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Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA P. O. Box 3243 Telephone 002511-115 517 700 Cables: OAU, Addis Ababa
website : www.africa-union.org

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**REPORT OF THE EXPERTS' MEETING ON THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF A PAN-AFRICAN RADIO
AND TELEVISION CHANNEL**

I. INTRODUCTION

The Meeting of Radio and Television Experts on the establishment of a Pan-African Radio and Television Channel was held from 21 to 23 November 2005, at the Cairo International Conference Centre.

Organized by the African Union Commission in collaboration with the Ministry of Information of the Arab Republic of Egypt, the meeting was a follow-up to the proposal for the establishment of a Pan-African Television Channel submitted by the Egyptian President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak to his peers at the Assembly of the African Union held in Abuja, Nigeria in January 2005.

It was also being held after the meetings in Addis Ababa (30 August 2005) and in Cairo (19 September 2005) between the delegations of Egypt and the African Union Commission which had been mandated by the Heads of State to consider the practical modalities of the implementation of the Egyptian proposal.

II. ATTENDANCE

The representatives of about thirty Member States, experts from the African continent and the Diaspora as well as representatives of international and regional organizations, regional communities, media enterprises and communication professionals participated in the meeting.

III. OPENING CEREMONY

The opening ceremony was held at the International Conference Centre in Cairo, chaired by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Professor Alpha Oumar Konaré and in the presence of Mr. Ahmed Anis, First Under Secretary in the Ministry of Information, and Mr. Ibrahim Akabaoui, Secretary General of the Egyptian Radio and Television Union.

It provided an opportunity to reaffirm the will of the African Union to endow Africa with its own communication tool which could facilitate exchanges among Africans, establish a Pan-African conscience and correct the bad image given of Africa on the one hand, and underscored Egypt's desire to share its experience in television and radio with sister African States on the other hand.

IV. ELECTION OF THE BUREAU

The meeting agreed to elect a five-member Bureau, with a representative from each of the major geographical regions as follows:

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|--|---|------------------------------------|
| - Chairperson | : | Egypt (North Africa) |
| - 1st Vice-Chairperson | : | Nigeria (West Africa) |
| - 2nd Vice-Chairperson | : | Kenya (East Africa) |
| - 3rd Vice-Chairperson | : | Lesotho (Southern Africa) |
| - Rapporteur | : | Equatorial Guinea (Central Africa) |

Furthermore, it was decided that the Bureau thus composed, should establish a Working Group charged with monitoring the implementation of the project.

V. DELIBERATIONS OF THE MEETING

The meeting submitted for discussion in the plenary, four scientific papers dealing with the technical and financial aspects as well as the contents of the programme as follows:

1. "The Pan-African Radio and Television Channels: Key Challenges and Opportunities", presented by the African Union.
2. "A Pan-African Satellite Communications System providing continental coverage for the exchange of Radio and Television Programmes in a Cost-Effective Manner", presented by the Regional African Satellite Communication Organization (RASCOM).
3. "Strategies for Broadcast News and Program Exchange in Africa" presented by URTNA.
4. "Technological Considerations for Pan-African Radio and Television Broadcasting in Africa", presented by Egypt.

Lengthy discussions took place during the meeting, covering various aspects, leading to the finalization of the project.

With regard to the **Nature and Missions of the Channel**, the meeting concluded that the main objectives of the Pan-African Television Channel should be to foster African integration and solidarity, promote the true image of the Continent, as well as African culture and heritage.

Participants were of the opinion that the Pan-African Television Channel should be a global channel focusing on general information, sports, culture and disseminate African documentaries and films about Africa.

The **financial** aspect featured prominently in the discussions. Several ideas were put forward, namely, the concrete proposal with estimates by Egypt, which suggested that the cost of the project estimated at 34 million US dollars annually, should be derived from contributions by Member States.

Three scales of assessment were submitted: countries to contribute US\$1.5 million, countries to contribute US\$1 million and countries to contribute US\$0.5 million. These scales of assessment should determine the number of seats given to States within the managing bodies of the Channel.

