

EuroAfrica-ICT Manifesto

*For a Strengthened EU-Africa
Strategic Partnership
on ICT under FP7*



Brussels - November 19, 2007

This document has been inspired by the activities developed by the EuroAfrica-ICT project (see www.EuroAfrica-ICT.org), funded by the European Commission (Directorate General Information Society and Media) and aiming at exploring the potential for a deeper and broader S&T cooperation on ICT between the European Union (EU) and sub-Saharan Africa under the 7th EU Framework Programme for Research and Development (FP7).

In the framework of this project, a high number of activities (workshops, conferences, expert panel meetings, site visits, bilateral meetings, public consultations, etc.) have been developed over the last twelve months, involving the main European, African and global organisations (public institutions, large corporations, SMEs, universities, NGOs, etc.) active in - or interested in - S&T cooperation on ICT between the EU and sub-Saharan Africa.

These activities have led to the following conclusions shared by all the individuals and organisations listed at the bottom of this Manifesto. They expect that their conclusions are duly taken into consideration in the ongoing revision process of the FP7 Work Programme related to the ICT theme.

Europe and Africa are two continents which are very close geographically, located on the same longitude and sharing identical languages (English, French, Portuguese, etc.). They logically have a strong past in common and can legitimately forge an even deeper future.

EU-Africa relations are already very close today: Africa receives 60% of its development assistance from Europe (€15 billion per annum); 85% of all agricultural goods exported from Africa are bought by Europe; 65% of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria are provided by Europe.

At a time when Africa is changing politically and economically and is rapidly entering a true new phase in its development history, when its resources and its potential markets are of increasing interest to many countries in the world, it is necessary that EU-Africa relations can evolve.

We can therefore only praise the decision of the EU and of the African Union (AU) to go beyond donor-recipient arrangements, to enter a genuine “partnership of equals” based on mutual interest, and to agree on an ambitious Joint Strategy to be adopted at their Summit of December 2007 in Lisbon.

In the past years, Africa has also recognised that Science and Technology (S&T) and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are key vectors for bridging the scientific and digital divides, for reducing poverty and ensuring socio-economic development, for reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), and, eventually, for supporting the sustainable evolution of Africa towards a peaceful, integrated and prosperous continent, a full actor of the global community.

The AU-NEPAD Africa Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action, the creation of the African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST), and the AU’s African Regional Plan for Knowledge and Economy (ARAPKE), are only some of recent examples of Africa’s determination to rely on S&T and ICT to achieve its growth and development objectives.

Progress is indeed being made today in Africa concerning institutions, policies, regulatory frameworks, infrastructures, capacity building, etc., and the African ICT research community - even if still limited - is already offering interesting skills and is rapidly expanding.

Meanwhile, in their determination to ensure Europe's global leadership in ICT and in line with their i2010 initiative, the EU Member States have earmarked a total of €9.1 billion for funding ICT research over the duration of FP7, a programme including an important international dimension, being open in particular to the participation of sub-Saharan African organisations.

In this context, a strengthened S&T cooperation between the EU and sub-Saharan Africa on ICT is of mutual strategic interest to the European and African research organisations and industries, and can efficiently contribute to implementing the new EU-AU Joint Strategy. It is therefore not surprising that one of the expected deliverables of the Lisbon EU-AU Summit is the approval of a specific Partnership on Science, Information Society, and Space.

However, the FP7 Work Programme for the ICT Theme, in its present version (covering the period 2007-2008), pays a very limited attention to Africa when compared to other regions of the world. There is indeed a true paradoxical gap between - on one hand - the political vision and roadmap, and the determination of European and African organisations to cooperate (among them the ones endorsing the present Manifesto), and - on the other hand - the opportunities offered by the FP7 ICT Work Programme.

Taking the above into consideration, the individuals and organisations having endorsed this EuroAfrica-ICT Manifesto recommend that, in the ongoing revision process of the FP7 ICT Work Programme (to cover the period 2009-2010), the strategic nature of EU-Africa cooperation can be duly taken into account so that:

- An increased participation of sub-Saharan African organisations in FP7 proposals is positively assessed during the evaluation process of the proposals,
- Specific actions (sectorial 'Coordination and Support Actions' - CSAs, 'Specific International Cooperation Actions' – SICAs, etc.) based on European and African mutual interests, are included in the revised FP7/ICT Work Programme.

On this last point many of the individuals and organisations having endorsed the EuroAfrica-ICT Manifesto have suggested such actions and are ready to provide further information to the relevant Units of the European Commission's DG Information Society and Media, to support their suggestions.