MEDIA STATEMENT ON THE MEETING OF SADC MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR TELECOMMUNICATIONS, POSTAL AND ICTs
MASERU, LESOTHO
23rd MAY 2013

The Meeting of SADC Ministers responsible for Telecommunications, Postal and ICT was convened from 20th to 23rd May 2013 in Maseru, Lesotho, hosted by the Ministry of Communications, Science & Technology (MCST) of Lesotho. The Meeting was officially opened by Honourable Tseliso Mokhosi, Minister for Communications, Science & Technology of Lesotho and was attended by Honourable Ministers from SADC Member States.

In his remarks during the Opening Ceremony, the Honourable Christopher Bwalya Yaluma, the Minister of Transport, Works, Supply and Communications of Zambia and Chair of AU CITMC acknowledged the important role that ICT plays on socio-economic development and the multiplier effect it has on the development of other sectors of the economy and the overall contribution towards combating and eradicating poverty, a precondition for attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). He indicated that whilst there has been substantial growth in mobile connectivity within the SADC region, broadband connectivity has been very low. Considering the immense potential that broadband unleashes it is necessary for the SADC region to have in place an efficient and effective optimal frequency band plan that will promote increased broadband deployment, adoption of new technologies, and provision for other future services. He also indicated that in line with the AU Ministerial Resolution, SADC Member States are encouraged to start planning to migrate from Internet Protocol version 4 (IPV4) to IPV6.

Mr. Isidoro da Silva the Chairman of the National Communications Institute of Mozambique (INCM), Chair of SADC stated that there are various opportunities created by the Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT), among which is the increased competitiveness in the ICT sector, stimulating content creation, increase audiovisual supply, business opportunities for new entrants, creation of new markets for interactive service providers and access to the Information Society. The DTT migration process also presents challenges for SADC Member States, starting with access to affordable Set Top Boxed (STBs). This calls for setting up the right conditions for STBs to reach the disadvantaged population. To pursue a smooth DTT migration, we should reflect on financing models that provide for an efficient process for disseminating information about the DTT migration process. Regarding the home and away roaming, recalling that the decision to harmonize the roaming charges was made at the Ministers Meeting held in 2007 in Maputo, Mozambique he noted the significant progress this project has made and believes that it implementation will undoubtedly bring huge benefits to SADC citizens. He indicated that with the adoption of the SADC Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan (RIDMP) at the SADC Summit in August 2012 held in Maputo, Mozambique, the ICT Chapter which identifies several projects that include enhanced

policies, institutional frameworks and regulations, capacity building and infrastructure aimed at deploying enhanced backbone transmission networks of ICT, research and innovation, strengthening postal services, implementation of infrastructure related to DTT migration, radio frequency management and implementation of the e-SADC strategy, Member States are called upon to pay more attention to the implementation phase to meet the established.

Engineer Joao Samuel Caholo the SADC Deputy Executive Secretary (DES) for Regional Integration (RI) reminded the Meeting that the SADC Protocol on Transport, Communications and Meteorology (TCM) was signed by SADC Heads of States in August 1996 in Maseru, Lesotho. He applauded the continued leadership of the ICT Ministers in having steered the ICT Programme that has brought about the much needed connectivity in all spheres of socio-economic activity. He believed that the SADC region had made considerable progress in addressing a number of key ICT activities over the past year which the Meeting will review.

He introduced the Chapter on ICT of the SDC RIDMP also known as the Digital SADC 2017 and in particular introduced the Short Term Action Plan (STAP) whose overall goal is to make SADC become and information and knowledge-based society. He spoke about the upcoming SADC Infrastructure Investment Summit to be convened from the 27th to 28th June 2013 in Maputo, Mozambique aimed to showcase the key priority SADC Infrastructure projects in the RIDMP to mobilize resources. He acknowledged the pivotal role the SADC Implementing Agencies, namely CRASA, SAPOA and SATA played in the ICT sector and appreciated the support from SADC International co-operation and developing partners, without whom our success would have been limited. He commended the Chair of the Senior Officials Meeting and his colleagues and other stakeholders for their contributions towards preparing the Agenda for the Ministers during the last three days.

