

**REPORT OF THE 29TH ASSEMBLY OF TELECOM
OPERATORS**

NAIROBI KENYA

27TH JUNE 2023

Introduction

The Telecom Operators Assembly was held on the 27th June 2024 at Safari Park Hotel and Casino, Nairobi-Kenya.

The Assembly was opened by Mr. Andrew Changa, the Liaison Manager-ICT at the EACO Secretariat on behalf of Mr. Celestin Bukene, the CTO at Econet Burundi and outgoing Chairman of the Telecom Assembly. In his remarks, he welcomed members present at the 29th Assembly of Telecom Operators and thanked them for attending this very important event of the EACO Congress week.

The meeting was attended by 13 representatives from Government Ministries, Telecom Operators, National Regulatory bodies of the EACO members and Universal Service and Access Funds, namely Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda, Industry Partners and the EACO Secretariat. List of attendance is attached as *Annex 1*.

1. ELECTION OF THE BUREAU

The Rapporteurs of the bureau were elected as follows:

- (i) Ms. Ruth W. Kariuki (Kenya) - 1st Rapporteur
- (ii) Mr. Keith Bamwesigye (Uganda) - 2nd Rapporteur.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND PROGRAMME

The Assembly adopted the agenda attached in *Annex 2*.

3. REPORT OF THE OUTGOING CHAIRPERSON

The Assembly received and noted the report of the Outgoing Chairperson. This was delivered by the Liaison Manager in charge of ICT at the EACO Secretariat, Mr. Andrew Changa.

The Report was discussed and adopted as presented with the following key issues arising;

- a) The trends in the Telecom sector which include adoption of emerging technologies. It was noted that countries need to position themselves to adopt the emerging technological trends like 5G, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things among others. It highlighted the status of 5G implementation by Member States in the East African Region.
- b) Digital divide. It was noted that many areas in the Member States remain unconnected and this is an area that Telecom operators, Regulators and Government in general needed to put more emphasis on.
- c) Cost of ICT services and devices remain high. The high cost of ICT services especially broadband and smart devices has continued to contribute the digital divide. Telecom operators, Regulators and Government in general need to put more emphasis on to ensure access of communication services to all citizens.
- d) The report also noted that a lot of work had been accomplished by the various working groups and that this would be highlighted by the performance reports that would be presented by the various Chairpersons of these working groups.
- e) High cost of spectrum - The cost of Spectrum is high in many countries yet it should be treated as an enabler to providing services to the population. The government should ensure this is handled appropriately since the cost is always transferred to the end user.

The detailed report of the outgoing Chairperson is contained in *Annex 3*.

4. HANDOVER OF CHAIRMANSHIP.

On behalf of the outgoing chairperson Mr. Celestin Bukene, the CTO at Econet Burundi of the Telecom Assembly, Mr. Andrew Changa, the Liaison Manager-ICT handed over the chairmanship to Mr. Ganson Lawela, Head of Regulatory at Airtel Kenya.

Mr. Lawela thanked the outgoing chairman and the members for entrusting him to chair the assembly for the upcoming period.

He pledged his commitment and support towards the success of the EACO activities.

5. PRESENTATION OF REPORTS OF WORKING GROUPS.

The chairpersons of the various working groups under the Telecom Assembly made presentations that highlighted their mandate, Terms of Reference, status of all activities that had been planned for the Financial Year (FY) 2023/2024 and the planned activities for FY 2024/2025. They requested the Telecom Assembly to consider and adopt the reports.

6. WG1: EACO COMMUNICATION SECTOR INDICATORS

HARMONIZATION

Noted:

The report of WG1 presented by Mr. Keith Bamwesigye, Vice Chair of WG1, which included;

6.1 Achievements

- i. Reviewed the Telecommunications sector indicators
- ii. Data collection, analysis and reporting completed up to December 2023 (Quarter 2).
- iii. The EACO Communication Statistics Report is Quarter 2 of 2023/2024 (December 2023) with telecommunication indicators.

6.2 Challenges:

- i. Different levels of technological and sector advancement have constrained data collection efforts. Some KPIs are easily accessible in some member states compared to others
- ii. Low participation in the physical meetings.
- iii. Limited capacity in data analysis for Member States
- iv. There were not enough funds to handle the task since the database was crashed and reinstatement consumed the earlier planned budget to include Broadcasting and Postal Indicators.

- v. Some indicators do not solely reside under the ICT Regulators, e.g. Mobile Money Services.

6.3. Recommendations:

- i. The working group requires a minimum of two Representatives for each Member States to enable continuity of work and technical inputs in different parameters of the Sectors.
- ii. NRAs should allocate budget to sponsor their members to attend physical meetings.
- iii. EACO Secretariat to provide or to seek capacity building partnerships for Working Group 1 members in data analytics with Global Partners e.g. GSMA and ITU.

