

**1<sup>ST</sup> EURO-AFRICA COOPERATION FORUM ON ICT RESEARCH  
- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -**

**The “1st Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum on ICT Research” - A considerable success!**

Brussels, April 5, 2009 - The “1st Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum on ICT Research” has been a great success. On March 24-25, over 320 participants from some 50 different countries - including both policy-makers and ICT researchers in the public and private sectors - met in Brussels (Belgium) to highlight the key issues that currently hamper the full deployment of ICTs in Africa and see how Europeans and Africans can collectively maximise their impact in bringing concrete responses to African needs, support the development of a truly inclusive Information Society on the continent, and enhance the development of Euro-Africa collaborative projects. The two-day event was organised by the European Commission (Directorate-General Information Society and Media - DG INFSO) with the strong support of the African Union Commission (AUC) and the EuroAfriCa-ICT EU/FP7 project.

The meeting was opened by Ms **Viviane Reding** (European Commissioner for DG INFSO) firstly through a video message (Ms Reding had to participate in a last minute Parliament session) and then through a member of her Cabinet: **Mr Jan Ostraja-Ostraszewski**. Ms Reding highlighted that Europe has a lot of experience and best practice to share and the EC is committed to support African institutions on the necessary policies and programmes needed to set-up and implement. “We are pursuing those objectives through two complementary Africa-EU Partnerships: the Partnership on Infrastructures, for supporting the rolling-out of trans-national physical backbones, and the Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space - the so-called 8th Partnership - for supporting complementary S&T and ICT capacities”, said Ms Reding and Mr Ostraja-Ostraszewski. “We look forward to working with all of you, in Africa and the EU, on ICT policy and research,” added Commissioner Reding. “There are already tangible results of EU policy in research cooperation,” complemented Jan Ostraja-Ostraszewski. “For example, there have already been more projects supported under the first call of FP7 than under the whole duration of FP6.”

Ms **Vera Brenda Ngosi** (Director, Directorate of Human Resources, Science and Technology, African Union Commission) thanked the EC for its determination to assist Africa adding that the Forum provided “an excellent opportunity for addressing mutual concerns and partnerships. We are opening a new chapter, and Africans are ready to work shoulder to shoulder with our European partners”, she added.

“ICT in all forms are key to people-centred development,” said **Abdul Waheed Khan** (UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information) “and UNESCO stands ready to play a catalytic role with the organisations present here at this Forum”. The situation in Africa was put into context by Ms **Sally Kosgei** (Kenya's Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education) when she said: “Africa has a roadmap for development, but we have only taken the first step. We need to take a thousand more steps, otherwise we will be left behind. We have received some bilateral support from some EU countries and some support from the African Development Bank, but there is a need for proper coordination and to assess where we are.”

Among the discussions during the Forum were high-level sessions dedicated to “Africa-EU cooperation on ICT”, “EU-AU partnerships”, “EU, AUC and ACP programmes”, “private and public partnerships” (PPP), “African participation in FP7”, “e-Infrastructures”, technology roadblocks and socio-economic goals and applications.

Summing up in the closing ceremony, **Thierry Devars** (Policy Officer, International Relations Unit, DG INFSO) concluded that there had been too many pilot projects in Africa, and that now was the time to move them to the commercial models. “This can be done,” he said, “by developing partnerships and friendships between the EU and AUC.” “The EU-AUC partnership is real”, added Vera Brenda Ngosi, “and it is advancing, but it can move forward faster”. In the opening panel session, **Stefano Manservigi** (Director-General, Directorate General Development - DG DEV, European Commission) noted that he was pleased, when looking out at the high level of participation at the Cooperation Forum. “Five years ago, this was not possible,” he said, referring to the fact that the seeds of political will in Europe to assist Africa had been sown, and that there was at least enough capacity in Africa to be able to nurture these seeds into something viable. As a result of the connections made and opportunities for collaboration discussed during the “1st Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum on ICT Research”, increasing the pace of development in Africa has been given a major boost. It is hoped that, in five years time, cooperative ICT research and development programmes initiated at this Forum have begun to bear fruit.

“As a result of the connections made and opportunities for collaboration discussed during the 1st Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum on ICT Research, increasing the pace of development in Africa, especially through the advancement of ICT research and accessibility, has been given a major boost”, said **Peter McGrath** (Acting Programme Officer, the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World - TWAS).

socio-economic development and for its integration at a worldwide level. The African and European ICT Institutions/Communities have now to build on the current dynamics and tackle the remaining obstacles in the most efficient way to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and to implement the Africa-EU Joint Strategy and Action Plan” added **Karine Valin** (Managing Director, Sigma Orionis).

A follow-up event will be held end of 2009 or early in 2010 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

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The “1st Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum on ICT Research” was sponsored by a number of ICT-related organisations, including:

- **The Canon Foundation for Scientific Research** (UK)
- **ICWE GmbH** (Germany) organisers of eLearning Africa, the largest international conference on ICT for development, education and training on the African continent
- **The Sharing Knowledge Foundation** (Partager le Savoir), based in Switzerland, which aims to foster a dialogue between scientists from Europe and those from Middle Eastern and African countries
- **SPIDER**, the Swedish programme for ICT in developing regions

*"ICT4D helps poor and marginalised communities in Africa and elsewhere to use the potential of ICT to improve the quality of their lives. ICT offers vast opportunities for socio-economic development by using modern technology to address urgent needs in health, education, agriculture and other sectors that impact directly on the livelihoods of the poor. Bringing together African and European experts will enhance the possibilities of making full use of the potential of ICT4D to promote development. SPIDER works in support of reduction of poverty by coordinating a network of experts from universities, governments, NGOs, and the private sector in support of this effort."*

Afzal Sher - Director, SPIDER

*"Information and Communication Technologies have a vital role to play in regional, organisational and personal development. The Canon Foundation for Scientific Research is delighted to support the EuroAfrica-ICT Forum, and wishes the organisers and participants every success with this important event."*

Steve Jones - Scientific Advisor, Canon Foundation for Scientific Research

*"In December 2007, the Montpellier workshop "Internet and Grids for Africa", organised by "Sharing Knowledge Foundation" and "Institut des Grilles du CNRS" advocated a pilot programme for grids to be implemented at a regional level in order to offer African scientists the technical resources needed to fulfil their research programmes. The first grid in sub-Saharan Africa, has been set-up in July 2008 at University Cheikh Anta Diop (Dakar, Senegal) and successfully linked to the EGEE European Grid. This is a breakthrough that should soon be followed by South Africa and other African countries."*

Robert Klapisch, President and Founder, Sharing Knowledge Foundation

*"At ICWE we believe in the huge benefits that ICT can bring to education. We established eLearning Africa to create a platform for experts, policy makers, decision takers and practitioners from Africa and beyond to connect, discuss and learn. Since our first event in Addis Ababa, eLearning Africa has grown into the largest and most important conference on ICT for education on the African continent. It has played a significant role in accelerating the transfer of knowledge and expertise. Delegates from more than 90 countries attend this annual event, creating an important new community of experts dedicated to developing and contributing to a host of exciting projects in Africa. This year in Dakar (27-29 May), the capital of Senegal, eLearning Africa will once again highlight the latest developments, examine new ideas and offer participants a unique opportunity to join this important community."*

Rebecca Stromeyer, Managing Director, ICWE GmbH.

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*Sigma Orionis and TWAS are two of the EU/FP7 EuroAfrica-ICT project consortium members responsible for implementing the “1st Euro-Africa Cooperation Forum on ICT Research”, organised by the EC and the AUC.*