Honourable Tšeliso Mokhosi the Minister of Communications, Science and Technology of Lesotho thanked the SADC Secretariat for making its Member States the leading ICT block on the continent and requested that it continues with its high level efforts in implementing the SADC ICT Programme. He encouraged Member States to meet regularly to discuss and establish common positions and proposed views so that the voice of SADC is articulated clearly on all relevant issues to be discussed internationally and stated that SADC Member States cannot afford to be left behind. He acknowledged the SADC spirit of sharing and assisting each other like what Angola, Botswana and South Africa have done in regard to the SADC Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) Project Management Office (PMO). With those opening statements he then declared the Meeting officially launched.

The vote of thanks was given by the Honourable Moses Kunkuyu, the Minister for Information and Civic Education, of Malawi, and Vice-Chair, who thanked the Kingdom of Lesotho for the warm welcome, the excellent facilities accorded to the Honourable Ministers and Delegates as well as the hosting of the SADC Ministers Meeting in the beautiful mountain Kingdom. He wished that the SADC worked to enhance the efforts that Member States are putting especially in various fields of ICTs, despite the challenges the region is facing. He also assured the Meeting that Malawi as the incoming Chair will strive to propel SADC to greater heights in terms of regional integration and economic development.

The Ministers Meeting which was preceded by the Meeting of Senior Officials held from the 20th to 22nd May 2013, was chaired by the Honourable Moses Kunkuyu was attended by Honourable Ministers responsible for Telecommunications, Postal and ICT from Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi,

Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Meeting was also attended by the Deputy Executive Secretary of Regional Integration, Engineer Joao Samuel Caholo and the Director of Infrastructure and Services of the SADC Secretariat, Mr. Remigious Makumbe. In addition, the Executive Officers of SADC Implementing Agencies, namely CRASA, SAPOA and SATA were in attendance as well as representatives from the UNECA, ITU, UPU, ATU, NEPAD NPCA and PAPU.

The Meeting focused on the review of the implementation of the Ministers' decisions of the Ministers meeting convened in November last year in Balaclava, Mauritius. The Meeting also facilitated fruitful policy dialogue which sought to ensure that the implementation of regional Telecommunications, Postal and ICT Programmes contributed meaningfully to regional integration, socio-economic development and to the attainment of the World Symposium on the Information Society (WSIS) targets and the MDGs in the SADC Region. The Meeting deliberated over a number of issues and made a number of decisions including the following:

The Ministers considered and approved the SADC Guidelines on Transparency (eg. on balance, call limit information, tariffs for voice, SMS and data) on the SADC Home and Away Roaming (SHAR) and this will become effective as of 1st June 2013. The SHAR is a regional initiative to promote affordability of mobile roaming services to SADC Citizens. The guidelines are in line with the directive of the Ministers meeting held in November 2012 in Balaclava, Mauritius which stipulated the enforcement of transparency measures and the establishment of the Roam Like A Local (RLAL) principle by June 2015.

The revised SADC Frequency Allocation Plan (FAP) based on the WRC-12 decisions and the latest frequency allocation and utilization needs of the SADC Region was considered and approved and Member States are now to align their National Frequency Plans with the FAP.

The Minister approved the proposal for a time and proactive allocation of frequency spectrum at cost-based principle so as to support the on-going affordability initiatives and service universality especially for broadband.

The Ministers noted that SADC Member States are among the leading African Nations in terms of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT) Migration through the implementation of the SADC Roadmap for Digital Broadcasting Migration. Some Member States are at the advanced stage while others have some constraints and are behind. Member States are to continue their efforts as they all plan to migrate to DTT by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) deadline of the 17th June 2015.

The Ministers considered and endorsed the nominated secondments from Angola, Botswana and South Africa to the DTT Project Management Office (PMO) which has been set up at the SADC HQ in Gaborone, Botswana. This Regional DTT Migration Institutional Mechanism is the first of its kind and will play an instrumental role as being as a one-stop-shop for expeditious expert assistance on DTT migration matters and will assist Member States meet the ITU deadline. Member States are rto submit their requests for assistance to the SADC before the end of June 2013 as visits by the DTT PMO will start shortly.

