

# THE AFRICAN ICT BEST PRACTICES FORUM



Microsoft®

*Towards a private sector enabling environment*

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## The African ICT Best Practices Forums serve as a practical way for sharing experiences.

*The ICT Best Practices Forum is a venue for government officials from across Africa to explore how best to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government in the region through the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT).*

**A**s a result of the extremely positive feedback received from the first African ICT Best Practice Forum, it was decided to organise a second event along the lines of the first - this time with a pan-African scope. The second African ICT Best Practices Forum took place in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso on April 21-23 2008, with the theme "Which partnerships for promoting e-government in Africa?" It drew over 300 delegates from across Africa, including representatives from 60 countries. It brought together African governments, business, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the academic world from across the region. Focused on effective partnerships to promote e-government in Africa, the ICT Best Practices Forum is an initiative of Microsoft. The President of Burkina Faso, Blaise Compaoré, and that of Togo, Faure Eyadema, are among the distinguished dignitaries who attended the opening session.



In his opening speech, Steve Ballmer, Microsoft CEO, remarked that 'Technology is simply a tool that empowers people to make progress. Real progress will take real commitment. Governments must commit to transparency and to eliminating the barriers that hamper entrepreneurship, business creation, and economic opportunity. Some countries in Africa have made considerable progress. But there is more work to do.'

"Although the African Union's economy has grown more than 5% per year over the last few years, the continent continues to be marginalized", said the E.U. Ambassador to Burkina Faso, Amos Tincani, at the ICT Best Practices Forum event. The European Union is building on earlier efforts to strengthen and diversify the African economy by working with the private sector on measures designed to boost ICT and network infrastructure.

Among the positive effects that ICT can have (education, health ...), one of the most obvious is its potential to play a leading role in helping African countries to provide more efficient, better quality and more easily accessible public services, helping to both reinforce their capacities and their competitiveness, and improve transparency and good governance.

The ICT Best Practices Forum helps materialise this objective, by providing a platform where African governments can share information about successful technology solutions in their respective countries. The Forum also presents a unique opportunity for private sector representatives to meet with top representatives of government, donor organisations, civil society and international governmental organisations. ■

The second African ICT Best Practices Forum took place in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso on April 21-23 2008

About the Forum



With the support of BizClim



## Steve Ballmer's remarks at the Forum's opening session

*I'm excited by Africa's incredible potential and its undeniable progress. You have vast natural resources, of course. But more than that, you have an incredible richness in human resources. Nearly a billion people, almost two-thirds of them under the age of 30 and anxious for progress, opportunity, and prosperity. For a company like Microsoft, it's impossible to look at these numbers without seeing huge opportunities for growth.*

*There are exciting pockets of innovation where Africa is already delivering breakthroughs that are applicable around the world. In Kenya, for example, new digital payment technologies enable people to transfer money between cell phones at very little cost using a simple text message. The ability to move money cheaply and easily between urban and rural areas—between urban and rural families—can have a transformative impact.*

*But clearly, there are issues related to education, healthcare, basic infrastructure, and support for business and entrepreneurship that need to be addressed.*

*Like me, you're here because you believe information and communications technologies can play a pivotal role in addressing many of these issues. And as a wave of new innovation emerges, the power of technology to drive positive change will grow dramatically.*

**Steve Ballmer**  
Chief Executive Officer - Microsoft Corporation



*The 2008 ICT Best Practices Forum was supported by key players in the sector.*

*The 2008 Forum was organised in partnership with the Government of Burkina Faso, with support from the European Union, through the ACP Business Climate Facility (BizClim). It was also supported by Intel, Dimension Data and CFAO Technologies, and endorsed by the ECOWAS Commission.*

*Partnerships with private sector companies such as Microsoft are an important part of the EU's initiatives.*

**M**icrosoft was one of the first companies to join the EU-Africa Business Forum - chartered by the European Commission and the African Union Commission - when it was launched in November 2006. Microsoft's chairman for Africa, Cheick Modibo Diarra, was recently appointed as co-chair of the initiative. The Africa-EU Strategic Partnership foresees that the EU-Africa Business Forum will play a key role in bringing together entrepreneurs and public and private investors from both Europe and Africa in order to discuss ways of improving the investment and business climate and to raise the profile of doing business in Africa. The 2008 ICT Best Practices Forum dedicated a special session to the EU-Africa Business Forum where a panel of speakers, including the EU Ambassador and Minister of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) of the Republic of Uganda (Dr. Ham-Mukasa Mulira), was assembled to exchange views and respond to questions from the participants. ■



# The European Commission threw its weight behind the 2008 ICT Best Practices Forum.

At the EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon on December 2007, the two parties agreed to develop a partnership through an eight point strategy. One element of the common strategy concerns science, space and the information society.

