

**Opportunities, Successes and Challenges of Collaboration  
in the Global ICT R&D in Africa.**

Opening Address at the EuroAfrica-ICT Awareness Workshop  
Supporting FP7/ICT Proposals Involving Sub-Saharan African Organisations

By  
Dr. Edmund B. Katiti,  
Policy & Regulatory Advisor,  
NEPAD e-Africa Commission.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,  
All Protocol Observed.

**Africa-EU Partnership**

The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership states that Africa and the EU will strengthen their cooperation in building knowledge-based societies and economies. Both sides recognize that the development of S&T and innovation is one of the essential engines of social-economic growth and sustainable development in Africa; that competitiveness in the global economy is increasingly dependent on knowledge and innovative ways of applying modern technology, especially ICT. Thus partnerships and investments advancing access to ICT infrastructure, access to quality education, and the development of S&T and innovation systems in Africa are crucial for attaining all other development goals.

Africa and the EU will strengthen their cooperation and support to bridge the digital divide and promote the development of an inclusive Knowledge Economy, including through the implementation of the outcome of the WSIS and relevant AU/NEPAD programmes.

More specifically, in the area of ICT, Africa and the EU will aim at bridging the digital divide that limits access to modern telephony and internet services. It will address the harmonization of policy and regulatory frameworks and investment in broadband infrastructure and support non-commercial e-services.

In parallel, similar efforts will be made to address the scientific divide and increase Africa's research capabilities.

One of the reasons for setting up of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), was to change the way Africa relates to its development partners. Under NEPAD Africa identifies its priority sectors, programmes, and projects, and then approached its development to assist in those areas. The way NEPAD does this, is by bringing together African stakeholders in a particular sector, who determine the priorities and then chart the way forward.

**NEPAD e-Africa Commission**

NEPAD e-Africa Commission is NEPAD's ICT Task Team. Its mandate is to oversee the structured development and implementation of the NEPAD ICT programmes across the African continent.

Objective of the Commission are:

- To accelerate development of ICT broadband infrastructure;
- To accelerate use of this infrastructure for ICT services and applications;
- To bridge the digital divide within Africa and between Africa and the rest of the world.

Although the NEPAD e-Africa Commission has a wide mandate, due to resource constraints, it is active in 3 programme areas:

1. ICT Broadband Infrastructure Programme,
2. ICT Human Resource Development through the NEPAD e-schools Initiative,
3. NEPAD e-Tourism Programme.

The first two are flagship programme areas that have been endorsed as such by the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC).

## **ICT Broadband Infrastructure Programme**

The NEPAD ICT Broadband Infrastructure programme aims to connect all African countries to one another and, in turn, to the rest of the world through broadband fibre-optic submarine cables.

The NEPAD ICT Broadband Infrastructure programme satisfies a number of strategic objectives reflected in the African Union Commission's concept paper 'Master Plan for the Development of Networks and Infrastructure to Strengthen African Connectivity and Access to Telecommunications and ICT Services'. Amongst these objectives are:

1. Ensure full intra and inter African region connectivity;
2. Significantly reduce, or even eliminate the transit of local traffic outside the Continent;
3. Plan the harmonious and integrated development of Communication and Information Technology networks and infrastructure at the level of each region and the Continent, by avoiding a fragmented approach thus benefiting from the economy of scale;
4. Stimulate substantial and consistent mobilization of investments and participation of the private sector in community infrastructure projects.

The NEPAD ICT Broadband Infrastructure Network (NEPAD Network) was agreed in 2 stakeholder workshops held in July 2004 in Johannesburg for the Eastern and Southern African region, and in July 2005 in Dakar for the West, Central and North African region. The NEPAD Network comprises of a submarine segment and a terrestrial segment.

A policy and regulatory framework under which the NEPAD Network is to be developed was agreed in August 2006, and signed into a Ministerial protocol under the auspices of the African Union. The Kigali Protocol, which was signed by 12 countries, has been ratified by 7 countries, bringing it into effect.

Although the Kigali Protocol was originally developed by 23 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, in October 2007, the signatory countries agreed that the protocol be open up to all African countries, and the African Union has agreed that there is nothing in the protocol that stops any African country that wishes to accede to the protocol from doing so.