Agreed.

- iv. The report of WG1 was adopted by the Assembly of Telecom Operators and is attached here with as **Annex 4**

7. WG2: ICT INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT, CONNECTIVITY SHARING AND DIGITAL INCLUSION

Noted.

The following was noted from the presentation by Ms. Esther Wanyana, who represented the Chair of WG2:

- i. The ToRs and Activities for WG2 for 2023-2025
- ii. The meetings held during this cycle
- iii. The implementation status of these ToRs

7.1 Challenges

- i. Inconsistencies in attendance by members/ low attendance;
Proposal: Member States are requested to retain nominees to EACO Working Groups.
- ii. Lack of experts on specific subject areas being handed in the working groups;
Proposal: Member States should nominate experienced personnel as well as encourage Telecom Operators and Industry to attend these meetings and Working Groups since they are the subject experts. There is also need for Capacity Building on specific subject matters.

- iii. Delay in delivering Draft documents.

Proposal: Working Group Members are requested to devote adequate time to the working group's activities / deliverables

7.2 Recommendations:

- i) Appoint at least three WG representatives
- ii) NRAs and the EACO Secretariat should encourage more private sector participation in working groups.
- iii) NRAs encourage their members to discuss and complete country tasks together
- iv) Members should provide adequate support to their colleagues in the WG to ease access to information
- v) NRAs to appoint more active people that will enable the WG achieve the set targets.

Agreed.

The report of WG2 was adopted by the Assembly of Telecom Operators and is attached here with as **Annex 5**

8. WG3: ICT APPLICATION, CONSUMER PROTECTION ISSUES AND CYBERSECURITY

Noted:

The following were noted from the presentation by Mr. Unguec Stephen Kang, Vice Chair of WG3:

- (i) The ToRs for the working group for the FY 2023-2024;
- (ii) The meetings held during this cycle
- (iii) The implementation status of these ToRs
- (iv) Challenges faced
- (v) Recommendations

8.1 Challenges faced

- (i) Lack of adequate subject Matter Expert representations in the Working Parties.
- (ii) Irregularity in attending the WG3 meetings
- (iii) The absence of a chair for WG 3

8.2 Recommendations

- i. That the EACO Secretariat to proactively publicize, communicate and follow up on approved guidelines.
- ii. That the two ToRs for WP3: Cybersecurity (Establish a framework for collaboration among the national CETRs in the region; and development of operational procedures for the regional CERT) be merged into one as they would have the same output.
- iii. The proposed ToR name is: Establish a framework for collaboration among the national CERTS in the region.
- iv. The EACO secretariat plans to organize a two-day workshop on Digital Financial Services, Child Online Protection, and Quality of Service.
- v. That the title of the WG3 be reviewed to include Quality of Service (QoS), noting that WP2 handles matters on QoS and the absence of the name has had an impact on member states participation and work of the WP2. WP3 handles Cybersecurity and ICT Applications. WP1 handles matters on Consumer Protection, and WP3 handles matters on Cybersecurity.
- vi. The proposed revised title is **“CONSUMER PROTECTION ISSUES, QUALITY OF SERVICE, AND CYBER SECURITY”**.

Agreed.

The report of WG3 was adopted by the Assembly of Telecom operators and is attached here with as **Annex 6**

9. WG5: BROADCASTING DEVELOPMENT, SPECTRUM MANAGEMENT & MEDIA SERVICES REGULATIONS

Noted:

The following were noted from the presentation by Mr. Dut Acol De Dute, Chair of WG5:

- i. The ToRs for the working group for the FY 2023-2024;
- ii. The meetings held during this cycle
- iii. The implementation status of these ToRs

- iv. Challenges faced
- v. Recommendations

9.1 Challenges faced

- i. Poor and inconsistency in attendance of physical meetings
- ii. Delay in delivering draft documents by responsible Member states
- iii. Conflicting priorities for WG5 members between regular work within their administrations and work of EACO

9.2 Recommendations

- i. EACO administrations to consider reviewing their current regulatory standing considering the benefits of similar regulatory framework and structures for ICT and Broadcasting that would make harmonization of regulations and strategies much easier for the region.
- ii. Finalise review the existing mobile cross border frequency coordination mechanism newly established continental agreement on the same (Harmonized Calculation Methods For Africa – HCM4A)

Agreed.

The report of WG5 was adopted by the Assembly of Telecom operators and is attached here with as **Annex 7**

10. WG6: COMMUNICATIONS NUMBERING PLANS, IP ADDRESSING, SERVICE PRICING & INDUSTRY ANALYSIS

Noted:

The following were noted from the presentation by Mr. Jacques Ndagijimana, Chair of WG6:

- vi. The ToRs for the working group for the FY 2023-2024;
- vii. The meetings held during this cycle
- viii. The implementation status of these ToRs
- ix. Challenges faced
- x. Recommendations

10.1 Challenges/recommendations

- I. Poor and inconsistency in attendance by members and low turn up for meetings.
Recommendation: *Members States to appoint at least three members to each working group, considering all areas handled by the working group.*
- II. Delay in delivering draft documents by responsible Member states and Conflicting priorities for WG6 members between regular work within their administrations and work of EACO
Recommendation: *Working Group Members to be facilitated to concentrate on the work of EACO*

Agreed.

