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Background Paper on ICT-for-Development in Africa For the United Nations ICT Task Force

By : Dr. Joseph Okpaku, Sr.

President and CEO
Telecom Africa Corporation

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On September 30-October 1, 2002, the United Nations ICT Task Force will be holding its third meeting since its inauguration on November 20, 2001.

The objective of this Background Paper is four-fold:

1. To provide an overview of on-going initiatives with respect to ICT development in Africa, including those involving the Task Force;

2. To identify key issues that could have a durable impact on ICT development in Africa;

3. To identify prospective areas of collaboration with the NEPAD e-Africa Commission in support of NEPAD's overall objectives;

4. To identify areas in which the Task Force could help mobilise significant support, promote and/or partner with NEPAD and its e-Africa Commission, and on the basis of such support, have durable positive impact on ICT Development in Africa, within the vision and of its own terms of reference.

1. Overview

A number of events in the last several months have served to advance the focus on ICT Development and ICT for Development in Africa, especially with respect to the UN ICT Task Force and its partners. At their 2002 Summit meeting held in Kananaskis, Alberta, Canada on June 26-7, 2002, the Heads of State of the G8 industrial countries endorsed the programme and Implementation Plan of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the strategic development initiative of the continental organisation, the Organisation of African Union. At the African Summit held a few weeks later in July 2002, in Durban at which the African Union (AU) succeeded the OAU, the NEPAD programme was formally adopted by the new continental organisation, with NEPAD as an organ of the AU. The NEPAD programme includes a strong focus on the dual strategy of ICT Development and ICT for Development. (S*ee later).*

At the Kananaskis Summit, the G8 Heads of State also adopted their own parallel programme for support of Africa's initiative. The G8 Africa Plan of Action, as the initiative is called, also places emphasis on support for ICT Development in Africa, and commits the member states to providing support for enhancing Africa's ability to develop ICT capacity as well as to take advantage of the enabling capacity of information and communications technologies and applications in her drive for comprehensive development.

Specifically, with respect to ICT Development, Article 5.4 of the G8 Africa Action Plan undertakes to assist Africa to create digital opportunities by:

- Encouraging the Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force) International e-Development Resources Network to focus on Africa, and supporting other DOT Force initiatives that can help to create digital opportunities, each building, wherever possible, on African initiatives already underway;
- Working towards the goal of universal access to ICT by working with African countries to improve national, regional and international telecommunications and ICT regulations and policies in order to create ICT-friendly environments;
- Encouraging and supporting the development of public-private partnerships to fast- track the development of ICT infrastructure; and
- Supporting entrepreneurship and human resource development of Africans within the ICT Sector.

Article 5.5 of the Action Plan addresses the counterpart objective of promoting ICT for Development by committing the G8 countries to assisting Africa to "make more effective use of ICT in the context of promoting sustainable economic, social and political development." Specifically, it undertakes to do so by:

- Supporting African initiatives to make best use of ICT to address education and health issues; and
- Supporting African countries in increasing access to, and making the best use of, ICT in support of governance, including by supporting the development and implementation of national e-strategies and e-governance initiatives aimed at increased efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of government.

Two initiatives emanating from the G8 DOT Force process, which are of particular importance to Africa, are:

- The Global Digital Opportunity Initiative, a joint venture between the Markle Foundation and UNDP, which also has a support mechanism under the International Partners Group; and

- The Partnership for Global Policy Participation.

The Global Digital Opportunity Initiative plans support for ICT development in twelve African countries. In March 2002, the Prime Minister of Mozambique signed the first agreement for such deployment in New York.

Also in the same month, the United Nations General Assembly, with the support of the UN ICT Task Force, held a two-day meeting on ICT and Development on June 17-18, 2002. This included two informal panels (one each day) that focused on *Digital Opportunity: The Role of Public-Private Partnerships,* on June 17, and *The Role of the United Nations in Supporting Efforts to Promote Digital Opportunity in Africa,* on June 18.

