



**International Workshop**  
*Towards the establishment of an*  
***African Parliamentary Knowledge Network***  
***on ICT, legislation and documentation***

**Final Communiqué**

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) convened in Abuja, Nigeria, on 20 March 2007, the International Workshop “Towards the establishment of an African Parliamentary Knowledge Network on ICT, legislation and documentation”. The meeting took place as part of the United Nations funded project “Strengthening the capacity of African Parliaments to harness Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)”

The workshop was co-organized by the National Assembly of Nigeria, under the auspices of the Pan African Parliament, in cooperation with the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament. It benefited from the generous support and hospitality of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

77 participants from 15 countries took part in the deliberations of the meeting in a constructive and cooperative manner. Among them, twelve parliamentary delegations from African Assemblies and the Pan African Parliament were represented.

The objective of the International Workshop was to exchange ideas and share views around the establishment of an African Parliamentary Knowledge Network (APKN) and agree on a common framework for its set up, structuring and sustainability.

The workshop created an opportunity for a frank and open discussion among participants, who benefited from presentations on existing experiences and lessons learned, capacity-building approaches, political and institutional frameworks, ownership and challenges.

During intense and productive consultations, representatives of African Parliaments, of the United Nations, prominent academicians and high-level parliamentary experts had the opportunity to evaluate a number of options and possibilities relating to the establishment of the APKN and proposed different modalities for its implementation.

Participants considered the Network within the general framework of cooperation among African Parliaments under the Africa i-Parliaments Action Plan, the initiatives undertaken by the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament, NEPAD’s goals and the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) implementation plan.

In light of the above, the International Workshop:

- agreed on the establishment of the *African Parliamentary Knowledge Network* with the aim of strengthening the information management capacity of parliamentary administrations to better serve their institutions and members;
- agreed on the need to provide strong political endorsement for the *African Parliamentary Knowledge Network* to operate in a conducive environment with long-term objectives and sustainability over time;

- recognized that information and communication technology, while not being an end in itself, has the potential to reinforce Parliaments’ core functions and parliamentary practices to deliver on their constitutional mandates;
- acknowledged the value of existing regional initiatives, such as the Network for ICT Managers of the SADC region, and recognized the need to take into account these experiences and to harmonize, and benefit from, these initiatives;
- acknowledged the strong linkages between the goals and objectives of the Africa i-Parliaments Action Plan and those of the African Parliamentary Knowledge Network and commended the coordination so far reached among the two processes;
- renewed its commitment to work in a spirit of collaboration towards the achievement of these goals and objectives

Moreover, the International Workshop recommended that:

- the *African Parliamentary Knowledge Network* be an integral part of the Africa i-Parliaments Action Plan in order to ensure proper coordination and avoid duplication of efforts;
- specific objectives of the network include the promotion and enhancement of sharing of ideas, experiences and good practices among parliamentary administrations in their areas of responsibility, which include legislation, information, research, documentation and technologies;
- the *African Parliamentary Knowledge Network* promote at continental level the training and capacity development of Members of Parliaments and parliamentary staff in the area of legislation, information, research, documentation and technologies;
- the activities of the network may include, but are not limited to, the organization of seminars and training sessions, the establishment of online forums, the promotion of working groups on specific topics, and the design of an information portal and newsletters;
- since strong political backing is required for the *African Parliamentary Knowledge Network* to grow as a true continental network, the Pan African Parliament consider its endorsement, the approval of an APKN Charter and ensure oversight with regards to its guidance and implementation at its last plenary session of 2007;

and in view of the above, that:

- by the last plenary session of 2007 of the Pan African Parliament, a study be prepared, under the auspices of the Abuja Conference co-organizers, with a view to map existing processes and realities at the regional levels in order to identify mutual benefits and challenges, and outline recommendations for their harmonization at continental level;
- by the last plenary session of 2007 of the Pan African Parliament, a Charter of the *African Parliamentary Knowledge Network*, outlining membership, governance, secretariat services and funding, be prepared under the auspices of the Abuja Conference co-organizers, in consultation with representatives of parliaments from the Africa regions to ensure an inclusive and balanced approach to it.

Finally, participants of the International Workshop commend the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the National Assembly of Nigeria and the Pan African parliament for the organization and preparation of the Abuja meeting and welcome the kind offer of the United Nations and the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament to hold a follow up meeting at the Pan African Parliament in early 2008.