The report of WG6 was adopted by the Assembly of Telecom operators and is attached here with as **Annex 8**

11. WG7: E-WASTE MANAGEMENT AND GREEN ICT

Noted:

The following were noted from the presentation by Mr. Phillip Apiu, Vice Chair of WG6:

- i. The ToRs for the working group for the FY 2023-2024;
- ii. The meetings held during this cycle
- iii. The implementation status of these ToRs
- iv. Challenges faced
- v. Recommendations

11.1 Challenges

- i. Countries are at different levels on e-waste management;
- ii. Low awareness levels among the public on e-waste;
- iii. Constrained financial resources in implementing infrastructure for E-waste management;
- iv. Slow pace in reviewing the existing e-waste laws, regulations and guidelines to reflect the current environment and formulation of new ones;
- v. Inadequate representation of service providers/operators (telecoms, broadcasters) in WG07 meetings; and
- vi. Fewer experts on Counterfeit ICT Gadgets and Green ICTs.

11.2 Recommendations

- i. Countries to enact various laws, regulations, guidelines and standards on e-waste management;
- ii. Member States to consider allocating a budget for e-waste management in order to conduct more awareness and fund e-waste management projects;
- iii. Member states to continue with the implementation of the 2nd Regional E-waste Management Strategy (2022– 2027), while sharing experiences and success stories;
- iv. Member states to device mechanisms for getting e-Waste from the Government and its institutions for proper disposal;
- v. Collaboration with institutions of higher learning for development and implementation of e-waste curriculum;
- vi. EACO member organizations to continue supporting the participation of their staff in EACO, ITU-T and ITU-D study groups related to E-waste; and
- vii. There is need to have more experts on Green ICTs and Counterfeit ICT Gadgets management in WG07.

Agreed.

The report of WG6 was adopted by the Assembly of Telecom operators and is attached here with as **Annex 9**

12. CROSS CUTTING ISSUES

The Assembly of Telecom Operators identified the following Cross Cutting Issues for submission to the Joint Working Committee:

- 1) Active Participation of Members States in all EACO meetings;
- 2) Cross border frequency coordination in the region;
- 3) Participation of telecom operators in the activities of EACO;
- 4) Need for experts in the different working Groups;
- 5) Facilitation of working group members to enhance participation and contribution in working group activities;

13. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TELECOM ASSEMBLY

- i. Handle the issue of cross border forced roaming;
- ii. Member States to ensure that atleast three (3) delegates with the relevant expertise are attached to each Working group to ensure effective participation
- iii. Operators urged to fully participate in the activities of mitigating forced roaming.
- iv. MNOs encouraged to deploy border roaming solutions to mitigate forced roaming
- v. To review the existing mobile cross border frequency coordination mechanism in the next cycle taking into account the newly established continental agreement on the same (Harmonized Calculation Methods For Africa – HCM4A)
- vi. Review the One Area Network framework to address gaps its implementation including interconnection fees and also ensure the existence of a monitoring framework to ensure compliance.
- vii. Ensure effective collaboration between operators and regulators to resolve cross-border challenges.

14. CLOSING OF THE TELECOM ASSEMBLY.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Ganson Lewela thanked members for their unwavering support and contribution during the meeting and urged them to attend the joint committee meeting.

11.0 CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD:

The Congress is hereby invited to:

- Note and adopt the report of the Assembly of Telecom Operators; and
- Provide any further guidance the Congress may deem necessary towards the work of the Assembly of Telecom Operators.

Ganson Lewela
Chairperson.

ANNEXES.

ANNEX 1: ATTENDANCE



List of
Participants.docx

ANNEX 2: AGENDA FOR TELECOM ASSEMBLY



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2024- Agenda_Progra

ANNEX 3: REPORT OF THE OUTGOING CHAIRPERSON OF THE TELECOM ASSEMBLY



Report of Outgoing
Chairperson of Telecc

ANNEX 4: WG1 REPORT



Report for Working
group 1 Activities Fina

ANNEX 5: WG2 REPORT



EACO WG2 Assembly
presentation.pptm

ANNEX 6: WG3 REPORT



EACO WG 3
Presentation June 202

ANNEX 7: WG5 REPORT



EACO WG 5
Presentation Assembl

ANNEX 8: WG6 REPORT



EACO WG 6 Report
26 June 2024.pptx

ANNEX 9: WG7 REPORT



Report of WG 07 on
E-waste Management