The CEO Charter for Development

One of the key events at the Special Meeting was the launching of the CEO Charter for Development programme, an initiative of the Global Digital Divide Task Force of the World Economic Forum, in partnership with the UN ICT Task Force. The CEO Charter

is based on the pledge of companies that sign up to commit a minimum of 20 per cent of their annual corporate citizenship and philanthropic budgets to support ICT Development in the developing world with a view to eliminating poverty. This programme holds immense potential for driving ICT development support in Africa in a consistent and coherent way, especially the support of the indigenous African private sector, the ultimate repository and arbiter of long-term durable industrial and competitive capacity-building and knowledge acquisition in Africa.

The WEF-SADC e-Readiness Initiative

The World Economic Forum (WEF), a key partner to the UN ICT Task Force, is itself vigorously engaged in promoting ICT development in Africa in a variety of areas. In cooperation with the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), government institutions and the African individual and institutional private sector, WEF conducted a comprehensive initiative on e-readiness in the Southern African Region. It also devoted its most recent African Economic Summit, expanded from its predecessor Southern African Economic Summit, and entitled, "NEPAD at Work: Business Engages the New Partnership for Africa's Development", to promoting support for NEPAD by the global private sector. One of the outcomes of the Summit was the "Business Endorsement of the New Partnership for Africa's Development" initiative, a programme by which companies doing business in Africa commit themselves to support NEPAD's objectives by undertaking to observe a set of standard corporate citizenship criteria, such as transparency and proper accounting principles. Although a large number of over 250 companies have signed up for this programme, its value is difficult to assess as signing up does not involve any quantifiable commitment of resources (material or in kind), to Africa or the NEPAD process.

The Task Force Digital Bridge to Africa Workshop

On July 12, 2002, the UN ICT Task Force convened the Digital Bridge to Africa Workshop with a view to mobilising African ICT expertise and resources abroad in support of Africa's ICT development on the continent. Co-sponsored by UNIFEM, the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships (UNFIP), Digital Partners and Gruppo CERFE, the workshop consisted of a panel discussion and a working lunch, followed by a concluding plenary session. The workshop, which was attended by some 130 participants including a large number of African ICT experts and entrepreneurs at home and abroad, resulted in the creation of three initiatives:

- The Digital Diaspora Network-Africa (DDN-A)
- AFRISHARE, and
- The Social Venture Fund for Africa

The Gateway Project

In addition to these, the Task Force has mobilised resources and windows of opportunity through its partnerships, in support of ICT development. For example, the Gateway Project of the World Bank has provided a Global Database Gateway and a window for

ICT projects to respond to the needs of the Task Force. In addition, it is providing support through its Network of Country Gateways. African countries are beginning to take advantage of this opportunity.

The Success Story Study

With the support of the African Regional Network and the ECA, the Task Force recently commissioned a Success Story Study in Africa to collect evidence of progress being made in the acquisition of the enabling tools and capacity of ICT, and their deployment for self-improvement and socio-economic empowerment. The study, which will be presented at the Task Force Meeting and entailed field research in three African countries (Egypt, Uganda and Kenya) focused on micro enterprises, and concludes that there have been some gains. It identifies the key elements behind these success stories in terms of certain concepts such as "Demand drives supply", "Ownership is essential", "Learning (and adjusting) by doing", and "The money motive matters".

Other Initiatives

Informal Sector and Civil Society Initiatives

The informal sector, consisting primarily of NGOs, plays a significant role in advancing efforts at building ICT development in Africa, especially with a view to the use of ICT technologies and applications for dealing with the scope of issues which have become traditionally associated with NGO efforts: namely, the eradication of poverty; the social, educational and political empowerment of the disadvantaged or erstwhile deprived, especially women, children; rural and variously handicapped persons; education; preventive healthcare and the management of illness, especially HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases; and universal access to basic information and telecommunications services through innovative and affordable technologies or modifications of existing ones. The energy and persistence, which is the hallmark of NGOs, has contributed in no small way to the plethora of initiatives that are currently ongoing in Africa, including those now embraced by governments and the formal sector. It is significant that these NGOs are as much indigenous African organisations as regional or international groups.

