DC, Embassy on improving the regulatory environment in Africa"*.

Business to Business meetings

The business to business meetings organized by Pro-Invest did not only bring together entrepreneurs seeking different types of partnerships, but also educational and research institutions seeking different types of collaborations. Approximately 750 meetings were scheduled leading to about 70 partnership memoranda including:

- Ü Joint-ventures
- Ü Distributions
- Ü Sub-contracting
- Ü Equipment supply
- Ü Export advice
- Ü Technical Assistance.



Infrastructure Projects Update:

One highlight of the conference was the review of significant infrastructure projects being deployed in Africa. The following were the most notable projects reviewed at the conference:

- Ü SWANSAT - by Dr. William Welty, CEO of SWANSAT
- Ü SEACOM – by Mr. Brian Herlihy, President of SEACOM
- Ü TEAMS – by Mr. Eric Osiakwan, Secretary General of AfriISPA.

SWANSAT (Super-Wide Area Network Satellite) is a planned constellation of no less than four (and possibly as many as twelve) high powered geosynchronous orbit (GSO) telecommunications satellites licensed for global provision of two-way broadband services utilizing ten GHz of electromagnetic frequency in the W-band. Each SWANSAT bi-directional signal will cover the globe, except for the North and South Poles. Each spacecraft in the SWANSAT constellation will be capable of delivering 600 million 2 Megabit/second broadband Internet connections and about 250,000 video channels to island nations and other world communities that are now either underserved, not being served at all, or served at exorbitant cost to the end user. The first spacecraft in the constellation is planned for deployment in late 2012, with follow-on launches slated every six to nine months until a full deployment of the SWANSAT System constellation has been accomplished. SWANSAT can provide two-way broadband ICT services to residents of least developed countries (LDC's) and developing countries (DC's), utilizing its Shareware Telecommunications™ economic model (described below) to meet sustainable development and wide open access goals of the UN Economic and Social Council's ECOSOC 2000 Ministerial Declaration in full consistency with many UN Millennium Development Goals. A minimal number of non-subsidized subscriptions from residents of G7 nations will be accepted as a base for subsidizing subscriptions accepted from residents of non-G7 nations, including residents of LDC's and DC's and from those serving the underserved in these nations.

SEACOM is a private company which will construct a 15,000 km submarine cable system that connects South Africa, Madagascar, Mozambique, Tanzania and Kenya to India and to the new TE cable station in Ras Sidr, Egypt near Suez, where TE will land the SEA Cable System. From Ras Sidr, SEACOM will own a system within TE North

cable system permitting the full SEACOM system to reach France seamlessly. When it is fully functional in 2009, SEACOM will be a service provider of international fiber optic bandwidth along the East Coast of Africa linking Southern and East Africa, Europe and South Asia. SEACOM has an enormous capacity of 1.2TB/s, to enable high definition TV, peer to peer networks, IPTV, and surging Internet demand and pricing will be significantly lower than current satellite or fiber pricing. SEACOM will be ready to serve Southern and East African markets from 2009, well in time to meet the bandwidth needs of the Confederations Cup and the 2010 Soccer World Cup in South Africa, and the growing requirements of the economies in the countries it serves.

TEAMS (The East African Marine System) is an initiative spearheaded by the government of Kenya to link the country to the rest of the world through a submarine fiber optic cable. It was first proposed as an alternative to EASSy, the East African Submarine Cable System. The submarine fiber cable will run from Mombassa to Fujairah but there are considerations to extend the network plan to include landing points along the coast in countries South of Kenya.

Peer-Reviewed presentations:

A large number of peer reviewed technical papers were presented during the Research and tutorial sessions. About 200 papers were received for consideration but only about 30 papers were accepted for publication and presentation after a rigorous technical review by a technical committee of experts. Topics included the following:

- ü Fiber optics
- ü Internet Connectivity
- ü Satellite broadband
- ü Broadband wireless networks

The way forward

Regulation:

NEPAD Council has identified regulation as one of the most important issue that came out of the conference. Many African countries still have government controlled telecommunication monopolies that may make it difficult for other companies to compete effectively in the ICT sector. Cross border projects are taking long to implement because of the complexity of acquiring necessary “International Gateway” licenses by many companies. The Council has pledged to discuss deregulation with continental bodies including the African Union through its Embassy in Washington DC. Regulation will be one of the themes to be addressed at our next ICT Africa event in 2009 in South Africa – venue and dates to be confirmed.

African University Networks

NEPAD Council recognizes the need for an African network African Universities. As a starting point for this initiative the Council invited several speakers to discuss any ongoing national or continental initiatives. Two of the participants who addressed the

topic were Dr. Gilford Hapanyengwi from the University of Zimbabwe and Mrs. Léa Hidega Tiku from France Telecom.

Dr. Gilford Hapanyengwi discussed a planned network connecting 12 Zimbabwean Universities and whose aim is to foster cooperation and sharing of ideas and resources in the delivery of all services at the member academic institutions through the use of ICTs.

Mrs Hidega Tiku proposed to implement the “African Research and Education Collaborative Network” in collaboration with ongoing initiatives. The project’s plan is to bring together all stake holders and carry out the following:

- Ü Define methods of interconnection of each country
- Ü Define strategies and implement routing between regional networks
- Ü Describe international routing policy
- Ü Implement network management
- Ü Help implement applications
- Ü Training

The backbone network could be implemented by leveraging Mrs Hidega Tiku’s experience of implementing the French network, “RENATER”.

The council has pledged to support the initiative and engage other stake holders such as the African Union and AfrISPA. The project will benefit from AfrISPA’s Internet exchange points initiative. The Council plans to convene a session on the project at the ICT Africa 2009 in South Africa.

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- Ü Mr. Derrick Moyo – First Secretary, South African Embassy in the USA
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