REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE

29TH EACO ASSEMBLIES & EXTRAORDINARY CONGRESS

24TH – 28TH JUNE 2024

SAFARI PARK HOTEL & CASINO, NAIROBI, KENYA

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The 29th EACO Assembles and Extraordinary Congress were held from 24th – 28th June 2024 at Safari Park Hotel & Casino, Nairobi, Kenya. The meetings for the Working Groups and Committees, the Unveiling of EACO Regional Statistics for 2023, two workshops (on telecom & postal sectors) preceded the Assemblies while a workshop on Universal Service Fund was held on Day 4 of the week (27th June 2024).

The Extraordinary Congress was held on 28th June 2024 and was dedicated to amendment of EACO constitution.

This report presents the proceedings and decisions of the Assemblies and the Extraordinary Congress after considering the reports of Working Groups and Committees.

2.0   PARTICIPATION

The Congress was attended by:

  i.   DGs of the National Regulatory Authorities from member countries;
  ii.   CEOs of various operators;
  iii. Representatives of UPU, PAPU, ATU, AFRALTI, SPIDER; CRASA, SAPOA.
  iv.   Members of EACO and other stakeholders.

3.0   OPENING CEREMONY FOR THE 29TH ASSEMBLIES

3.1. Remark by the Executive Secretary of EACO – Dr. Ally Simba

The Executive Secretary welcomed all delegates in their respective capacities to the 29th EACO Assemblies.

He thanked Kenya, through Communications Authority of Kenya (CA), for hosting the Assemblies as well as the consistent support in all areas of our endeavor to achieve EACO's objectives.

 He also recognized all the Special Guests and thanked them for having found time to attend the session.

Detailed remarks are herewith attached.

ES Opening Remarks
29th Annual Assembli

3.2 Remarks by the Director General of CA, Mr. David Mugonyi

The Director General of CA welcomed all the delegates to the 29th EACO Assemblies. He indicated that Kenya was proud to host the events and promised to participants that all the requirements would be met to make their stay in Kenya comfortable. He also recognized and welcomed in a special way the Special Guests from the region and the invited delegates to take benefit of the Assemblies' activities.

The full speech is herein attached.

Remarks by DG CA at
opening-24.06.2024.p

3.3. Speech of the Guest of Honour, Hon. Eliud Owalo, FIHRM, EGH, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Information, Communications and the Digital Economy, Republic of Kenya

The Minister thanked and congratulated all EACO members for their accomplishments and the different projects.

He indicated that the theme for the 29th Annual Assemblies and the EACO Extraordinary Congress "Promoting digital transformation in the EAC region,'' provides EAC member states with an opportunity to reflect on our individual and collective efforts to leverage the power of digital transformation to grow our economies. In Kenya, the Government's Bottom-up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA), has primed ICTs as a critical enabler of economic growth and has identified deliberate interventions to make this a reality.

The entire speech is herewith attached.

Remarks by CS
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4.0. HIGH LEVEL ROUND TABLE

The High-Level Round Table was held under the theme "Promoting digital transformation in the EAC region"**.**

4.1 Opening of the High-Level Round Table

After the opening ceremony of the 29th Assemblies, the High-Level Round Table followed and was moderated by Mr William Baraza, Director of AFRALTI.

The keynote address was given by Dr. Bengt Mölleryd, Senior Analyst, Swedish Programme for ICT in Developing Regions (SPIDER).

The presentation is herewith attached,

Presentation_Nairobi
key note EACOi_BM_2

4.2 Thematic Presentations and Discussions

The Round table discussion had thematic questions on:

     i.   Policy in digital transformation
    ii.   Status, successes and challenges in digital transformation;
   iii.   Regulation of digital services and challenges experienced;
   iv.   Initiatives or solutions by private sector related to digital services;
    v.   Regional digital instruments;
   vi.   Countries' experiences and impacts.

Participated in the High-Level Roundtable the following:

- Mr. Nicholas Merinyo Mkapa, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Information, Communications and Information Technology, Tanzania
- Dr Labanya Margaret Mathya, Director, Corporate Affairs, Communications Authority (NCA), South Sudan;
- Ms. Bridget Linzie, Executive Secretary, Communications Regulators' Association of Southern Africa (CRASA);
- Ms. Susan Wegoye, Director, Legal Affairs, Uganda Communications Commission (UCC);
- Ms. Angela Wamola. Head of Sub-Saharan Africa GSMA.

4.3. Key recommendations

Participants to the high-level roundtable made a number of recommendations in order to promote digital transformation among others:

- To embrace the technology through capacity building;
- Sharing experience;
- To ensure that required budget is allocated to institutions dealing with digital transformation;
- To be digitally ready and to secure the cyberspace, e.g. digital authority ensures provisions on data protection;
- To consider the industry sector as a development partner.

5. Recommendations from the workshops

5.1 Telecom workshop

The workshop's theme was *"Role of ICT in Promoting Digital Transformation in the Region"*.