SMEs

Given the size of the informal component of the African economic landscape, especially with over 70% of the population living in small and rural communities, and the unique adaptability of ICT applications to small and micro enterprises, it is not surprising that these enterprises have become increasingly active in the African ICT environment. Taking advantage especially of the online facilities of the Internet, as well as the development of telecentres, individual and small groups of African entrepreneurs are setting up a slew of businesses, from online marketing of farm products, arts, crafts and clothing, to Internet cafes and telecentres. Street corner and marketplace pay-as-you-go phone services in cities like Abidjan, Dakar and Bamako, in which you pay a deposit and

the number you desire is dialed for you (fixedline to fixedline, and mobile to mobile for lowest tariffs), pay noble homage to the ingenuity of the African informal sector.

Industry-based Initiatives

The ICT industry in Africa itself has gradually come around to the realisation that its long-term profitability in the African market is intimately tied into the development of ICT capacity, not only in order to increase market demand, but also with respect to promoting economic and social development. This is the only way to increase the buying power of the African population, which, in turn, will increase that portion of their income which they can then invest in availing themselves of more and broader ICT products and services.

Examples of such industry-based initiatives include the following:

1. *The SatCom Project*

   The SatCom Project was instituted by the telecommunications and satellite industry in Africa, as a partnership between indigenous and international players. At the SatCom Africa 2002 Conference held in Midrand, South Africa, in February 2002, the industry embraced the suggestion of PanAmSat that it commit bandwidth, equipment, expertise and other resources to support significant satellite-based projects. Created primarily by the Terrapinn, Ltd., RASCOM, the Telecom Africa Corporation, Hughes Network Systems, WorldSpace, Sentech, UNISA, the Global VSAT Forum and Mike Jensen Consulting amongst others, the SatCom Project is designed to:

- Be continental in scope;
- Make a concrete positive difference to ICT development in Africa;
- Promote distance education, telemedicine, social, cultural and health development in Africa;
- Involve all aspects of satellite technology, as well as exploit compatible non-satellite communications technologies and applications;
- Avoid becoming a vehicle for dumping obsolete technologies, equipment and applications in Africa, a practice that would further impoverish Africa as a graveyard of technological obsolescence;
- Promote research and development in pursuit of such solutions;
- Promote human resource development, especially of Africans;
- Involve African experts worldwide, using the facilitations of global network applications;
- Promote knowledge of satellite communications in Africa, at both the technical and layman levels;
- Promote partnerships amongst the players in the industry at large, and between Africa and the non-African sectors;
- Engender, to the extent possible, enthusiastic support from officials and institutions with circumscribing authority to facilitate or smother the project; and
- To be fun for all parties concerned.[1]

2. The Digital Factory

The Digital Factory is an initiative to create capacity in Africa for the development of software and applications at global standards to support the global ICT industry and market, as well as to meet indigenous continental demand. A private-sector initiative between Sun Microsystems, The Telecom Africa Corporation, Epi-Use, *plc* and the State of California Technology, Trade and Commerce Agency, the Digital Factory hopes to replicate the software development miracle of India, most notably in Bangalore. In the process of being detailed and fine-tuned, the Digital Factory will be continental, beginning with two or three countries, and expanding from there.

Digital Factory partners expect to greatly enhance the prospects of Africa's ICT Development not only in terms of training and capacity-building to ensure that software deliverables from the Digital Factory are globally competitive in terms of quality and innovation, but also in providing market opportunities for such expertise through out-sourcing, subcontracting and direct contracting by industry partners, development agencies and international organisations themselves, all of whom have on-going demands for software and applications.

Indigenous African Initiatives

Of great importance in the ongoing drive for ICT Development in Africa is the active role of Africans and African institutions, both public and private sector, in undertaking often quite bold and innovative initiatives. The potential impact of such efforts is itself greatly enhanced by the intimate level of collaboration between both sectors, government and private, and between Africans on the continent and in the Diaspora. These initiatives cover a broad spectrum of areas, from policy and regulation, to indsutrialisation, infrastucture, software, content, development communications, and capacity-building.

