



NEPAD Dialogue

Focus on Africa



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Bringing the benefits of ICT to Africa

In choosing its priority programmes, NEPAD focused on the importance of information and communication technologies (ICT) both in helping to extend and raise the quality of education at all levels in African education systems and also in imparting ICT skills to the African population in the workforce and in the communities at large.

Benefits of all kinds are expected to result from this technology in its impact on the economy, on business, on investment, on food security, on poverty reduction, on productivity and competitiveness of African economies.

Benefits are expected on the conduct of government operations, on transparency in governance and citizen participation and on cultural expression and cultural exchange.

NEPAD realises that delay in implementing a meaningful ICT programme for this continent is a delay in raising its standards of living and eradicating poverty and a delay in the meaningful participation of Africa, especially of its young people, in the modern world.

The NEPAD ICT programme is predicated on two elements:

- Firstly, the rapid development of ICT infrastructure for the integration of the continent, enabling trade, social and cultural exchange to take place with ease and affordability.

A similar objective applies to children graduating from African primary schools 10 years from the start of this project.

It is intended to launch preparatory activities for the definition of this project in 2003. The preparatory activities will be conducted with the participation of national experts and reviewed by stakeholders. They will culminate in the preparation of a business plan and an implementation plan for work to be performed at the national level in each of the African countries.

The project aims to convert each one of the approximately 500,000 African schools into a "NEPAD e-school".

A NEPAD e-school is an African school connected to the NEPAD e-schools network. The school is equipped with a certain minimum set of apparatus including: computers, TV and radio sets, telephones, scanners, photo-copiers, communication terminals, etc and is connected to the internet.

The school will teach ICT skills and will be utilise ICT to upgrade the quality of its overall educational offering and the management of its administrative activities.

Teachers at the school will be trained to teach ICT skills will undergo ICT training on a continuing basis. Each school has a health point to support the NEPAD e-health

- Secondly, the rapid dissemination of ICT skills across the African population, enabling ICT literacy to be brought to bear on the workforce as well as on social, political and cultural activities. This will be done by implementing an effective e-schools programme, simultaneously, in the primary and secondary schools.

NEPAD has set up the e-Africa Commission to drive this ICT programme. For an effective partnership with the private sector and civil society, the Commission has established ISPAD(Information Society Partnership for Africa's Development) .

This partnership is open to companies which recognise the value of ICT to their enterprises and to the development of the African economies.

The companies will choose the level of their commitment and involvement in the NEPAD ICT programme and some may choose to become foundation partners to the Commission.

The NEPAD e-schools project

The NEPAD e-schools programme is the top priority ICT project because of the critical role that computer literacy can play in improving the provision of education to African children and equipping school leavers with the skills they need to function effectively in a knowledge-based economy.

A comprehensive, well-designed and executed programme of ICT education in schools is the quickest and most effective avenue for disseminating ICT skills in the African population, given the age distribution in this population.

Rapid progress towards the widespread acquisition of ICT skills by Africans is one of the main pillars of the NEPAD ICT strategy.

The objective is to ensure that within a period of five years from the start of this project, all

programme.

The NEPAD e-schools network will be connected to the internet mainly via satellite communication links. Under a companion project presented separately (the low cost satellite access project for NEPAD e-schools) NEPAD, through the e-Africa Commission, will undertake discussions with satellite operating companies and terminal manufacturers to negotiate bulk purchase arrangements to reduce the satellite access costs for NEPAD e-schools.

The World Economic Forum held in Durban on 11-13 June 2003, saw the launch of this project. Business people from the world-wide ICT industry and other interested parties expressed keen interest at the launch.

A number of companies pledged their support to the NEPAD e-schools programme.

US\$ 100,000 answer to NEPAD call

The World Economic Forum held in Durban from the 11 to 13 June 2003 was a resounding success. The forum analysed political, economic, social, and corporate governance issues.

An important decision emanating from the forum was the business to business call that emphasised the need to support the NEPAD process, both financially, and in capacity building.

Mr. Alhaji B. Tukur, President of the African Business Roundtable and Chairman of the NEPAD Business Group, donated US\$100,000 to NEPAD in response to the call for financial and material support.

The Chairman of the NEPAD Steering Committee, Professor Wiseman Nkulhu thanked him for the generous donation to the Secretariat and said, "Mr. Alhaji Bamanga Tukur has really demonstrated that he takes seriously the call made to

youths graduating from African high schools will possess the necessary ICT skills to enable them to find jobs, to create job opportunities for themselves or to further their education in ICT or other fields.

African business. We hope that other businessmen and women on the continent and abroad will follow the example set by Mr. Tukur. In this way, we will be making real, the commitments made at the World Economic Forum."

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Kind Regards,

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