**I**CT needs reliable infrastructures, and the EU supports the development of infrastructures via the European Investment Bank, which granted during the last decade more than €270 million in loans in the field of telecommunications. The EU and its Member States in partnership with the EIB recently launched a Trust Fund to finance Infrastructure, which blends EC grants with the EIB's resources, as well as loans from the EIB-managed Investment Facility. The fund will soon finance the East Africa Submarine Cable System (EASSy).

ICT also needs an adapted legal and regulatory framework which is investment-friendly. Sweden has financed the development of ICT regulatory regimes in Rwanda, in Mozambique and in Tanzania. BizClim programme also supports ACP countries in drafting appropriate ICT regulatory frameworks.

As the EU believes in the importance of a dynamic private sector for boosting economic growth and creating jobs, it conducts a series of initiatives in this direction via two of its programmes: the Centre for the Development of the Enterprise and Pro€Invest. Pro€Invest focuses on institutional strengthening to intermediate associations in ACP countries. On its side, the CDE provides non-financial services to ACP companies, with the main aim of increasing their competitiveness. CDE runs the programme « ICT Development in West and Central Africa», which has provided direct assistance to companies such as call centres or Internet service providers.

The integration of ICT into government functions and services is a key area of work, both for EU-supported projects and for its members' bilateral projects. ■



*The European Commission was very visible at the event, a testimony to its strong commitment to the partnership.*

The European Commission supported the attendance of NGOs and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from across Africa through the ACP Business Climate Facility (BizClim). BizClim is a joint initiative of the ACP Group of States and the European Commission that aims at assisting ACP countries in their efforts to boost the business environment. Some 85 entities were able to attend the forum at Ouagadougou. BizClim is also responsible for the production of a road map for best practices implementation programmes, as well as for fostering the dialogue between public and private stakeholders to support the implementation of such programmes. ■



## Viviane Reding address the Forum online

*The European Commission, with its African and international partners, plays an active role in this process. It does so by using the experience that shows that the success of the development of the Information Society for all depends on the quality of the relations and the joint contribution of the activities of the public sector and the private sector investment (...)*

*Through this Forum, you have followed the path of sharing experiences and best practices. Let me say to you that this same method is the one that we have adopted at the European Union for the development of the Information Society and the appropriation by the citizens of its potentials. (...)*

*The conditions for a partnership with the private sector should also be created. This constitutes a crucial element. The action of the European Union on the EU-Africa Partnership for "Science, the Information Society and Space", adopted at the Lisbon Summit, goes in the same direction. (...)*

*We wish, indeed, to strongly contribute to the development of innovative solutions adapted to local needs and contexts. This innovation dimension is crucial if we want to benefit from the potential of the ICTs in a development context.*

**Viviane Reding**  
Commissioner for Information Society and Media,  
European Commission



## Established in Africa since 1992, Microsoft has a long-standing commitment to the development of Africa.



### Cheik Diarra spurs Afro-Responsibility

*So much public debate in recent times has been marked by Afro-Pessimism – the idea that we don't have what it takes ... the skills, the investments or the wherewithal ... to drive ourselves in the direction we want to go. They say we're too inefficient, too corrupt, too greedy. I do not share those views.*

*There is also the view of Afro-Optimism – one that pushes the balance in the other direction ... one that does not recognise the challenges that Africa faces ... one that hides from the realities of the work we need to do. I don't share those views either.*

*Personally, I believe in Afro-Responsibility.*

*We do have the skills, we do have access to the right investments, and we do have the knowledge. After all, every single best practice you will see during this conference is from Africa, grown in Africa and working in Africa ... real proof that we have what it takes. However, we still have work to do. Which is why Afro-Responsibility is about being rigorous in the practice of good governance and transparency ... rigorous in business ethics and fiscal responsibilities ... rigorous in the management of social systems and infrastructure.*

*Afro-Responsibility is also about understanding and embracing the benefits of technology. It's about encouraging government leaders to be clear on their technology policies. And it's about choosing the solutions, systems and synergies best-suited to their needs.*

**Cheik Modibo Diarra,**  
**Microsoft Chairman for Africa**

*While Africa is nowhere near supplanting India as an outsourcing location, or China as a consumer market, in five to ten years from now that may start to change, as governments in the region focus on hemming up the digital divide.*

**A**

As an industry powerhouse, Microsoft has made itself central to many of these aspirants' plans. Microsoft has been investing millions of dollars in offices, training centres, education programs and e-government projects to help bring developing communities into the digital age.