Regulatory Matters

On the regulatory side, national regulatory authorities have begun forming sub-regional groupings, such as the West African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (WATRA) and the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Southern Africa (TRASA). Taking advantage of common attendance at various forums, such as the African Regional Preparatory Conference for the World Summit on Information Society in Bamako, Mali, in June 2002, African experts, officials and sector entrepreneurs are holding *ad hoc* meetings to pool their resources to pursue common interests. In this regard, moves are underway for the creation of an association of African Telecommunications Regulatory Authorities, with the support of the Bureau for Telecommunications Development (BDT) of the ITU.

Infrastructure

There are several regional infrastructure initiatives being taken by Africans in the ICT sector.

1. The Sat-3/WASC/SAFE Undersea Optical Fibre Cable Network

Shortly after the independence of South Africa, in a dramatic show of continental solidarity, cooperation and strategic common purpose, several African countries, in the euphoria of having achieved the most singular strategic objective of the OAU, undertook to join forces to build a major undersea optical fibre cable to directly link many African countries, and link them to Europe and Asia. Led by Telkom S.A., the 36 participants built the Sat-3/WASC/SAFE cable network. The 28,000 km cable, which cost $650 million US, was launched in Dakar on may 27, 2002.

2. The RASCOM Satellite Project

RASCOM, the Regional African Satellite Communications Organization to which most African governments belong, is undertaking to build the RASCOM Satellite, in collaboration with Alcatel. Designed to have a footprint that will cover the entire continent, it is intended to support affordable access to ICT resources for Africans anywhere on the continent, especially rural populations.

3. The Comtel Project

Comtel is a regional project, undertaken by the member states of COMESA, to build an optical fibre grid to interlink their national networks.

Policy and Strategy

1. The African Connection and the Ministerial Oversight Committee

The African Connection was created by the African Ministers of Communications during the ITU African Regional Conference, which took place in Johannesburg in 1998, to serve as an institutional framework for the coordination of telecommunications development ideas and capacity-building, especially those with regional scope. The African Connection is supervised by the Ministerial Oversight Committee of African Ministers of Communications.

2. The African Telecommunications Union (ATU)

The African Telecommunications Union, a reconstitution of the Pan-African Telecommunications Union (PATU) by the African Ministers of Communications, is the *de facto* African regional telecommunications counterpart of the ITU. ATU, which also reports to the Ministerial Oversight Committee, serves as the organ for the systematic pursuit of telecommunications development in Africa.

3. The African Advisory Group on ICT (AAG-ICT)

In the area of mobilising Africa's global expertise at the cutting edge for Africa's ICT Development, the African Advisory Group on ICT has played (and continues to play) a critical quiet role. The AAG-ICT is a group of 12 eminent African ICT experts from around the world who meet behind closed doors on an average of twice a year to provide

confidential high-level advice to African Ministers of Information and Communications on strategic, policy and regulatory issues, with no holds barred.

Created by the Minister of Communications of South Africa, Dr. Ivy Matsepe Casaburri, who also hosts it, the AAG usually meets one day ahead of the meeting of the Ministerial Oversight Committee, whose subsequent meeting its members also sit in on. The AAG also works in close liaison with the African Connection and the African Telecommunications Union, the heads of which two institutions also sit on the AAG. The Advisory Group expects to support the strategic aspects of the activities of NEPAD through intellectual support for the e-Africa Commission. This configuration, the result of persistent advocacy amongst African ICT experts that the continent take control of its sector challenges and build indigenous institutions to respond vigorously to them, is most likely to prove to be the most strategic innovation in Africa's response to the global challenge of ICT development.

In addition to these, there are indigenous African initiatives aimed at building industrial as well as research and development capacity in Africa, mobilising Africa's expert capacity spread around the world.

2. Key Issues with Potential Durable Impact on ICT Development in Africa

Myriads of Initiatives

An unintended and probably unanticipated challenge to the effective pursuit of ICT development in Africa is the plethora of initiatives, which threaten to overwhelm Africa's absorptive capacity. Numbers seem to take priority over significance in a response, which is not inconsistent with the situation in other development efforts. In 1998, the Bureau for Telecom Development of the ITU convened a meeting in Rabat, Morocco, to try to coordinate and systematise some of these initiatives. Amongst those participating in this meeting, besides the ITU, were IDRC, Bellanet, UNDP and several African institutions, including CSIR and the Telecom Africa Corporation. While the partnership amongst the leading development initiatives, under the umbrella of (or with) the UN ICT Task Force, has forged a measure of coordination, the impact of this in terms of effectiveness or achievement is yet to be felt.

