

**UNCTAD E-Commerce Week**  
**Open Consultation on the Aid for e-Trade Initiative**  
**21 April 2016**  
**Geneva, Switzerland**

**Statement by the Africa Union Commission**

Excellences and distinguished participants,

I would like to commend UNCTAD for this initiative on aid for E -Trade and also for the successful organisation of this meeting dedicated to e-commerce.

As you may know Africa has made significant progress in internet penetration and mobile broadband and since 2009, with the deployment of several (over 18) submarine cables and landing stations, Africa's international bandwidth has been increasing by 71% annually over the last five years.

However Broadband penetration in Africa is still low compared to other regions. This is due to the lack of connectivity that encompasses Internet access and connections to all kinds of transformative applications and services that would in turn help bridge the digital divide.

The transformative benefits of having broadband available to all are clear and include improved learning, increased job creation, improved trade and commerce and a positive impact on socio- economic development.

Broadband also enables the agriculture sector for example, farmers in some African countries access on the Internet to forecast weather conditions and market their products and find high quality and cheap supplies.

Mobile broadband has also been driving financial inclusion in many African countries through the use mobile banking and mobile money.

The overall AU vision for the ICT sector in Africa is to build the soft and hard infrastructures that will satisfy African broadband demand at the lowest cost while increasing accessibility and security of access to/from all African countries to the rest of the continent and the rest world, with specific attention to landlocked or isolated countries.

The Ministers of Information and Communication called for the mainstreaming of ICTs as across cutting sector and consider ICT infrastructure as critical infrastructure essential to enable the continent to participate in the Information society and lead the fundamental changes of the 21st century in the digital economy.

To address the infrastructure gap in Africa, there is an ongoing project within the African Union, the program for Infrastructure development in Africa called PIDA.

The project is aiming at creating a conducive environment for building an inclusive information society, bridging the gap in Broadband Telecom infrastructure and ensuring access to the majority of citizens to broadband Internet.

PIDA priorities adhere to the overall goals of regional infrastructures development including intra-African connectivity and establishing an enabling environment & Governance by harmonizing the policies and regulations related to development of ICT sector notably: National and Regional broad band policies, radio spectrum management, and cyber security and e- strategies.

In addition to the implementation of the National and Regional Internet Exchange Points where the African Union conducted capacity building workshops in more than thirty countries and provided technical assistance to 14 counties who set up their national Internet exchange point.

To conclude, I would congratulate UNCTAD for developing the Aid for e-trade framework and from our side we believe that it is a good opportunity to boost the e- transactions in African countries and as international organisations we need to coordinate our efforts and collaborate to avoid duplication of work.

Furthermore, we shall endeavour to reap the full dividend from the development of the global digital economy through facilitating and promoting digital entrepreneurship, e-transformation initiatives and building confidence and trust in the use of ICTs as the single key driver of governmental, economic and societal changes.

Thank you for your attention.