

**Minutes of the 2nd Meeting of the Council of African
Regulators**

**11th September 2017
Marriott Hotel, Rwanda**

I. Welcome and Introductory Remarks

Introductory Remarks

Dr. Hamadoun Touré, Executive Director of the Smart Africa Secretariat, delivered the welcoming remarks.

He thanked the participants for being present and mentioned that there is a rare opportunity to work together to transform the African continent and that the ICT sector offers a unique platform to attain that objective. He emphasized on the important role of Regulators in the leadership of the ICT sector and the necessity to work together to implement strategic transformative initiatives.

He stressed that some of the decisions cannot be implemented alone and require cooperation between the stakeholders; for example the case of the One Africa Network initiative, which requires partnership between stakeholders for its implementation. He suggested that the platform is used to have open and frank discussions in order to address practical, operational and implementing measures.

Lastly, he thanked Mr. Lin Mombo, the elected President of the Council of African Regulators, for his strategic leadership; as well as Mr. Patrick Nyirishema, the Director General of the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Agency (RURA) for accepting to host this meeting and for all the support provided by the Republic of Rwanda.

Introductory Remarks

Mr. Patrick Nyirishema, Director General of RURA, thanked and welcomed all participants to Kigali on behalf of the Chairman of the Smart Africa Board and President of the Republic of Rwanda, H.E. Paul Kagame.

He mentioned that organising this meeting only a few months after the inaugural meeting, which happened in May 2017, is a strong sign of commitment of telecom regulators. He wished all participants a productive meeting and enjoyable stay in Kigali.

Welcome Remarks

Mr. Lin Mombo, the elected President of the Council of African Regulators and President of the board of ARCEP Gabon, thanked the participants for being present. He thanked the telecom regulators for entrusting him with the important responsibilities of leading the Council of African Regulators.

He highlighted that the Council of African Regulators (CAR), was created in May 2017 to develop a policy and regulatory framework that will support the transformation of Africa into a single digital market through large-scale projects such as the One Africa Network. He stressed that the CAR is an excellent platform to collaborate, share best practices and proactively respond to the challenges facing the Telecommunications industry.

He appreciated that Africa is moving together to create a brighter future to the youth in terms of innovation and jobs creation, through ICTs. He shared his belief that the time is ripe to work together given the unwavering support expressed by the Heads of State about the Smart Africa agenda.

He informed the audience that H.E. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic and one of the founding members of Smart Africa is personally engaged in the Smart Africa initiative and has always participated to Smart Africa meetings and forums. He personally participated to the launch of the OAN project between Gabon and Rwanda, along with H.E. Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of Rwanda, in July 2016.

With regards to the OAN project between the 2 countries, he highlighted that the initiative tremendously reduced terminating tariff (By 250% in Gabon and 635% in Rwanda) as well as the roaming tariff (882% and 1270% for Gabon and Rwanda respectively). He reiterated his personal engagement to advance the initiative in Central Africa, for which he serves as Executive President of the telecom regulators association (ARTAC). He is also intending to invite Smart Africa to participate and share the OAN experience.

He finished his welcome remarks by calling the telecom regulators to join hands to work together in harmonizing policy and regulations of the ICT sector and to continue working hands in hands to advance the sector.

II. Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda of the meeting was adopted without amendments.

III. Composition of Bureau

The bureau was composed as following:

- Chair: Gabon
- Vice-Chairs:
 - Guinea (For the West Africa Region)
 - D.R. Congo (For the Central Africa Region)
 - Kenya (For the East Africa Region)
- Rapporteurs:
 - Mali
 - South Sudan

The meeting requested the Smart Africa Secretariat to support rapporteurs capturing the minutes of the meeting.

IV. Adoption of the minutes of the first meeting of CAR and Matters arising

The Council of African Regulators adopted the minutes its first meeting with few amendments.

The telecom regulator of Mali proposed an amendment highlighting that Mali and Senegal were elected to represent the West Africa block. He also requested that the list of participants be annexed to the report.

The telecom regulator of Kenya thanked the chair for accepting to lead this forum. He thanked Rwanda for hosting both EACO and Smart Africa, and for its leadership in the ICT Sector. He recommended that we continue involving regional blocks as regional engines of implementation of the OAN framework. He suggested that we always ensure that the Heads of regional blocks are invited in all future Council of African Regulators meetings.