African Ownership

A major part of this is the seemingly intractable challenge of creating an African-defined (even if not African-led) agenda, with all the benefits of knowledge, experience *in situ*, compelling demands of internal self-actualisation and ownership with its implicit direct accountability and responsibility to the African peoples.

Strategic Matters

A further by-product of this challenge is the emerging possibility, albeit incipient, that there might be a genuine imbalance in the perception of critical (if not strategic) priorities in the urgent effort to build lasting and self-enhancing (read "sustainable") ICT capacity in Africa, with its collateral direct impact on clear and measurable social, economic,

cultural, intellectual and systemic transformation of Africa and the African condition into a comfortable partner in the global dispensation.

Some issues which fall into this category include: excessive emphasis on small, medium-scale and micro enterprises without industrialisation; a potentially bloated demand for a "conducive" policy and regulatory framework without defining the pre-eminent role and responsibility of the governed or the regulator, and to whom they are both answerable; investment in building indigenous capacity and the protection of such budding capacity versus embracing totally externally originated capacity in the context of liberalisation of the sector; "realistic" versus "ambitious" efforts and expectations; the threat of marginalisation of indigenous ICT sector entrepreneurs by the relentless thrust of globalisation, and such other disparities, which reflect the difference inherent in the perspective of the African and the development partner.

Quantifying and Qualifying Africa's Existing Globally Diffused ICT Expertise

It is scientifically impossible to undertake strategic African capacity building in the ICT sector without first determining the extent, scope and quality of the expertise Africa already has and which it can deploy as its first line of attack in trying to achieve the quantum development. This is necessary not only to bridge the handicap of a late start, but also to move in leaps and bounds to catch up with and join the ranks of global competitive ICT development and capacity. In the absence of such comprehensive human resource assessment, most initiatives that have been undertaken in this regard are subject to reasonable doubt.

African initiatives, such as *The Global Human Resource Survey of African Male and Female Experts in ICT,* are designed to create a critical database for strategic decision-making policy and access to African cutting edge expertise, wherever it may be worldwide. This anticipated database will enable African governments and their decision makers, development agencies, international organisations and the global private sector, to draw on Africa's already vast human resource expertise to shape, formulate, man and drive critical ICT initiatives throughout the continent. This will supplement the administrative skills of decision makers with the technological expertise of Africans.

Building Africa's Research and Development Capacity in ICT

Technology is not sustainable without continuous research and development activity at the cutting edge. This strategic capacity is seriously lacking in Africa, hamstringing the continent's ability not only to custom tailor generic technological innovations to meet its specific environment, needs and habits, but to also join the global community of research and development, which is the source of the development of Intellectual Property, the quintessential element of technological wealth.

African initiatives, such as *The Telecom Africa Virtual Research Laboratory Project*, will link African scientific and technological research experts around the world and their global counterparts with interest in African ICT development in a secure global Intranet to undertake research activities of specific focus on African needs and priorities. When research initiatives are developed to the point of requiring in-lab physical research and experimentation, such initiatives will be transferred from online to in-lab work through

negotiations with the most appropriate physical laboratory in the world, bringing a handful of African researchers into such a laboratory for the duration.

Africa's ICT Challenge

In all of this, the singular challenge is to devise effective strategies to bridge the gap between these contrasting and often conflicting perceptions and priorities and, in the process, advance the progress of effecting increased and irreversible access to, and acquisition of, capacity in the mastery and use of Africa's ICT capacity, both in its own rights as well as as a tool for development.

3. Engaging the Task Force in Support of African ICT Development and NEPAD's ICT Programme

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is the strategic platform of the newly-created African Union, the continental African political and economic institution that succeeded the Organisation of African Union (OAU) and which mirrors other regional institutions, such as the European Union. An instrument of the African Union, NEPAD, in its short life, has established itself as a reference point in virtually all initiatives directed at, or having significant components involving, Africa. NEPAD enjoys high priority with the United Nations.