Microsoft recognises that it can and should make a substantial contribution, through partnership, towards enhancing Africa's capacity for development, so that the continent can benefit from internally generated and sustainable development. The over-arching goal is to ensure that technology supports and accelerates progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development in Africa.

Several barriers stand in the way of effectively reaching these underserved communities, including environmental and infrastructural obstacles, localization issues, the need for personalized solutions, and the prohibitive cost of technology. To better serve these people, Microsoft Unlimited Potential combines advanced technologies and strong partnerships with governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), educational institutions, and technology and service partners.

The ultimate goal is to enable sustained social and economic opportunity for those at the middle and bottom of the world's economic pyramid. In the short term, Unlimited Potential aims to reach the next 1 billion people by 2015 by exploring solutions in three key interrelated areas. Each is crucial to developing sustained economic opportunity:

- Transforming education
- Fostering local innovation
- Enabling jobs and opportunities

In the context of their Unlimited Potential Initiative, and with the occasion of the ICT Best Practices Forum, Microsoft announced new partnerships with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the government of Angola, as well as the launching of a new skills training and support programme called the NGO ICT4D Academy. ■



# A new portal for best practice sharing

*The new pan-African reservoir of ICT best practices, hosted in Burkina Faso, will demonstrate how the sharing of knowledge can have a powerful impact on problem-solving in Africa.*

**A**t the ICT Best Practices Forum in Ouagadougou, Microsoft and the Burkina Faso's Ministry of Technology officially launched the African ICT Best Practices website, which will enable African governments and citizens to share their IT best practices and their success stories.

The initiative, spearheaded by Microsoft's chairman for Africa, Dr. Cheick Modibo Diarra, presents a database of information on a pan-African website, which will be hosted and maintained by the Burkina Faso Ministry of Technology.

Within the memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between the Burkina Faso government and Microsoft in September 2007, Microsoft has provided the necessary software platform to allow organisations to easily collaborate on finding best practices that are relevant to Africa, share experiences and possibly give advice on how to overcome various challenges.

For their part, the government of Burkina Faso has employed resources that are responsible for the sourcing, uploading and maintenance of all of the information for the website.

"This project has been one that we, as the government of Burkina Faso, have been very passionate about, as it means that we are able to help to create an environment where all Africans have access to best practices that will help them to better serve their people," said Mr. Tankoano, Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, Burkina Faso.

"During both last year's and this year's forums, we have seen that many countries in Africa share similar challenges and issues," added Dr. Diarra. "By allowing the various governments of the continent access to this pool of information that will be hosted on the best practices website, there is less of a chance that these countries will end up having to re-invent the wheel when trying to find solutions to problems or guidelines for projects. There is also less chance that governments will need to spend excess money and resources on solving problems when the problem may have already been solved elsewhere in Africa."

The portal will be fed by the case studies submitted by public sector agencies throughout Africa. Registered users can submit proposals for proven, successful projects that fit into any of the categories listed in the Projects section of the website. Submitted proposals are then assessed and evaluated by a technical committee responsible for checking the reliability and validity of the submitted information. ■

The website may be visited at [www.africaictbestpractices.net](http://www.africaictbestpractices.net)



## **Burkina Faso champions the ICT Forum for the second time**

*Burkina Faso is delighted to be able to organise, together with Microsoft Africa and the European Union, the second African ICT Best Practices Forum.*

*The world has entered an era in which access to the sources of information and knowledge has become a decisive factor in competitiveness and economic growth. In the face of the digital divide that threatens to increase the marginalisation of developing countries, we must step up the introduction of electronic communication infrastructures to seize the opportunities offered by new technologies.*

*I would like this Forum to be an occasion for African governments, their advisory institutions and ICT experts to share their experiences, so that we can build an inclusive information society to serve the sustainable development of our countries.»*

**Blaise Compaoré,  
President of Burkina Faso**





## Some lessons

### *Harnessing Citizen Information to Provide Better Government Services*

*After working on defining the right ICT environment, the first stage of e-government is putting in place an efficient system to collect information in all sectors, thus providing the basis for good service delivery. Information about citizens' circumstances, requirements and expectations can be used not only to directly support better ICT-based services, but also to provide vital forecasting input. Some examples include ID cards, patient management information systems and statistical systems.*

