KIGALI DECLARATION

ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EQUITABLE INFORMATION SOCIETY IN AFRICA

We, the Representatives of the African Parliaments to the Kigali International Conference

Recalling the commitment of our governments to the Millennium Development Goals and particularly those setting ICT targets, together with their commitments at the World Summits on the Information Society (Geneva 2003, Tunis 2005) for an equitable information society for all;

Recalling the outcome of the Cairo International Conference of 4th and 5th June 2008, which resulted in the creation of the Africa Parliamentary Knowledge Network;

Acknowledging that equitable access to information is a right for all;

Recognising the vast inequities to equitable access to information, knowledge, and affordable communications across the continent and the uneven development that this contributes together with the negative impact that the high cost of communications services has on the wider economy;

Considering the critical role the information and communication technology (ICT) can play in the economic growth and development of nations;

Acknowledging that the quality of a democracy is dependent on the rights of the citizenry to express themselves freely and to access
information and knowledge in order to make informed decisions;

**Realising** the significant role that parliaments must play in promoting an equitable information society through the enactment of legislation, which ensures transparency, accountability, openness and effective oversight;

**Cognisant** of the United Nations role in the promotion of an equitable information society to support parliaments in their legislative activities and ensure the promotion and the adoption of ICTs;

**Underscoring** the need for mutual assistance, exchange of information, and sharing of experiences and best practices among African Parliaments as recognised by the African Union and Pan-African Parliament in their commitment to the harmonisation of policies and the integration of regional markets.

**CALL UPON**

All African Parliaments to:

1. Adhere to the Africa Parliamentary Knowledge Network (APKN).
2. Urge the development of policies and initiate and enact laws that promote equitable access to information, communication and knowledge and provide for favourable institutional arrangements for the ICT sector.
3. Encourage private investment and participation in the ICT sector, while ensuring that strategies are developed to ensure equitable access for all;
4. Increase the capacity and effectiveness of the parliaments in African States as oversight bodies to ensure the benefits of the enhanced communications services are shared by all; and that the ICT sector contributes to growth and development of national and regional economies;
5. Create Parliamentary ICT Committees Chairpersons' Forum to:
   (i) provide the necessary critical engagement with proposed legislation,
   (ii) provide meaningful oversight of its implementation,
(iii) harmonise and assure compatibility of the legislations, and
(iv) ensure effective implementation of laws in all parliaments through an overarching assessment mechanism;

6. Encourage the undertaking of research on the ICT sector in order to develop policies based on the analysis of practical experiences in relation to the universal access to information and communication services for all.

7. Formalise mechanisms to share and disseminate information and knowledge among parliaments.

8. Ensure the freedom of expression and equitable access to information, upon which the citizenry can base their decisions and create a conducive environment for the institutions of civil society including the media, trade unions and NGOs to promote and practice equitable access to information and communication;

9. Elaborate a comprehensive master plan for ICTs and the development of electronic information dissemination and storage systems.

10. To contribute to the implementation of the Kigali Plan of Action on the Development of an Equitable Information Society in Africa.

DONE IN KIGALI ON 5TH MARCH 2009
KIGALI PLAN OF ACTION
ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EQUITABLE INFORMATION SOCIETY: THE ROLE OF PARLIAMENTS

In the spirit of the Kigali Declaration on the Development of an Equitable Information Society and the Role of African Parliaments, the representatives of the African Parliaments present have agreed to implement the following plan of action.

1. To establish a repository of policy, legislation and regulation of each country in the area of ICT and relevant research and analysis in the context of the “Africa Parliamentary Knowledge Network “(APKN) and the Africa Information Society Initiative (AISI).

2. To develop and implement a training programme for parliamentarians to familiarize them with the dynamic ICT field and to update their knowledge in order to enhance their representative, legislative and oversight functions (in the issues related in to ICTs) in the context of the APKN and the AISI.

3. To identify common research needs in the area of ICT and seek support to have it conducted and specifically support and utilize local and international indicator studies and analysis; in order to move towards a more rigorous and evidence based policy development, legislative practice and to monitor progress towards the achievement of an equitable information society for all.

4. To actively contribute to the online monthly thematic discussion that will be led by identified specialists on relevant topics or legislation being debated/passed in a particular jurisdiction in the context of the APKN Information Society Initiative (info-society.apkn.org).
List of participating parliaments

1. Algeria
2. Angola
3. Botswana
4. Burkina Faso (PAP)
5. Burundi
6. Chad
7. Comoros
8. Congo - Brazzaville
9. Democratic Republic of Congo
10. Djibouti
11. Equatorial Guinea
12. Ethiopia
13. Gambia
14. Ghana
15. Kenya
16. Malawi
17. Mozambique
18. Namibia
19. Niger
20. Nigeria
21. Rwanda
22. Sierra Leone
23. Sudan
24. Swaziland
25. Tanzania
26. Togo
27. Uganda

1. Pan African Parliament
2. East African Legislative Assembly
3. ECOWAS
4. SADC Parliamentary Forum