The Ministers noted the prompt progress made by some Member States in their national transposition of the SADC harmonized model laws on Cyber Security, namely the e-transaction/e-commerce, data protection and cybercrime model laws.

The Ministers considered and approved the TOR for the establishment of the SADC ICT Observatory which will become the central point for monitoring and evaluating the progress of the

SADC ICT Programme and also continually measure the digital divide. The SADC ICT Observatory will facilitate the collection and dissemination of ICT indicators, measurement, benchmarking, preparing reports which would enable key stakeholders such as investors, businesses, citizens and Government to be well informed and make the informed decisions.

The Ministers considered and endorsed the SADC ICT SCOM as the Institutional Structure with oversight over the implementation of the Digital SADC 2027 that was adopted by the SADC Summit in August 2012, in Maputo, Mozambique. Digital SADC 2027 will also assist SADC Member States maximize the potential benefits of the digital revolution to facilitate, economic growth, social development and regional integration. The ICT infrastructure projects implemented over the first phase (2012–2017) are referred to as the STAP portfolio of projects amounting to $21.4B. They include the SADC Regional and National Integrated Broadband Infrastructure (RNIBI), SADC Regional Information Infrastructure (SRII), National/Regional Internet Exchange Point (N/RIXP), DTT Migration, postal code addressing systems and etc, where the former is our ICT flagship project.

They also directed SADC to pursue the establishment of SADC Conformity and Interoperability Test Centers and the development of frameworks and guidelines on promoting open access to ICT infrastructures such as submarine cables..

The Ministers were briefed on resource mobilisation marketing strategy of the SADC RIDMP infrastructure projects thorugh the convening of the SADC Infrastructure Investment Summit from the 27th to 28th June 2013 in Maputo, Mozambique, to be attended by Heads of States and top Executives from International Cooperating Partners (ICPs) supporting the six (6) sectors in the SADC RIMDP and banks active in the SADC Region.

The Ministers also noted the progress made in relation to the development of the SADC Model Framework on Universal Postal Reforms and the various initiatives implemented by the SADC Postal Operators in order to improve their quality of services and also reduce pricing, namely; the Regional Special Parcel Services, Global Monitoring System (GMS), Regional Road Transport Network (RTN) and diversifying their portfolio with the Regional Electronic Money Transfer Project, which aims at easing the plight of the unbanked, especially in our rural areas.

The Ministers were also briefed on the preparations for convening the 2nd SAIGF in August 2013 in Luanda, Angola, inauguration of the SADC ICT Thematic Group by August 2013, Postal Strategy Conference to be convened in November 2013 in South Africa as well as the, SADC Coordination Meeting on the GE06 Frequency Plan Modification and SADC Sub-Regional preparatory meeting for the WRC-15 in June 2013 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. SADC also plans to convene the First SADC Preparatory Meeting for the World Telecommunication Development Conference 2014 (WTDC-14) and Plenipotentiary Conference 2014 (PP-14) in 2013. These preparatory meetings enable SADC to develop its own common positions on the agenda items to be discussed and also voicing SADC views at these international forums. In addition, SADC Member States have been able to assist each other to become better prepared on the issues that may have an impact on the SADC Region.

The Ministers urged Member States to favorably consider re-joining or joining the ATU so as to benefit from the united voice of the African Continent.

The Ministers approved a more comprehensive Review Mechanism Template for Monitoring the Status and Progress of the implementation of their decisions.

The Ministers considered and approved a new list of SADC Regional Priority Projects to be undertaken during the year 2014/2015 pertaining to Infrastructure Development, Policy and Regulatory Framework, Postal Operations and Regulation, Regional Coordination.

The Ministers ended their meeting by expressing their appreciation to the Honourable Moses Kunkuyu for having offered to host the next Ministers' meeting in June 2014 in Malawi.

23rd May 2013

Maseru, Lesotho