

**JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ BY ICT MINISTERS AND SENIOR OFFICIALS FROM
BURUNDI, KENYA, UGANDA, RWANDA AND TANZANIA ATTENDING EAST
AFRICA**

BROADBAND WORKSHOP

May 9th, 2007

Kigali, Rwanda

Implementation of a Unified policy on East Africa Broadband Connectivity

Noting that the representatives from the Governments of Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Burundi and Tanzania gathered in Kigali, Rwanda, May 8-9, 2007 at a workshop, to discuss avenues for accelerating the deployment of broadband connectivity in East Africa;

Appreciating that the event was co-hosted by the Government of Rwanda and the U.S. Digital Freedom Initiative, a public-private partnership with support from the U.S. Department of State, USTDA, Federal Communications Commission, U.S. Department of Commerce, and USAID along with Cisco Systems;

Recalling that the participants were urged by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda during his opening remarks to make significant progress during the workshop;

Also recalling the extensive discussions held between the Delegations of Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda, and the support given by the US Government and its associated Federal Agencies;

Understanding that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) offers opportunities to impact all aspects of society including connecting rural areas and schools, supporting and strengthening the private sector including job creation, enhancing government provision of services, allowing institutions of higher education to access and share research, improving the delivery of health care services, and facilitating the free flow of information;

Reaffirming the urgent need to increase broadband access in the region to drive economic, social and political growth and the desire to complement other initiatives in the region;

Appreciating that a good network backbone is crucial for the economic development of our region;

Emphasizing the use of ICTs for development and that in order to realize some of the UN MDGs for our region, our governments have to play a role in rolling out infrastructure to create an enabling environment for private-public partnerships;

And therefore

Realizing the goals given as a challenge by President Kagame in his opening statement to the participants that there be a common goal to expand broadband connectivity in the region, it was agreed by the Governments of Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and Uganda that:

1. Progress must be made to bring undersea fiber optic cable systems and backbone connections to the region as quickly as possible;
2. Discussions with all potential submarine cable systems including the East African Submarine System (EASSy), the East Africa Marine System (TEAMS), and others, should aim to meet the requirements of all public and private stakeholders;
3. TEAMS has made significant progress and as such it will be fast tracked. Within a week, TEAMS will incorporate the countries in the region and request nominations to the technical team from East African countries. TEAMS will provide a briefing of regional governments about the technical, legal and investment details with a view to seeking inputs from regional partners within the next four to six weeks;
4. In an effort to build technical capacity to support the deployment of broadband and submarine cable networks, the U.S. Digital Freedom Initiative and its partners including USTTI and USTDA will work together to offer training on interconnection, transiting, long-term cable maintenance and spectrum management issues for regulatory agencies, ministries and others in the region. In service training and attachments in the US in key technological areas was emphasized. Exposure to US working culture & ethics to be part of training. Resources under the World Bank financed Regional Communication Infrastructure Program shall also be utilized towards the training. The East African governments will make nominations within the next three months;
5. The EAC should adopt an open access policy for backbone networks and agree they should be operated on a non-discriminatory manner based on a cost model that is sustainable, which supports regional interconnectivity and allows for high end usage that is affordable to the end users within three months;
6. East African governments will work through the EAC towards harmonizing regulatory policies in order to facilitate successful expansion of broadband infrastructure within three months;
7. The EAC will develop a regional connectivity vision for an Eastern Loop with the understanding that each nation will develop its own segment;

8. Permanent Secretaries, Secretary Generals and Regulators from the region should ensure that the objectives are met and report back to their governments. The EAC should convene a review meeting within three months from the date of this communique to review progress on the resolutions above.