The purpose of having the workshop was to ensure that the Communication sector is engaged in discussions on topics that are relevant to the Assemblies and make necessary recommendations relevant to the region.

A keynote address was delivered by Ms. Beata Mukangabo, General Manager at Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA) on behalf of Mr. Everiste Rugigana, Director General, (RURA). The workshop was moderated by Eng. Dut Acol De Dut, Director of Spectrum Management from National Communication Authority, South Sudan, and Chair of EACO WG5.

Below were the presenters:

- **Mr. Isaac Boateng**, Standardization Coordinator, African Telecommunications Union

  ATU on EACO
  Rev2.pptx

- **Caroline Mbugua,** Senior Director Public Policy and Communications, GSMA-Sub Sharan Africa.

  EACO
  Presentation-GSMA.p

- **Leonard Chitundu**- Telecom Officer, Director of Infrastructure and Logistics – COMESA Secretariat.
  Title: Role of ICT Infrastructure in Digital Transformation

  Role of ICT
  Infrastructure in Digit

- **Mr. Jeff Panwei,** Director, Southern Africa Regional Network Marketing and Solution Sales, Huawei
  Title: Regulatory Interventions to expand fiber networks for Digital Transformation

**2024 Huawei EACO
Presentation on Fiber**

The following were the key recommendations from the workshop:

- Review National building codes in EAC Member States to ensure provisions for fiber pre-deployment to facilitate fiber-optic cable in the future given the core foundation role that it plays in the Digital Economy.
- Member States were urged to address ICT infrastructure financing gaps by exploring different financing options
- They were also urged to ensure Private Sector participation, encourage Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the ICT sector.
- Create an enabling environment through harmonised policy and regulatory frameworks and make Africa an investment destination
- Include ICT in National Investment plans, have unified licensing regimes, encourage infrastructure sharing to reduce on CAPEX.
- Capacity Building to build skills for the African workforce
- Innovation and adoption of Emerging Technologies such AI
- Enhance collaboration and partnerships (Public Private Partnerships).

5.2 Postal workshop

The workshop was held under the theme *"Promoting e-commerce in postal & courier services".* The objective of the workshop was to make aware industries of the postal sector on the need of promoting e-commerce in postal & courier activities and operations and; then discuss on the strategy of promoting e-commerce in postal & courier services in East Africa region.

The moderator was Mr. Ferdinand Christian Kabyemela, from Tanzania Posts Corporation (TPC), Chairperson of WG4 on Postal and Courier Services Development & Regulations.

The keynote was delivered by Dr. Philip Filikunjombe, Director of Legal Services Unit, Tanzania Communications Regulatory Autority (TCRA); and is herein attached.

**Keynote Speech by
Dr Philip - Postal Wor**

Four presentations have been made of the following topics:

Topic 1: *"Cross-border e-commerce Logistics - Opportunities and Challenges for Postal Operators"*

Presenter: Molefe Mathibe, JMAT Advisory Services

Presentation by Molefe Postal worksh

Topic 2: *"What factors can influence discernible impact on the growth and sustainable e-commerce business in Africa"*

Presenter: Dr Sifundo Chief Moyo, Secretary General, PAPU

PAPU Presentation_29th EA

Topic 3: *"Role of PCK in financial inclusion & Showcase of Postapay solutions"*

Presenter: Joan Toroitich, Postal Corporation of Kenya (PCK)

Joan Presentation PostaPayEACO-FINAL

Topic 4: *e-Commerce: Organization Posture and Culture*

Presenter: Mr. Maharage Ally Chande, Postmaster General & CEO, Tanzania Posts Corporation.

Presentation PMG TPC- Postal workshop

In order to promote e-commerce in postal & courier services, the following recommendations have been made:

- Government has to create an enabling environment for digital services provision
- Posts to establish partnerships to provide wider e-commerce solutions to meet market demands
- There must be payment solutions to facilitate cross border trade
- Post to upscale delivery and logistics operations

5. 3 Workshop on Universal Service Fund (USF)

As part of the Assemblies and Congress, a workshop coordinated by the GSMA in partnership with EACO held a workshop on Closing the Connectivity Gap in Africa through USF reforms.

The workshop that was moderated by Ms. Caroline Mbugua HSC, Senior Director Public Policy and Communications SSA, GSMA started with a Country case study for Tanzania and this was

presented by Ms. Justina Mashiba, the CEO of UCSAF Tanzania. In her presentation, she highlighted the functions and responsibilities of UCSAF, sources of funds, key projects that have been implemented in Tanzania and the challenges that the fund faces.

