



*Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kenya to the United Nations*

866 U.N. Plaza, Rm 304, New York, NY 10017

**STATEMENT**

**BY**

**H.E. AMBASSADOR ZACHARY D. MUBURI-MUITA  
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE**

**OF THE**

**REPUBLIC OF KENYA TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
ON BEHALF OF THE AFRICAN GROUP**

**ON**

**AGENDA ITEM 46: INFORMATION COMMUNICATION  
TECHNOLOGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

**IN THE PLENARY OF THE SECOND COMMITTEE  
DURING THE 63<sup>RD</sup> SESSION  
OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**ON 23<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER 2008,**

**NEW YORK**

**Please check against delivery**

**Madam Chair,**

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group, on the agenda item 46, titled "Information and Communication Technologies for Development". The African Group, associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua & Barbuda, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

**Madam Chair,**

The recent General Assembly high-level meeting on Africa's development needs recognized that the challenges facing Africa were well known and that African Governments had taken measures to create an environment conducive to global partnerships, in order to address the continent's development needs, including the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Recent assessment reports have indicated that African countries are not on track towards achieving the MDGs by the target date of 2015. The report of the MDGs Africa Steering Group identifies practical steps and several key actions within the Information Communication Technology (ICT) sector that can contribute to achieving the MDGs. The African Group would have liked that the ICTs was among the sectors addressed under the MDGs framework, since in our view, the ICTs constitute important contribution to development and the digital divide is a cross-cutting obstacle to achieve the MDGs.

In Africa, poverty is not only economic or social, it is also digital while the same applies for illiteracy that is not only cultural or educational but is also digital. Therefore ICTs are a fundamental social process, a basic human need and the foundation of all social organization. The digital divide is notably a social divide. The MDGs cannot be achieved without bridging the digital divide.

**Madam Chair,**

The African Group is aware that ICTs should be considered as powerful tools for development and not as an end in themselves. Whereas the ICTs cannot replace a real development strategy, they can offer many opportunities to the disadvantaged sectors of society. The integration of the ICTs, within a framework of international cooperation and partnership can activate the development process in a meaningful way.

Owing to its capacity to accelerate the development process and the achievement of MDGs, ICTs can determine future living standards and promote development and integration in the world economy. For developing countries, particularly the poorest ones, the digital divide is first and foremost a question of infrastructure and social investment. Thus, there is not only a technological but also a socio-economic challenge. The ICTs have opened up new opportunities for attaining higher levels of development, they are transforming the way people live, work and interact, they are also critical in the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals including MDGs.

**Madam Chair,**

The implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) should be at the center of the debate on ICTs for development. The International Community should endeavour to implement the national, regional and international plans agreed at the WSIS in order to address the challenges of accessibility to ICT and truly turn the digital divide into digital opportunities by establishing an open, balanced, people-centred and development-oriented information society. The role of the United Nations is crucial for leading a global coordinated approach in this regard.

African countries are already taking measures and moving forward to unlock the vast potential of the continent in terms of investment opportunities. In his report, the Secretary General draws up a contrasted balance concerning the potential and the capacity of Africa in terms of connectivity, applications and infrastructure.

The challenges that digital divide poses for African countries have forced them to choose between many competing goals in their development process in spite of their limited resources. Indeed, bridging the digital divide requires adequate resources and sustainable investments in ICT infrastructure and services, capacity building and transfer of technology.

In this regard, the Global Digital Solidarity Fund, established within the framework of the WSIS, can play a significant role in striving to reduce the digital divide, to build a solidarity-based and inclusive information society and to put ICT at the service of development. We therefore call upon development partners, the private sector, the civil society, individuals and local communities, to provide voluntary contributions to its financing, in particular through the new innovative financing mechanism of the "1 percent of digital solidarity" Principle, also called the "Geneva Principle".

The African Group further welcomes the decision by the government of France to convene the 1<sup>st</sup> international Conference to finance the digital solidarity, to be held, on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2008, in Lyon, France. We hope that this conference will make a positive contribution to bridging of the digital divide and also, to the Doha Conference on financing for development.

**Madam Chair,**

Let me mention the "Connect Africa Summit", held in October 2007 in Rwanda, which was a key initiative aimed at mobilizing human, financial and technical resources for WSIS implementation, especially for bridging major gaps in ICT infrastructure development and connectivity.

The Summit resulted in investment commitments of over \$55 billion from private and public sector stakeholders toward achieving, over five years, the five "Connect African Goals" aimed at bringing broadband, high-speed and low-cost connectivity to the continent by 2012 and promoting the development of a critical mass of ICT skills required by the knowledge economy and the adoption of national e-strategy.

Africa is aware that the creation of an enabling and attractive environment for investment needs to develop and sustain not only the infrastructure for ICT but also the related human resources. This is the main message delivered by the "Connect Africa Summit", considering that most of the African peoples are confronted by the challenge of exclusion and marginalization.

The African Group underscores the importance of concerted and collective efforts by the international community in implementing the outcomes of the WSIS and thereby ensuring that ICTs play an important role in development. In this respect, we trust that the United Nations will continue playing its pivotal role in bringing together all the stakeholders with a view to early realization of these noble goals.

**I thank you**