



# 14th African Union Summit

Theme: "Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in Africa: Challenges and Prospects for Development"

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## DIVISION OF COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION

### ICT IN AFRICA – INFORMATION SHEET N5

#### **HARMONIZATION OF ICT POLICIES IN SUB-SAHARA AFRICA (HIPSSA)**

HIPSSA is ongoing under an International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and European Commission partnership. The programme was officially launched in December 2008 and it will run until the end of 2011. Its objectives are, developing and promoting ICT market policies and guidelines for individual countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, supporting the regional organizations and the sub-regional economic groupings to develop and promote the use of harmonized ICT market policies and regulations in the area concerned and building human as well as institutional capacity in the field of ICT through a range of targeted training, education and knowledge sharing measures. The alignment of HIPSSA with the AU Action Plan was agreed by the European Commission and African Union Commission and it was subsequently proposed for the AUC to co-chair the HIPSSA Steering Committee with ITU.

The first meeting of the HIPSSA Steering Committee in March 2009 adopted a common list of priorities articulated around 8 main subjects: Licensing; Universal Service and Access; Frequency management; Numbering management; Interconnection; Cyber-security; Statistics Collection; Analog to Digital Broadcasting Migration. The first major achieved milestone is a report assessing the current level of harmonisation related to the 8 topics in Sub-Sahara Africa. The result of the review compares the regional harmonisation initiatives and determines commonalities and divergences between these initiatives. The report identifies the key challenges and opportunities related to achieving a harmonised regulatory approach and present the results under a SWOT analysis for each regional organisation.

The development of regional infrastructures and their rational operation can only be done in an appropriate enabling regional environment, namely, a policy and regulatory framework that allows all stakeholders to have a common understanding of the objectives and expected results, and defining rules that are critical factors to attract investment. The Regional Economic Communities (REC) and Intergovernmental organizations (IGO) supported by International Specialized

Institutions have adopted or are in the process of implementing harmonized policies and regulatory frameworks.

At the regional level, the establishment of regional ICT associations has also focused attention on development of policy and regulatory frameworks for Africa. A common feature among all these associations is that most if not all have similar objectives. However, the status of common or harmonized regulatory policies and provisions differs sharply between the RECs and the regions. The challenge though has been for individual countries to incorporate the regional frameworks in their national policy, legislative and regulatory agenda.