Amongst the African items and events on the Agenda of the 57th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, such as the debate on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa (Agenda Item 33), the final Review and appraisal of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF) (Agenda Item 41), the General Assembly will hold a High-Level Plenary Session on NEPAD. The session consists of two plenary meetings and an informal panel discussion at which the five members of Heads of State Implementation Committee of NEPAD (the Presidents of Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt, Senegal and South Africa) are scheduled to field questions for three hours.

From an institutional structure point of view, NEPAD has four main sectors, as follows:

1. Infrastructure, which consists of ICT, Water and Sanitation, Transport and Energy;
2. Agriculture and Market Access;
3. Human Development, covering Health and Communicable Diseases, Education and Poverty Eradication; and
4. Capital Flows, which consist of Domestic Resource Mobilisation, Private Capital Flows, ODA Reform, and Debt Reduction.

NEPAD ICT development objectives are articulated in the basic NEPAD Document. They are:

- to double teledensity to two lines per 100 people by the year 2005, with an adequate level of access for households;

- to lower the cost and improve reliability of service;
- to achieve e-readiness for all countries in Africa;
- to develop and produce a pool of ICT-proficient youth and students from which Africa can draw trainee ICT engineers, programmers and software developers; and
- to develop local-content software, based especially on Africa's cultural legacy. [2]

The e-Africa Commission

Positioned within the Infrastructure Sector, ICT is a major focus in the NEPAD agenda. To oversee this process, African leaders formed the e-Africa Commission to serve effectively as the ICT task force of NEPAD in pursuit of the NEPAD objectives listed above. The Commission is chaired by His Excellency, President Alfa Konare, former Head of State of the Republic of Mali and an ardent advocate of ICT for Development in Africa. President Konare was also a keynote speaker at the ECOSOC meeting of July 5-7, 2000, which focused on "Development and International Co-operation in the 21st Century: The Role of Information Technology in the Context of a Knowledge-based Economy".

Although NEPAD looms large on the African horizon and in the global picture, it is yet to develop both a comprehensive detailed agenda and to set up the administrative and expert capacity and establishment to fully manage its affairs. In particular, the e-Africa Commission, NEPAD's *de facto* ICT organ for master-minding and managing its ICT priorities and programmes, is also very new, and therefore at the early stage of addressing its institutional and programmatic challenges.

Given these facts, and the over-riding fact that NEPAD's overall agenda covers an enormous scope, which embraces virtually all development challenges of Africa and its people[3], NEPAD has called for the cooperation, expertise, synergy and the strongest commitment of support institutions (both African and international). This would enable it to successfully manage the process in such a manner as to fulfill the enormous expectations the African people, and indeed the world, have placed on the young institution.

Specifically, for our purposes here, the e-Africa Commission is expected to seek similar support for its sector objectives, hoping to profit immensely from a global partnership programme in support of the ICT component of the NEPAD Implementation Plan.

NEPAD ICT Initiatives

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[2] NEPAD Document, Section B1 (ii) Bridging the Digital Divide: Investing in Information and Communications Technology, page 25, item 117, Objectives.

[3] See *ENABLING NEPAD, An Assessment of the Objectives, Capacity and Activities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and Strategies and Niche for UNDP Support.* A Consultancy Report By Joseph O. Okpaku, Sr., Ph.D., New York, UNDP.

At the Conference on Financing NEPAD, held in Dakar, Senegal, on April 15-17, 2002, and hosted by Senegal's President Abdoulaye Wade, NEPAD unveiled its ICT Programme as approved by the Heads of State Implementation Committee of NEPAD (the highest ruling body of the organ) under the Chairmanship of Nigeria's President Olusegun Obasanjo. The programme, which consists of thirteen projects, is detailed in Appendix 1.

A review of these would indicate that the programmatic objectives of NEPAD are in the following areas:

- Infrastructure
- Content development
- Law, Policy and Regulatory Affairs
- Industrialisation
- E-Governance
- Online distance services, including telemedicine and distance education
- Internet marketing

This would essentially cover the full spectrum of the ICT industry.

