Second UNPAN Electronic Information Training Workshop

Organized by
the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (/DPEPA)
in cooperation with IDEP

CLOSING CEREMONY
SPEECH BY DR. SAMUEL A. OCHOLA,
DIRECTOR, IDEP
Director of Planning, and member of IDEP Governing Council,

Mr. LOM

Representatives of the United Nations in Dakar and in New York,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Friends All,

It is a great pleasure for me to address you once again on the occasion of the closing ceremony of this important workshop which started on the 16th of July 2001. I am quite convinced that for the last five days, you have been able to share useful skills and knowledge and explored the cyberspace for the benefit of your respective regions and for the common good of mankind.

I also hope that you have found the modest facilities offered by IDEP in terms of connectivity to the Web-based UNPAN databases, training materials, and tools adequate enough, as to allow for effective training and organization of the workshop.

I have been informed by my colleagues that apart from being immersed in the cyber-training, you also had time to discuss a number of issues concerning the sustainability of the UNPAN Network in particular. You have addressed:

- the south-south collaboration, ad North-South collaboration
- technical and human capacity development,
- data transfer,
- exchange and utilization, and
- the management of the documentary content,

These, to me, form an important aspect of your meeting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
I am perforce challenged to recall French philosopher and paloentologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin notion of ‘noosphere’ - a derivative of the Greek word, for mind (noos). Noosphere is planetary, thinking network of self-awareness, information and communication – which as a concept has affinities with the Internet – and which as a concept has entitled Teilhard to be referred to as the patron guru of the World Wide Web. This innovative genius demonstrates that an inventor is always ahead of his time.

While technological inventions alone do not determine history, they nonetheless transform social, economic, political and cultural life when their time have come. This is what is currently happening with the world wide impact of information technologies.

The increasing convergence of computer and telecommunication which has been made possible by the invention of microchip and the digitalisation of communication network is providing a new technological foundation for a new civilization.

While this new digital civilization appears to democratise knowledge, it also has its other Junas face which appears to undermine the authority of the rest of mankind, especially those in the developing world, who are being shut out of this digital orbit. This form of isolation should not be accepted during this millennium. It therefore behoves all developing countries, especially African countries to redouble their efforts in order to leap-frog their way into the new information and communication technology age.

The speed of development and convergency in ITCs, make it absolutely imperative for Africa to unleash the bottled up energy, intellect and genius of its people to be able to jump into the bandwagon of this new informatic age. We have to create a new vision to energise our people towards achieving this goal. In other words, the governments have to create:

- conducive environments in which innovation, competition, liberalization and investment will thrive; and
- above all, to invest in the development of the intellectual capital which is a key ingredient in the development and effective use of ITCs.

Indeed, the new global civilization which is being driven by information technologies, transcends what divide us
- and should act as a unifying factor for the enormous tasks ahead – Tasks that require a undivided commitment to forge a common destiny for the inhabitants of this Spaceship Earth.

It is for this reason that I am expressing my deep gratitude to the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs (DESA), Division of Public Economics and Public Administration for involving IDEP in the process of establishing this important On-line Information Network on Public Policy and Public Administration and Finance, popularly known as UNPAN. The collaboration has permitted IDEP to share experiences and to exchange useful information with other regions of the world. On our part, we stand ready to concretize this newly formed alliance in serving the African continent.

For the colleagues from UNPAN New York, I promise that you will be hearing from us very soon because:
- we want to continue picking your brains,
- we are anxious to learn and do things that will make the UNPAN Network at IDEP, a household name, and
- It is a popular source of materials and tools for the IDEP training programme.

You have seen and felt our capacity as a training institution and we invite you to hold more of your training events here.

For our guests who come from the On-line Regional Centres in Asia, Latin America, Europe and the USA, I can assure you that this training workshop has opened a window of opportunity for us to intensify our collaboration and to do more business. We shall always be calling on you for advice and exchange of information. Furthermore, we shall use your web resources to enrich our research and training programmes. Indeed, to use the new tools to construct a more humane global civilization.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the last five days, the participants at this workshop have had a birds eye view of IDEP’s IT infrastructure, and its human capacity that can deliver and organize a workshop of this magnitude and importance. I am personally very happy with the achievements obtained. I am saying this because, as we approached the 16th of
July, we had been forced to refine and upgrade our network technical and managerial capacities. We have as a result of this, been able to pinpoint and identify our shortfalls. Consequently, we have had to take necessary measures to upgrade our computer configurations and network access speeds.

I am sure that our regular students will continue to benefit from these developments and improvements which have been brought about by the UNPAN programme. Our member States too will be happy to access our web page and click on the UNPAN link from which they will have access to the global UNPAN resources. This will do us proud and make our programmes even more relevant to their specific needs.

I wish therefore to congratulate each and everyone of you for having made this workshop a success that it has been. I thank you for the work well done.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I wish to thank you for having come to Senegal and to IDEP. I look forward to seeing you back at IDEP. I promise that next time, we shall be having an extremely high speed Internet connection, probably a wireless VSAT. More importantly, it is my hope that the spirit of friendship that has been nurtured over the last five days will be continued and strengthened.

May God bless you all and we pray that you will have a safe journey back home.

I thank you.