



Economic Commission for  
Africa



Ministry of Communications  
Government of Ghana



ORGANISATION  
INTERNATIONALE DE LA  
FRANCOPHONIE



AFRICAN ACADEMY OF  
LANGUAGES

## **The African Regional Preparatory Conference for the WSIS**

### **African languages: creativity in the service of African renaissance**

#### **I- BACKGROUND**

With over 2,000 languages, which represents a third of all the languages worldwide, Africa cannot afford to ignore the issue of language in the development and building of an Information Society. Yet local African languages can become marginalized as a result of the Internet revolution with English becoming the dominant language. Efforts need to be made to include the use of local languages in the electronic world, if the majority of Africans are to gain access to the Information Society. Given that Africa is under-represented in the global Information Society, there is a need to build capacity to produce and collect accurate and relevant local content in official and national languages, recognizing oral and traditional forms of communications.

AISI emphasizes the importance of preserving and promoting African cultures, including the usage of local languages and content creation. There have also been calls to address new imperatives and challenges in the adaptation of African languages to promote greater access to the Information Society, as clearly spelt out in the Bamako Declaration<sup>1</sup>. Consideration should be given to the continent's linguistic specificities with the introduction of ICTs for content generation and creation.

#### **II- OBJECTIVE**

Jointly organized by ECA and OIF (Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie), the main objective of the workshop will be to evaluate the implementation of the Geneva commitments on cultural diversity and linguistics and make recommendations for the Tunisia WSIS phase. The workshop will also serve as a forum in which participants will exchange ideas on the challenges facing the presence of African languages on the cyberspace and ways to tackle those challenges.

#### **III- EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

In line with the above-mentioned objectives, the following outcomes are expected:

- State of the implementation of the Geneva commitments
- Challenges to the presence of African languages in the cyberspace
- Advantages of open source software in content development with African languages
- Recommendations for Tunisia WSIS phase

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.wsis2005.org/bamako2002/doc\\_html/declaration\\_final\\_en.htm](http://www.wsis2005.org/bamako2002/doc_html/declaration_final_en.htm)