International Conference

Parliaments' Information Management in Africa

Challenges and Opportunities of ICTs to Strengthen Democracy and Parliamentary Governance

NAIROBI DECLARATION

The "International Conference Parliaments' Information Management in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities of ICTs to Strengthen Democracy and Parliamentary Governance" took place in Nairobi, Kenya on 10 and 11 February 2005 and gathered Speakers and high-level delegations from the Parliaments of Algeria, Angola, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sao Tomé and Principe, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, as well as from the Pan African Parliament, East Africa Legislative Assembly, ECOWAS Parliament, SADC Parliamentary Forum and the Italian Chamber of Deputies. Parliamentary officials from the above countries as well as from South Africa, the European Parliament, some European Union countries and representatives from international organisations, development partners, the private sector and civil society organisations also attended the Conference.

The Conference created an opportunity for African Parliaments to appreciate the complex scenario of issues, constraints and diversified resources that African Parliaments need to acknowledge and address for the successful deployment of ICTs in their legislatures.

Among the issues discussed at the Conference were: Access to Information; ICTs Regulation; Enabling Frameworks; Pan-African Parliamentary Interoperability Framework; Parliamentary Information Systems; Knowledge-based Parliaments; Assistance Framework.

Participants made contributions and shared their experiences and know-how in a cooperative manner and recognized that information and communication technologies have the potential to reinforce the institutional capacity of Parliaments to deliver on their constitutional mandates.

Participants also acknowledged the strategic significance of ICTs in strengthening good governance and inter-parliamentary cooperation, as well as the need for Parliament to promote the adoption of the relevant legal frameworks to facilitate and regulate the diffusion of ICTs in order to narrow the digital divide and advance the information society.

Participants considered the Nairobi Conference within the general framework of cooperation among African Parliaments and in relation to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), NEPAD objectives, and the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process.

In the light of the foregoing, the Conference:

renews its commitment to and commends the results so far achieved by the regional initiative on "**Strengthening Parliaments' Information Systems in Africa - UNDESA**".

Further, the Conference recommends that:

- Speakers of African Parliaments continue to lead the process of ICTs diffusion and modernisation of Parliaments to improve access to information, strengthen parliamentary democracy and foster inter-parliamentary cooperation

- The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the Pan-African Parliament establish a coordinating mechanism to adopt, promote and maintain the Pan-African Parliamentary Interoperability (PAPI) proposal

- African Parliaments acknowledge the strategic role of ICTs in a modern Parliament and the necessity to adequately reflect this new function in Parliaments' administrative structure, budget and human resources

- African Parliaments' IT professionals meet regularly to exchange views and experiences for the harmonization of IT structures and concepts, and enjoins the leadership of the various Parliaments to commit to this goal

- African Parliaments develop Parliamentary Information Systems based on open and interoperable standards, innovative technologies and full access to information as a strategic objective for strengthening democracy and modernization in Africa

- African Parliaments, within their national context and through their legislative and representative mandate, act as change agents in taking advantage of the opportunity offered by ICTs to strengthen democracy, support sustainable development and promote cooperation among national institutions to generate an effective knowledge based policy

The Conference calls on technologically-advanced Parliaments, development partners, international organisations and the private sector to contribute towards the consolidation and expansion of the scope of the regional initiative to all other African Parliaments with the ultimate objective of transforming it into a self-sustaining initiative. At the same time, it urges development partners to shift from a fragmented approach to the development of ICT in Parliament in favour of a unified and coordinated partnership.

The Conference directs that the Nairobi Declaration be widely circulated in all concerned Parliaments and organisations.

Finally, the Conference expresses its deep gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Kenya, and in particular to the Kenya National Assembly, for their warm hospitality; to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs for the organizational and substantive support; and to the Government of the Republic of Italy for the funding of this Project and the Italian Chamber of Deputies for the technical assistance provided.

Nairobi, Kenya, this 11th day of February, 2005.