### *Using ICT in supporting a country's taxation and revenue management services.*

*ICT has a specific role to play in supporting a nation's fiscal and revenue services. Customs, tax and revenue solutions, as well as solutions to prove accountability in order to encourage external investment are critical. The creation of these projects allows government to manage revenues/funds more efficiently, be more transparent, and encourage increased investment.*

### *Online Citizen Services*

*Once the essential infrastructure, information-gathering systems, and tax and revenue services are in place, the most advanced level of an e-government strategy is to put in place popular, efficient and visible online services for citizens. E-governance initiatives such as e-democracy may have a particularly significant impact, as they have the effect of enhancing the democratic process through ICT, and are the basis for effective participatory governance and the enhancement and support of community development.*

## The Declaration

*The Ouagadougou Declaration of 2008 highlights the engagement of all stakeholders of the ICT Best Practices Forum in a dynamic process of development.*

**T**he ICT Best Practices Forum 2008, held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on 21-23 April 2008, brought together more than 300 participants, notably Ministers, representatives from International Financial Institutions such as the African Development Bank (ADB), international organisations such as the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), UNIDO, and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the private sector, notably local SMEs, the public sector, and civil society.

The forum took place:

- One year after the first ICT Best practices forum, held in Ouagadougou on 7-9 June 2007
- Four months after the Lisbon Summit of African and European Heads of State, where a new EU- Africa Partnership was adopted
- About one year after the recommendations on ICT made by the EU – Africa Business Forum held in Accra in June 2007

As a result of the above developments, major recommendations were formulated, and need to be implemented. The forum renewed its call to other partners, notably governments and donors, to fully fulfil their commitments. The private sector has already agreed upon actions to be taken, for example the launching of the Best Practice Reservoir.

The forum noted that, although the ICT sector is increasingly drawing the attention of policymakers, the challenges to the development of the sector remain enormous. Nonetheless, a growing sense of 'Afro-responsibility' in the region is ensuring that the enormous potential and talents in Africa are recognised.

A significant number of good practices were presented, showing that progress is being made in Africa through the implementation of innovative solutions. The Forum recommended looking at ways to scale up these initiatives, as well as to consider the financing of the ICT sector. More importantly, governments were asked to consider ways to improve the business environment of the sector, as well as to stimulate the creation of true and constructive public-private partnerships between the private sector and the donor community.

The outcomes of the forum will take the form of:

- a road map which will be prepared and disseminated
- a publication of the proceedings
- a brochure presenting the main conclusions and recommendations
- dissemination of the conference results and follow-up

We thank the Government of Burkina Faso for accepting to host this meeting and partners who organized this Forum, particularly Microsoft and the European Union.

Ouagadougou, 23rd April 2008 ■

# Success Stories

In this second edition of the forum, the presentations and discussions provided inputs and materials on each of the stages in which e-government strategy may be implemented. The starting-point for this was agreed as building up the enabling environment for e-government - ensuring the basic conditions for the successful development of e-government. Once this basic environment is in place, three levels of increasing complexity in the use of technology for data collection and service delivery can be identified. The first and most basic level relates to harnessing citizen information for more effective government services. The following stage takes place when governments begin to use ICT in supporting a country's taxation and revenue management, and the most developed level implies providing online citizen services.

*The partnership between the Government of Uganda, Microsoft and the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) illustrates the importance of providing appropriate technology tools and training to small scale entrepreneurs, in the form of recycled computers, and provides an example of a successful public-private partnership.*

One of the key difficulties for SMEs in less developed countries is securing access to hardware and software to leverage the benefits of ICT. In order to address this need, UNIDO and the Government of Uganda launched a PC Refurbished Centres Initiative facing the challenge of providing affordable, quality hardware and relevant software as well as ICT training for SMEs. The project was launched in Uganda following the results of market studies which proved strong demand for this type of support. Local refurbishment is done on second-hand computers brought from Europe and the USA.



*Somalia, one of the first countries in Africa to launch an ePassport and National ID card management system, has finally found an accurate and reliable way of identifying its citizens.*

Civil war in Somalia had destroyed all government infrastructure and virtually all records on citizens. Unauthorized Somali passports were being issued in Somalia and neighbouring countries, leading to the refusal of the old passport by other countries.

In this context, the Government of Somalia needed a solution to identify its citizens which was affordable, highly secure and in accordance with international standards. The government set up a partnership with Just Solutions Limited, whereby they share revenues from ePassports and cards issued.

In the first 6 months of the project, more than 10,000 ePassports and Smart ID cards have been issued, all being ready within 14 days of application.