Amongst the challenges before the e-Africa Commission, as it sets out to establish itself and to prosecute its objectives under the NEPAD programme, would be building the institution itself, and the institutional capacity to manage these challenges in the continental and global context, and from there, to define the role it has chosen to play in the different sub-sectors of ICT, especially given the power of the global industry which also dominates the African regional market.

In this regard, the e-Africa Commission is likely to seek to:

1. Develop a comprehensive picture of the current status of ICT development and initiatives on the continent, placing them in the global context;

2. Rationalise its ICT objectives and priorities within this dual context;

3. Mobilise Africa's global human resource expertise as a core team to strengthen its extended strategic and institutional capacity, a process which it has already begun by drawing on members of the African Advisory Group on ICT (the AAG-ICT), which itself helped create the concept of the Commission, to form the core of its membership;

4. Rationalise its role, whether as policy, facilitation, coordination, assistance in mobilising financial and other resources in support of the African private sector, promotion of global private/African public sector partnership, African public/private sector partnership, global/African private sector partnership, or some other permutation of partnership possibilities.

The rationalisation of this last area will be crucial if the Commission is to get the buy-in of an enlightened and driven African private sector because that sector already fears that the global private/African public sector partnership, which has been the configuration most advocated in much of ICT development strategies, invariably leads to undermining any prospects of Africa being able to build not only indigenous capacity, but the capacity and opportunity to compete globally, the ultimate prerequisite for Africa's eventual participation in a truly global economy.

In this regard, the position of President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal, the Vice Chairman of the NEPAD Heads of State Implementation Committee and Head of its Infrastructure Sector, is instructive. Addressing the lunch reception in his honour on June 17 2002, during the UN General Assembly Special Meeting on Information and Communications for Development, he succinctly articulated the view that his government's preference was for African governments to empower the African private sector so that they can form credible, fair and equitable partnerships with their global counterparts as a way to build Africa's indigenous private sector capacity this strategy would definitely attract the African private sector to join forces with the Commission in pursuit of a common continental dream.

In all of this, the e-Africa Commission is likely to concentrate on projects and initiatives which have the potential of maximum impact on ICT development in Africa, and which have sound prospects of durability through the capacity to become self-sustainable, if long-term, or provide discernable catalytic impact to drive subsequent initiatives, projects or programmes. The ultimate agent for such durability and sustainability will be an entrenched, versatile, innovative, and bold indigenous African private sector, working in alliance with its global counterpart, on equitable terms which also allow for mutual access to each other's market, on fair and equitable terms, with comparative competitive capacity. In the temporary absence of such capacity, adequate provisions would have to be made for affirmative action to build such competitive capacity from experience and knowledge gained from each passing collaboration. These are basic tenets of equitable globalisation.

5. The Role of the Task Force in Support of NEPAD and related African ICT Development Activities

The commitment of both NEPAD and the UN ICT Task Force to the goals of the UN Millennium Declaration, and the alignment of the Vision of the African Union with the global vision of the United Nations, provide a conducive platform for Task Force efforts in support of the ICT Development in Africa as a whole, and the ICT objectives of NEPAD as executed through the e-Africa Commission.

NEPAD, through the e-Africa Commission, could benefit substantially from the extensive access, expertise and clout of the UN ICT Task Force and its donor and private sector partners in many ways. These include the following:

1. Through the mobilisation of support from the G8 industrial nations, especially given their explicit commitments in the G8 African Plan of Action;

2. Through similar mobilisation of support from other industrial and evolving industrial nations outside the G8 membership;
3. Through mobilisation of support from donor and development agencies;
4. Through mobilisation of support, as much in material as in kind, from the global private sector, especially those who are partners in the Task Force;
5. In particular, through support for the World Economic Forum's CEO Charter for Development and Business Endorsement for the New Partnership for Africa's Development programmes to help mobilise the global private sector to provide comprehensive and dedicated support;
6. Through its own on-going initiatives, such as the Digital Diaspora Network-Africa, to help mobilise Africans and others in the Diaspora in support of ICT initiatives on the continent;
7. Through support of new initiatives, and in partnership with other initiatives and institutions, especially African initiatives, to help support Africa's own drive for self-development, the ultimate essence of NEPAD.