While underscoring the need to ensure long-term and independent financing for the Channel which would ensure its viability and continuity, participants remained divided over financing the Channel by contributions from Member States.

The meeting also proposed that resource mobilization for financing the Channel could be undertaken by the African Union through contributions from Member States, Africa's development partners and the private sector, which should be involved in financing this project through a public-private partnership. The same would apply for the contribution of the Diaspora.

Some participants advised that the management structure to be established should be responsible for conducting studies in order to obtain the necessary resources.

Concerning the legal and institutional framework, all participants highlighted the need to protect the independence of the Channel, while respecting its goals. They indicated that the Pan-African Television Channel should be the property of the African Union, without however constituting another department of the organization.

The meeting also reviewed the management structure, emphasizing that the Channel could be more effectively managed by a Board of Directors, an Administrative Council or Shareholders' Meeting.

Many proposals were made on the programme contents of the Pan-African Television Channel. The issue was whether to opt for an 8-hour programme daily in four languages, a 4-hour programme or a 6-hour programme and even a permanent satellite lease.

Exchanges of views about the target audiences led to the conclusion that the Pan-African Television Channel should first target Africans, and then audiences and viewers from other continents, with a view to promoting the true image of Africa, considering that the Channel meant to meet the aspirations and expectations of Africans in the area of information.

Concerning the languages, participants agreed to give priority to the official languages of the African Union. Extension to other languages such as Swahili should take place progressively.

Financial and technical presentations made by Egypt and RASCOM highlighted the technological opportunities available for the implementation of the project. The NILESAT, RASCOM, Intelsat and NSS7 satellites, and the optical fibre networks should constitute, in the opinion of participants, suitable tools for engineering studies to be conducted to optimise the final network of the Pan-African Television Channel.

Participants hoped for massive participation of the private sector in the implementation of the project, either at the level of financing, management or programming of the Pan-African Television Channel.

In this regard, private companies and parastatals, African telecommunication companies as well as the African Diaspora should be strongly and actively encouraged to take part in the implementation of the project and ensure its success.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of discussions, participants adopted the following recommendations in the plenary:

Programming Content:

- establishment of a Pan-African Radio and Television Channel functioning initially as a news-driven broadcaster, with regional bureaus and correspondents in Africa, and where possible, in other appropriate locations, particularly at national level, working to protect the interests of the Continent and improve Africa's image worldwide.

Legal and Institutional Framework:

- appointment by the African Union (AU) of a Board of Trustees charged with supervising the establishment of the governance structures of the Channel that will foster participation by a broad range of stakeholders, including the public, private and business sectors.
- setting up a Management Team to ensure that the Channel operates as an independent, credible and sustainable broadcast institution.

Funding:

- mobilization of financial resources by calling on the African Union to:
 - invite Member States to allocate the financial, technical and human resources required specially for the launching of the Channel;
 - encourage the participation of African institutions from the private and financial sectors, including the telecommunications and media sectors;
 - involve organizations of the African Diaspora;
 - establish cooperation links with international development organizations and other partner organs;
 - encourage the Channel to explore possible ways and means of generating income through advertising, marketing and sales.

Languages:

- broadcast of programmes in the official languages of the African Union – Arabic, English, French and Portuguese – while considering the possibility of introducing other languages such as Swahili.

Technologies:

- launching of the Channel using NILESAT and other cost-effective satellite and optical fibre combinations (RASCOM, Intelsat, NSS7, etc).

Partnerships and other relations of cooperation:

- the African Union is urged to create multifaceted partnerships involving public, private, business and other entities so as to enhance the viability, sustainability and credibility of the radio-television network.

Follow-up:

Proposed actions for the take-off of the Channel in 2006:

- detailed mission statement, content, profile, staffing options and technical requirements for the Channel;
- final cost studies;
- draft legal, institutional and management instruments;
- strategy document for resource mobilization;
- organization of a communication campaign for creating awareness and support for the establishment of the Channel;
- setting up by the African Union, in consultation with Egypt and the Bureau of the Experts' Meeting, of appropriate working groups to undertake these tasks.

2005

Report of the experts' meeting on the establishment of a pan-African radio and television channel

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