## *Livestock Identification and Trace back System (LITS) in Botswana*

Cattle make up an important portion of the economy of Botswana, with 90% of Botswanan beef being exported to the EU. As EU regulations require individual cattle identification and a computerized central database, the Government decided to set up a system enabling the cattle produced in Botswana to be identified and traceable throughout their lives. A digital solution was chosen, with digital tagging systems based on RFID microchip technology. LITS consists of a computerized Central Database and a field Data Acquisition System (FDAS), including extension officer PCs for capturing and storage of data, readers using Radio Frequency Technology, and Animal ID Devices (Boluses). The system has been successfully implemented, meets all current EU requirements and has been integrated into Ministry of Agriculture operations. It has complete stakeholder buy-in and has been accepted by all farmers in the country.

## *Computerised School Selection and Placement program in Ghana (CSSPS)*

In 1987, Ghana adopted a new educational system to address deficiencies in the education sector, whereby the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) was introduced.

The BECE results are used to select and place candidates into second cycle schools. The original selection process, carried out manually, had a number of problems. In order to address them, it was decided that the manual system should be replaced by a computerized system, the new CSSPS. The system incorporated a series of changes, including the use of raw cores of the candidates for selection, and enabled a choice of schools from a combination of regions. The successful implementation of the CSSPS has resulted in a number of visible benefits, including an increase in student intake and notable improvements in the cost efficiency, governance and accountability of the process. ■

## For a more enabling ICT environment

Creating the right ICT environment is essential for the successful implementation of e-government. The enabling ICT environment refers to a set of different factors, including:

- Good connectivity and an appropriate technology infrastructure. This remains one of the most compelling challenges faced by African governments in building e-government strategies.
- Building an adapted legal environment. This involves ensuring that laws are updated to recognize electronic documents and transactions, that they cover cyber crime, and that intellectual property issues are taken into consideration.
- Government vision and policy. Top level political and administrative leadership and commitment, across all bodies of the public administration remains essential for success. Additionally, it must be ensured that policies support and include e-government.
- Levels of education and e-literacy. Skills training of both civil servants and the less advanced segment of targeted users are essential.

*"We trust that the ICT best practices portal will serve as an example to the rest of Africa that access to information is critical in helping to empower its people."*

**Minister Joachim Tankoano**  
**Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, Burkina Faso**

The site can be found at  
<http://www.africaictbestpractices.net>



## Sponsors and partners

**Microsoft**® At Microsoft, our mission is to help people realise their full potential. In Africa, that means finding ways for technology to make a tangible difference in ways that are locally relevant.

With over ten years on the continent, Microsoft works in close partnership with governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and international partners. The company is committed to capacity-building and development through its myriad education, social and economic development programmes.

In Africa, Microsoft is divided into 4 regions which serve the continent. This includes Microsoft West East and Central Africa (with offices in Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Kenya, and Mauritius), Microsoft South Africa, Microsoft North Africa (with offices in Morocco and Tunisia), and Microsoft Egypt  
<http://www.microsoft.com/>



Government of Burkina Faso  
The Government of Burkina Faso has been a key partner of the African ICT Best Practices Forum, hosting the two first editions of the Forum in Ouagadougou.  
<http://www.primature.gov.bf>



The ACP Business Climate Facility (BizClim) is a joint initiative of the European Commission and the ACP Group of States financed under the European Development Fund that aims to address structural weaknesses that hamper the development of the economies of the ACP States, notably those impeding the development of the private sector.



BizClim is essentially about 'improving legislation, institutional set up and financial measures (the rules of the game) relating to the enabling environment of the private sector in ACP countries or regions and to the reform of SOEs - and to do so by focusing on possible support to ACP governments or regional institutions.'  
<http://acpbusinessclimate.org/>



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Intel Corporation is the world's largest semiconductor company and the inventor of the x86 series of microprocessors, the processors found in most personal computers. Intel combines advanced chip design capability with a leading-edge manufacturing capability. Intel has a strong history of collaboration with industry, government, education, and content leaders, with over 200 digital inclusion programs in over 60 countries—reaching over 10 million people a year with PCs and Internet connectivity. Intel provides technology, programs, and resources that support effective learning environments, and shares tools, technologies, content, and expertise to promote development of localized content.



CFAO Technologies was created in 2002 and is now a reputable player in the distribution and integration of information and communication technologies, mainly in the voice, data and images processing and networking markets. CFAO Technologies has created a wide and integrated range of high value services and offers to its customers Infrastructure solutions products and equipments.  
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The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional group of fifteen countries, founded in 1975. Its mission is to promote economic integration in "all fields of economic activity, particularly industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions, social and cultural matters ...."  
<http://www.ecowas.int/>