Dr. Hamadoun Touré reiterated the need of implementing important infrastructure such as Clearinghouse, Data Center, cyber security and more large-scale projects in Africa.

V. Meeting discussions and Resolutions

a) One Africa Network (OAN): Policy and regulatory measures, implementation

status update and proposal of establishing a roaming hub & clearinghouse for the OAN

Presentation:

The presentation on One Africa Network (OAN) highlighted the following:

- The strategic objectives of the OAN.
- The current OAN arrangements in East Africa (*Between Rwanda, Uganda, South Sudan and Kenya*), in West Africa (*Between Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinée, Burkina Faso, Mali, Togo and Sierra Leone*) and between Rwanda and Gabon.
- The overall OAN framework and its scope of implementation.
- The challenges associated with delivery and billing of roaming service (ICT Infrastructure, International gateways, Double/multiple taxation and Fraud).
- The proposal of establishing a roaming hub & clearinghouse for the OAN, the related advantages.
- A presentation of the OAN Service Exchange and Clearinghouse platform was provided to the participants, highlighting the technical and business components, functionalities and requirements. The proposal suggests the creation of regional nodes that will be aggregating the traffic from the different Regional Economic Blocs (Presentation attached in Annex section).

Comments:

- The President of the telecom regulatory body of Madagascar mentioned that although Madagascar has not joined the Smart Africa Alliance yet, the process is well advanced and will soon come to fruition.
- The telecom regulator of Kenya mentioned that a risk analysis for business continuity with the clearinghouse and challenges that can be anticipated need to be carried out.
- EACO suggested that clearinghouses regional nodes are created according to the different economic regions, with adequate considerations of redundancy, security and business continuity. He suggested that the regional blocks host the regional clearinghouses.
- The telecom regulator of Guinea recommended that assessment of roaming decisions should be enforced and followed through by Smart Africa with coordination of countries at the highest level. This is because operators traditionally resist or delay decisions related to One Africa Network.

- The Vice-President of the telecom regulation authority of D.R. Congo, mentioned that this is a political decision and being such, it should be implemented and enforced, given the advantages OAN offers.
- The Executive Director of Smart Africa appreciated the contributions of all countries. He reminded that the board gave the green light to apply penalties to non-complying operators. He reiterated the strong support of the board (made of 11 Heads of State) that will help ensure that decisions are implemented.

Resolutions:

The Council of African Regulators:

- *Agreed to support the implementation of the One Africa Network (OAN) roaming hub & clearinghouse to handle all traffic originating and terminating within the African continent.*
- *Approved that the Smart Africa Secretariat implement the Roaming hub and clearinghouse for the OAN not later than 31st December 2017.*
- *Requested that Telecom Regulators instruct mobile network operators to re-negotiate their bilateral agreements to ensure the full implementation of the One Africa Network by 31st March 2018.*
- *Requested that Telecom Regulators increase public communication about One Africa Network initiative.*

b) Emerging issues affecting the Telecommunications Sector

Presentation:

The presentation on emerging issues affecting the Telecommunications highlighted the following:

- There is a negative growth rate of volumes for the traditional telecommunications services with voice experiencing the lowest ARPU in the history of telephony (Mobile data becoming the new frontier).
- Telecom revenues are not growing. Free content from Over-The-Top (OTT) providers has resulted into a large consumption of considerable amounts of data. However, while volumes of data and applications are exploding, revenues are not growing in the same proportion.

- As potential solution, it was suggested to enter into partnership with the OTT players or the operators to develop their own applications.
- Convergence of policies and regulations of the new technology frontiers and collaboration with all key stakeholders (Cities, authorities in charge of non-technology sectors (e.g.: Smart Cities) is highly recommended.

Comments:

- The Chairman of the meeting recommended that regulators also focus on issues related to mobile payments.
- The telecom regulator of Mali mentioned that they have started an effort to evaluate the impact of mobile money over Telecommunications network. The result of the assessment will be presented to the Western Africa association of Telecom regulators (ARTAOWATRA) in order to support adequate regulations and better collaborate with central banks.
- The telecom regulator of Kenya mentioned that OTT applications are using infrastructure and eroding telecom and advertising revenues by taking away all the money to other continents. He recommended that OTT players pay for the infrastructure use.
- The telecom regulator of Guinea stressed the importance to work together to tackle the issue of OTT. He suggested some options including developing a system to size the OTT issue and define a fee that will be charged to the OTT players.
- The Executive Director of Smart Africa emphasized that the issue needs to be tackled as it was done by the European Union. The sizing of the subscribers coupled by an understanding of the revenues made on the African continent should help quantify what OTT players need to pay to Africa. This issue needs to be handled together as a continent because doing it alone will subject individual countries to a wide range of pressures.
- The telecom regulator of Burkina Faso stressed that we might have to use empirical methods for now to collect the size of the Internet user base and OTT usage. He recommended that Smart Africa or the African union handle this issue. He also highlighted that we all need to focus on problems related to data privacy and trust.
- The telecom regulator of Benin mentioned that technologies that can help handle OTT issues and block voice are available. He informed the participants that similar technologies are deployed by the United Emirates. He concluded by