Conclusion

Through these and other avenues, the United Nations ICT Task Force could help mobilise significant support, promote and/or partner with NEPAD and its e-Africa Commission, and on the basis of such support, have durable positive impact on ICT Development in Africa, within Africa's own vision for self-actualisation and of the Task Force's own terms of reference.

Any positive impact of initiatives undertaken by the Task Force and its partners, even if not in direct support of specific NEPAD objectives, constitutes *de facto* support of NEPAD, as the ultimate and overall objective of NEPAD is the transformation of the African ICT landscape by whomever, and through all legitimate and conducive channels and agents.

Above all, the United Nations ICT Task Force, by partnering with the African public and private sector at all levels, continental and global, along the lines of its ongoing initiatives, could help promote African ownership of the ICT development process in Africa, and empower the African ICT sector to build the capacity not only to meet the basic and emerging demands of ICT in Africa, but the industrial and technological capacity to compete effectively in the global marketplace.

Such cutting edge global competitive capacity is ultimately the only way to ensure durable sustainability of not only the process, but also of the far-reaching entrenchment and expansion of the gains accruable from all of the efforts of NEPAD and other indigenous African initiatives, of the United Nations ICT Task Force, and of all others involved in the global effort to both effect a quantum development of ICT capacity in Africa. This will also greatly increase prospects for achieving a broadcast acquisition and integration of ICT applications in the routine prosecution of the everyday life of Africans,

while preserving and enhancing the cultural attributes and priorities of Africa and its people, thus enriching the global human culture at large.

Appendix 1

NEPAD ICT Projects

ICT/1: *Infrastructure Project*

This project aims to install 32 optical fibre inter-state links in West Africa.

ICT/2: *Telecommunications Law and Regulation Harmonisation*

Aims to "create a unified and opened economic zone through the integration of property, infrastructure and financial services markets."

ICT/3: *IT/Telecommunications Device Manufacturing Plant*

The objective of this project is to "develop activities around telecommunications-related industries, create ICT private industries, promote industrial sub-contracting activities, improve IT equipment availability and produce ICT equipment more adapted to African needs and environment" in West Africa.

ICT/4: *Support to ICT-related Facilities*

A transcontinental project to "provide support to maintain and upgrade existing ICT-related educational or industrial centres" in Lome, Togo, Dakar, Senegal and Harare, Zimbabwe.

ICT/5: *PAG-NET, PanAfrican Governmental Network*

This is a transcontinental "secure IP/Ipsec network designed exclusively for African Government communications (data and voice transmission)."

ICT/6: *DATAFRICA*

"DATAFRICA aims at the creation of an electronic database to store various statistics in the field of economics, trading, geography, environment, agriculture, health, population, ICT and infrastructures."

ICT/7: *E-JUSTICE AFRICA*

"E-Justice Africa is a system that will manage justice information in Africa. It will allow (the) exchange of data between criminal justice agencies, courts, law enforcement and prosecutors."

ICT/8: *E-CUSTOMER AFRICA*

ACEN, as it is also called, is intended to be "a public/private communication and data transmission system designed to track customs transactions between African countries."

ICT/9: *ACT-NET*

ACT-NET or ACTIS, as it is also called, is "a Pan African cooperation tool to prevent and fight terrorism. It will collect, analyse and track information about terrorists, suspected individuals and their activities."

ICT/10: *TELEMEDICINE*

This continental project (AHTIS) is intended as "a way of building high-quality interoperable systems for health education, prophylaxis, epidemiological analysis, telemedicine operations, medical care and prevention."

ICT/11: *E-HISTORY AFRICA*

"E-History Africa is a program that will support and encourage (the) production and diffusion of African history on worldwide networks and digital media."

ICT/12: *AFRICASHOP*

A transcontinental project, "Africashop is an electronic online store that aims to be a window to African art and culture. It will offer arts and crafts, clothing, local food (and jewelry)."

ICT/13: *AFRICA CYBERMARKET*

"Africa Cybermarket is a commodity market that will allow electronic exchange of agricultural and sea products between African producers and the buyers." It is a transcontinental project.