This was followed by a presentation of the report of the study on USFs in Africa. The which was conducted by the GSMA in collaboration with the Africa Telecommunication Union (ATU). The extensive study provided an in-depth analysis of the status, success factors and challenges of USFs in Africa. It also highlighted that at least 51 of the 54 African countries introduced or are introducing the Universal Service Fund (USF) mechanism to deploy mobile broadband infrastructure in commercially unviable areas with the intention of bridging the connectivity gap. In all cases, USFs are partly or entirely financed through contributions from telecom service providers. The study aimed at producing evidence to support policy reforms, where needed, to enhance the impact of existing funds on the connectivity gap. The report proposed eleven key reforms to address factors limiting performance of USFs and to enhance their effectiveness in closing the coverage and usage gaps. These included;

- Adopt mechanisms to incentivize the disbursement of funds. Establish clear targets and use incentives to ensure effective and timely disbursement.
- Implement an evidence-based contribution rate—A suitable contribution rate should be decided using an evidence-based approach in consultation with service providers.
- Set clear and measurable targets for the USF – Clearly define the parameters for USF projects and outline key success measures following implementation.
- Priorities stakeholder consultation – Stakeholder consultation should not be a one-off or an occasional call for submissions; rather, it should be a continuous engagement process, with direct contributions and feedback from service providers.
- Use a data-led approach to selecting USF projects—Data gathering and efforts to apply relevant insights to project selection should form part of the operational reform of USFs.
- Ensure regular performance monitoring and reporting – Regular reporting is paramount to provide visibility and accountability.
- Establish a project costing system that accounts for overheads – A comprehensive costing system should account for overheads and OPEX from the outset, with a sustainable solution that guarantees the long-term viability of a USF project.
- Explore alternative funding mechanisms – The 'pay or play' model adopted in Morocco is an example of an alternative model with the potential to incentivise investments in coverage expansion and tackle the challenges associated with the traditional USF model.
- Build capacity and develop skills within the USF – Focus on reskilling and upskilling existing personnel, recruiting new people and retaining qualified staff at the USF authority.

- Engage with local communities on the benefits of connectivity – Take steps to engage with consumers and community leaders to address any perceived concerns about digital technology.
- Consider an independent governance structure – Seek to minimise or eliminate red tape and political interference in managing funds and implementing USF projects.

The workshop was concluded with a Panel discussion under the theme "Effectiveness of USFs in addressing the connectivity gap in the region".

The panelist included;

1) Hon. George William Nyombi Thembo, Executive Director, UCC.
2) Fred Waithaka- Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, Safaricom PLC.
3) Mr. William Baraza, Director, AFRALTI.

The discussions included the areas that Member States could tap into to improve the effectiveness of USFs in the region. These included;

- Collaboration that could be institutionalised
- Digital skilling. This would enable effective utilization of many interventions put in place by USFs
- Address the sustainability question which affects most of the projects established by USFs
- Review the mandate of USFs
- Use appropriate models like the Public Private Partnership to reduce the connectivity/usage gap
- Consider having MNOs on USF Boards.
- The USFs should look beyond the Telcom companies and also include other sub sectors like postal, however some highlighted that USFs benefit members so postal service providers should be encouraged to contribute to USFs however little the amounts could be.

The panel discussion was concluded with a recommendation to form the Assembly of USFs in the region or a working group specific to USFs given the role they play in addressing the connectivity gap in the region coupled with their growth rate.

The presentations made during the workshop are herewith attached;

UCSAF Tanzania Case
study.pdf

GSMA USF
Presentation.pptx

6.0 PRESENTATION OF REPORTS, FOR CONSIDERATION

6.1 Assembly of Regulators

The report was presented by the Chairman of the Assembly and was adopted.

The detailed report is attached herewith.

REPORT OF THE
29TH EACO REGULAT

6.2 Assembly of Telecommunications Operators

The report of the Assembly of Telecom Operators was presented and adopted.
The detailed report is attached herewith.

Report of the 29th
Assembly of Telecom

6.3 Assembly of Broadcasters

The report of the Assembly of Broadcasters was presented and adopted.

The detailed report is attached herewith.

Report of the 29th
EACO Broadcasters As

6.4 Assembly of Postal Operators

The report of the Assembly of Postal Operators and proposals contained therein were adopted.

A detailed report of the Postal Assembly is attached herewith

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AL_ASSEMBLY_ HELD

6.5 Joint Working Committee

The Report of the Joint Working Committee was presented to Congress comprising a certain number of recommendations.

The detailed report is herewith attached.

REPORT OF THE
29TH EACO JOINT WC

7.0 Extraordinary Congress: Amendment of the EACO Constitution

The amendments to the Constitution were approved and adopted by the extra-ordinary Congress as attached herein.

EACO Constitution -
Final Revised July 202

8.0 CLOSING.

The Extraordinary Congress was closed by the Dr. Labanya Margaret Mathya Ugila, representing the Director General of National Communications Authority of South Sudan.

He thanked everyone for the contribution on the success of all activities held during the week: EACO Secretariat, the organizing committee, the different delegations, the partners and stakeholders.

She particularly thanked the Communications Authority of Kenya for having hosted the event. She indicated that participants had appreciated the good coordination of the organizing committee, that at all stage from the beginning everything was guided by an excellent professionalism.

She noted and appreciated EACO's role of enhancing and coordinating development of ICTs in the region and urged each one to support.

And wished all a safe journey.

This 28th Day of June 2024