saying that this issue needs to be handled together with the consumers to avoid negative reactions or misunderstandings from the public.

- The telecom regulator of Rwanda mentioned that Rwanda is monitoring the mobile payments, in partnership with the National Bank of Rwanda. Investing in such platforms give insights on transactions carried over the networks. This could help prevent or mitigate criminal activities conducted over the telecom networks such as money laundering and financing terrorism but also get more visibility on what operators are earning on mobile payments.

Resolutions:

The Council of African Regulators:

- *Agreed to form a working group composed of Burkina Faso, D.R. Congo (Lead), Guinea, Kenya and Mali to look at OTT issues and potential solutions in details and report back to the 3rd meeting of the Council with recommendations.*

c) Internet for all initiative

Presentation:

The presentation on the “Internet for all” initiative highlighted the following:

- The current gap as far as connecting to the Internet is concerned, with over 3.9 billion people who remain unconnected to the Internet.
- The challenges to close this gap remain significant, with the rate of Internet penetration slowing and the gender digital divide increasing.
- Government and business leaders agree that there is an imperative to provide Internet to all. However, to date, a large proportion of people around the world, and in Africa in particular, are not enjoying any sort of Internet and/or broadband experience and are excluded from participating to the digital economy.
- In response, efforts from the global community have resulted in numerous new and continued global, regional, and country initiatives. Initiatives include the Internet for all initiative (jointly implemented with the World Economic Forum), the Network for Digital Development and many other international, regional and national forums.
- Pillars of the Internet for all initiative: which include Infrastructure, Affordability, Skills & Awareness and relevant content.

Comments:

- The telecom regulator of Gabon mentioned that in order to achieve affordability, Gabon invested in two fiber optic landing points. This has led to more than 50% cost reduction. Gabon informed that there are efforts to create an increased footprint of connectivity through the hybrid universal service, allowing the 4G signals to be provided along roads. Different implementing approaches were used including the delegated public service and PPPs.
- The Vice-President of the telecom regulation authority of D.R. Congo reminded the importance of this topic. He mentioned some of the key infrastructure being implemented, such as CAP-5, connecting Kinshasa-Luanda and Kinshasa-Lubumbashi. In order to attain affordability, there is a need to liberalize the sector. He stressed the need to create and interconnect Internet Exchange Points. Not only will it keep the local traffic local, but increase affordability.
- The telecom regulator of Burkina Faso mentioned that his country is landlocked, and the expensive costs of accessing the Internet is paid by the end-users. He encouraged countries neighbouring Burkina Faso to work with them to increase accessibility. He also mentioned that there are in the process of establishing a virtual landing point.
- The telecom regulator of Guinea mentioned that it is important to invest into fiber backbones and interconnect to other countries as well as Internet exchange points.
- The telecom regulator of Mali informed the participants that Mali is a vast landlocked country. Therefore fiber backbone is a priority. The country plans to invest into 3,000 km of national backbone fiber optic in the nearest future. He reiterated the need to invest into Internet exchange points and generate relevant content to boost the usage of Internet.
- The telecom regulator of Kenya shared the experience of Kenya, which has access to the sea. It has 4 landing points and national fiber backbone to various towns in Kenya. Rural areas are however not adequately connected. Among key initiatives undertaken is extending extra connectivity to players so that they can in turn extend it to rural citizens. Broadband to schools is another initiative, providing Internet to schools for 5 years until they become sustainable. 47 e-resource centers have been connected to Internet (2 Mbps) through collaboration with the Kenya Library services. These initiatives have shown that there is an increasing appetite to use the Internet.

- The telecom regulator of Benin mentioned that for African countries, making the Internet accessible and affordable to Africa is an achievable and unambiguous objective. He noted that most countries have liberalized the Telecommunications sector. He also noted that this is just a matter of keeping it a national priority.

