



**UNITED NATIONS**  
**Department of Economic and Social Affairs**

# **LEGISLATIVE XML**

**Parliamentary Workshop**

**27-30 June 2006**

**Cape Town – South Africa**

**Strengthening the Parliaments' Information Systems in Africa**





We all know that ...

**Legislation** is one of the core functions of **Parliaments**

**Legislation** covers nearly every aspect of our lives and **the world around us**

and

Providing **access** to legislation is a fundamental **democratic requirement.**





## We do ...

- ... provide access to legislation
- ... provide access to parliamentary documents

### **TRUE**

**... as a matter of fact many parliaments provide access to legislation/parliamentary documents, any time, anywhere with their web sites**





# Formal vs Real ... access

Providing access

is **not** just a matter of

providing physical or on-line access to them

what we could call “**formal access**”

“**Real/Open access**” requires that the information and the search and retrieval of data

**is structured in a way that allows users to access and manipulate information**

in the form that it is **most convenient** to them.





# What do we have

Paper document or Word ... HTML ... PDF files ..

**BUT**

**Paper/documents are static** and putting documents on line just provides access to the documents ...

**Legislation is dynamic**, it changes, amendments, expressed in terms of simple changes to the text of the Act (e.g. substitute this phrase for another, omit this section, replace this paragraph with these three paragraphs, etc)





# But does this ...

Allow us to

- provide “Point in time legislation”?
- search legislation across Africa through a single portal?
- know what an MP has done and said about a specific piece of legislation?
- access, processing and elaborate of legal and parliamentary information?





# NO ... but ....

You may say we just need to ...

digitise the passed documents

and then

put them on a server

and then

buy one of those **magic** software

that we have seen in ... other parliaments





NOT enough ....

What WE NEED IS ...

- AKOMA NTOSO

and

BUNGENI

and ....





A

LOT

OF

not magic but smart

WORK!





# Why AKOMA NTOSO?

... we just need a magic software ... we have Internet ... we have a web site ...

TRUE, BUT

unfortunately what is missing and will be missing for quite a long time is ....





# Missing ...

Computers/software really able to

**READ/UNDERSTAND**

legal and parliamentary documents





So, since computers are still

STUPID,

but **extraordinarily efficient** in being so!

We need to find a way  
to make legal and parliamentary documents

.....





# MACHINE READABLE

we need

eXtensible Markup Language – XML

we need a shared framework of XML schemas

we need

## AKOMA NTOSO





# AKOMA NTOSO:

**“Akoma Ntoso”** (linked hearts) is the symbol used by the Akan people of West Africa to represent understanding and agreement.





# AKOMA NTOSO:

*Likewise, AKOMA NTOSO represents common standards that provide open access to parliamentary documentation and allow Parliaments to exchange information more efficiently*

*like “linked hearts”*





# AKOMA NTOSO:

*Architecture for Knowledge-Oriented Management of African*

*Normative Texts using Open Standards and Ontologies*





# AKOMA NTOSO is ...

A way of

- **structuring** legal and parliamentary documents and data so that their elements can be automatically identified and processed
- **dealing with changes** in the law so that textual modifications can be clearly identified, and the current content of the legal texts can be automatically constructed
- **building rich executable representation** of legal/parliamentary knowledge which can capture the essential component of legal and parliamentary knowledge.





# AKOMA NTOSO is ALSO

The **UNIQUE** opportunity  
to build this at a

**CONTINENTAL LEVEL**

to build

shared standards for  
legal and parliamentary knowledge





# AKOMA NTOSO provides ...

Increase accessibility of African legal and parliamentary documents that

is a key factor in promoting

- an **African market** and translational business
- **cooperation** different legal authorities of the AU states
- **harmonisation** of African laws
- create a **critical mass** for the development and sustainability of legal/parliamentary applications





# BUNGENI

- Bungeni aims to increase the efficiency of parliamentary activities and make Parliaments more open and accessible to citizens -- virtually allowing them

**“inside the Parliament” or Bungeni,**

the Kiswahili word for “inside the Parliament”





# BUNGENI

- ... soon on
- these screens!