A major objective of the Kigali Protocol is to lower the cost of broadband connectivity in Africa through, among other things, the application of the principle of open and non-discriminatory access to the broadband network.

The NEPAD Network has developed into Uhuruset submarine cable and Umojanet terrestrial network.

- Uhuruset is a 40,000km 3.8Tbps submarine cable network going around the African continent and connecting Africa to Europe, the Middle East and India. It has a provision for connecting every coastal and island country in Africa. It is estimated to cost US\$1.4b and will be developed and operate by a company called Baharicom.
- Umojanet cross-border terrestrial network that will connect African countries to one another. Contract for a detailed feasibility study for this network is to be awarded in July 2008.

## **NEPAD e-Schools Initiative**

The NEPAD e-Schools Initiative was adopted as a high priority NEPAD ICT project by the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee in March 2003. The overall aim of the Initiative is to harness ICT technology for the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning in African primary and secondary schools, whereby young Africans graduate from these schools with ICT skills and knowledge that will enable them to participate confidently and effectively in the global information society and knowledge economy.

The NEPAD e-Africa Commission is spearheading the implementation of the NEPAD e-Schools Initiative, which has the following components running in parallel:

- the NEPAD e-Schools Demonstration Project;
- the NEPAD e-Schools Satellite Network;
- the establishment of the National Implementing Agencies;
- the development of Teacher Training,
- Content and Curriculum Development and
- the NEPAD e-Schools Business Plan.

These activities will converge towards large-scale rollout. Implementation of this initiative will be carried out at national level with coordination taking place at the continental level.

The Commission has been planning and implementing the various components of the NEPAD e-Schools over the past four years. Significant progress has been made in the implementation of the Demo Project. NEPAD e-Schools have been launched in 16 countries, equipment has been installed, teachers have been trained and pupils have been exposed to the wonders of new technology in more than 100 community schools in Africa.

The Business Plan provides the link between the Demo and the roll out. The main objective of the Business Plan is to develop a planning framework that will outline the input, process and resource mobilization for the massive roll-out of the NEPAD e-Schools Initiative. The consulting firm, Ernst & Young and Neil Butcher and Associates, was contracted to develop a Business Plan in consultation with experts appointed by governments of the participating countries, RECs, the African Development Bank, the lead consortia companies and civil society organizations.

In April 2008, a stakeholder conference was held in Johannesburg, that reviewed the Business Plan and made a number of key resolutions concerning the way forward for the NEPAD e-Schools Initiative.

### **Resolutions of Stakeholders' Conference**

1. Call upon the participating countries to aim at transforming 50% of all secondary schools in their countries into NEPAD e-Schools by 2015 and further urge them to collaborate in the development, distribution and sharing of all ICT-in-education applications, experiences and relevant content for NEPAD e-Schools in their national education systems.
2. Call upon national governments to adopt the NEPAD e-Schools Business Plan as a broad framework to implement NEPAD e-Schools and urge them to develop their own national e-Schools business plans by 2010.
3. Call upon national governments to implement the decision to establish, empower and equip National Implementing Agencies or institutional frameworks for the implementation of the NEPAD e-Schools whose governance structure includes stakeholders by 2009.
4. Call upon participating countries to adopt common procurement standards for NEPAD e-Schools and support joint negotiations in order to enhance their bargaining power through economies of scale;
5. Call upon national governments of participating countries to promote partnerships between local public and private institutions in the design, development and marketing of e-schools equipment and services in collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities as appropriate, in line with the NEPAD principles and objectives.
6. Urge all participating countries to complete the development and / or review and strengthen their national ICT-in-education policies, plans and strategies taking into consideration the principles of the NEPAD e-Schools Initiative.

### **NEPAD e-Tourism Programme**

The e-Tourism Programme is a new programme of the NEPAD e-Africa Commission. It has several elements:

**African Tourism Portal:** This is portal that will have links to all African countries official tourism websites. It will involve upgrading current websites in some countries and developing new ones where they don't exist.

**African Payment Gateway:** The APG will be linked to the tourism portal and is aimed at bringing direct revenue into the African Tourism sector. The APG will enable African SMEs to engage in e-Commerce with every country in the world.

**Conclusion.**

The NEPAD e-Africa Commission welcomes collaboration in all the above, and other ICT programme areas.

I thank you for your attention.