Resolutions:

The Council of African Regulators:

- *Requested Telecom Regulators to develop and share before the end of December 2017 a concrete Internet for all National action plan of activities for the next coming 12 months.*
- *Requested Telecom regulators to use the Council of African regulators platform to increase coordination and collaboration at National, regional, and continent level.*
- *Requested Telecom regulators to use the Council of African regulators platform to share innovative business and financing models and best practices that can help connect the unconnected last billion.*

d) Education for all initiative

Presentation:

The presentation on the “Education for all” initiative highlighted the following:

- Under the Smart Africa framework, the Education for all initiative was established to reaffirm the commitment of meeting the learning needs of all children, youth and adults through Technology.
- The Sustainable Development Goals emphasized the importance of education, through its goal No 4: “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.
- Two years after the SDGs adoption in 2015, the Report of the Secretary-General on “Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals” highlighted that achieving inclusive and equitable quality education for all will require increasing efforts, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. It further pointed that average percentage of schools with access to computers and the Internet for teaching purposes is above 60% per cent in both primary and secondary education. The share is less than 40% more than half of sub-Saharan countries with data.

- There is an opportunity to act today, given the increased accessibility of Internet, including an abundance of satellite capacity going online, the increased affordability of Smart devices and the vast amount of educational resources on the Internet.
- The Education for all initiative aims at supporting the provision of quality of education and increase access to educational resources through technology and therefore contribute to SDG goal No 4.
- Three specific focus areas will be part of this initiative:
 - Connecting primary and secondary schools as well as universities.
 - Enabling access to digital libraries.
 - Achieving economies of scale by responding to the existing market of 250 million electronic devices for schools & universities.

Comments:

- The telecom regulator of Gabon mentioned that they started an initiative of providing connectivity to schools. However, the operator, which partnered with the Government run through inappropriate billing costs and high rates, which affected the implementation of this initiative. As they are working to improve the process, this is an important aspect that will need to be considered. He shared the experience so that it can be of help to other countries who might plan similar initiatives.
- The telecom regulator of Rwanda highlighted that they connect every year over 100 schools. This is part of an on-going effort that has been going for many years, with the use of the Universal Access Fund (UAF). The UAF fund also support other initiatives such as the Rwanda Telecenter Network, bringing the Internet to the rural areas and increasing the access to online Government services. The same fund supports also the disabled people to participate to the digital economy.
- The telecom regulator of Guinea mentioned that there is an on-going initiative to renovate and connect schools (200+ schools). The project makes use of solar panels. The challenge has been that secondary schools are not using the infrastructure adequately (physical damages to computers). The new approach going forward will be to build bigger computer labs that will be shared by many schools.
- The telecom regulator of Kenya mentioned the Kenya Educational Network Trust, which has developed a sustainable model to ensure that the students are

provided the needed equipment and digital skills. He mentioned the Uduma initiative providing Government services through the Internet. He also shared with the participants the on-going efforts to provide computers to schools. He emphasized that it is a noble initiative to empower the younger generation to create the next generation of innovators and create wealth.

Resolutions:

The Council of African Regulators:

- *Requested Telecom Regulators to support the provision of connectivity for hundreds of schools every year by 30th June 2018, including underserved and rural areas, through the use of the Universal Access Fund; where applicable, the use of clean and renewable energy (solar panels, wind energy, etc.) should be encouraged.*

VI. Date and location of the next meeting

The Council of African Regulators resolved to hold their next meeting during the first week of December 2017 in Guinea.

VII. Closing remarks

The Executive Director of Smart Africa thanked the participants for keeping the momentum and being on the driving seat on numerous initiatives that were discussed during the meeting and beyond. He thanked the telecom regulator of Rwanda for all the logistical support offered for the organization of the second Council of African Regulators in Kigali. He conveyed to the participants the apologies of Hon. Minister Jean Philbert Nsengimana, Minister of ICT, for not being to attend because of his swearing-in ceremony that took place the same day with the CAR meeting. He thanked the Chairman of the meeting for his bright leadership of the meeting, which has led to tangible resolutions.

The Chairman of the meeting closed the meeting with a vote of thanks to all participants for their participation and dedication to advance the transformation of continent using ICT. He wished safe travel to all participants.

The meeting started at 09:25 and was adjourned at 18:30.

ENDS