



**United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Public Administration and Development Management
New York**

Remarks Made by Dr. John-Mary Kauzya, Chief of Governance and Public Administration Branch of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs during the Closing of the International Conference on African Legal Resources: Challenges and Opportunities of Legislative Informatics Held in Abuja, Nigeria (21-22 March 2007)

I salute,

- The Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
- The Senate of the National Assembly of the Republic of Nigeria,
- The National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
- Pan African Parliament represented by Ho. Suzanne Vos,
- The Italian Chamber of Deputies and the Inter-Parliamentary Union,
- Honorable Members of Parliament present,
- Distinguished Delegates,
- Colleagues from the United Nations System,
- Members of the press,
- Ladies and gentlemen,

As we come to the conclusion and end of the International Conference on African Legal Resources: Challenges and Opportunities of Legislative Informatics, I would like to express my great satisfaction with the way it has run and appreciation for the organization and hospitality that we have all enjoyed during here in Abuja.

I do not believe though that here we stand at the end of the journey of strengthening the capacity of African parliaments through the application of Information and Communications technology. In this exciting journey we have just put a milestone of reference towards stronger Parliaments interconnected and collaborative among themselves, linked on a continuous and daily basis with their constituencies for the promotion of meaningful democracy, transparency, accountability and integration in Africa. We therefore

must commit to implementation of a specific road map so that the next time we meet we will be sharing experiences of how sweet the fruits of our work here have been. The work of conception, laboratory trials, fine-tuning etc is over. We must move from the nursery to the garden and start planting. The strengthening of parliamentary information systems through the application of ICT as you have been discussing it must move into implementation in the various Parliaments. This work is on two planes. One is internal to each African parliament and the second is external dealing with inter parliamentary linkages and networking. You resolved to establish an African Parliamentary knowledge Network and to lobby for its political backing. This needs to be done quickly. We need to have Parliaments starting the implementation of the Bungeni and the Akoma Antoso on which you have all worked hard with support from the ICT professors and experts.

Africa has got a great development job at its hands and I am sure this job cannot be done with weak unconnected legislatures. Africa has serious problems which the old ways of doing Parliamentary work have not helped to solve. There is therefore great need to change and try new ways including the application of ICT in Parliamentary work. You have been working on this and you need to put it into effect. UNDESA pledges sustained support. In the architecture of good governance in Africa, Parliaments must stand at the front line and guide the people they represent to march with resolve towards political emancipation, social well being, and economic prosperity. Since it is acknowledged now that the application of Information and Communications technology in any of its forms and in any institution including the legislature will help in this endeavor, we must support it.

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in New York has a

mandate and is resolved to collaborate with Global and African Institutions to support the strengthening of institutions of Legislatures especially the administrative and support structures as long as Africa keeps requesting us for this support. I urge Parliamentarians and Administrators of African Parliaments to acquaint themselves with global, regional and continental structures with which they can collaborate to tap opportunities for strengthening their capacities for Africa's development.

Allow me to conclude by reiterating UNDESA's gratitude to the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the National Assembly and Senate, the Pan African Parliament, the Global Center for ICT, and all the African Parliaments that sent delegations to this conference. Without support from all of you, the conference would not have seen any day. All the Resource Persons who made presentations, the facilitators who chaired the sessions deserve lots thanks. To all the conference support personnel, including the protocol, the interpreters, the ushers, security, the press and media, our private sector partners (HP, Ubuntu Linux, Enhanced Media Systems, and CELTEL Nigeria), the Hilton Hotel Management and Personnel, and all those who in one or another contributed to the success of this conference, I give my sincere congratulations and thanks. I would like you allow me to express through of you UNDESA's appreciation of the financial and technical assistance that the Government of Italy has been providing to support the various programs and projects of governance and public administration capacity building in African including the work you are engaged in. Finally, please join me to thank my colleagues Gherardo Casini and Flavio Zeni who worked behind the scene to organize the conference

and who have facilitated it to its logical conclusion.

Let me conclude by saying that we are not doing all this work on Legislative Informatics as an act of technological acrobatics. This is part of overall efforts to strengthen good governance in Africa and provide a platform and an environment that can adequately support the people of Africa to free themselves from the straight jacket of poverty in which they are currently closed.

I wish all of you safe journey home. May God bless you.