Africa calls for implementation of global ICT treaty

African Member States agreed an action plan to implement the International Telecommunication Regulations (ITRs) as adopted last December at the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT) in Dubai.

The Durban Action Plan formulated at a Joint ATU-ITU Seminar on the outcomes of WTSA-12 and WCIT-12 calls upon all African Member States to become party to the treaty with a view of Africa becoming a global leader in emerging areas such as energy efficiency and e-waste.

The Durban Action Plan creates a number of ATU working groups which will examine in detail how best to implement each provision of the ITRs. Each working group will make proposals on how to integrate the various provisions within existing and new national legislation and also propose a framework for cooperation at the regional level.

The power of ICTs

The ITRs are a global treaty that will help pave the way to a hyper-connected world in which all people will benefit from the power of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Gift Buthelezi, deputy director general at the Department of Communications in South Africa highlighted recent events as motivation to implement the ITRs: "The last few months have been revealing in terms of how the Internet and ICTs are being used as tools by powerful governments to entrench their advantages over the rest of the world. If smaller nations do not unite to protect their interests, it will be easy to find ourselves in a situation where we have allowed private interests and powerful countries to dominate our legitimate public policy concerns".

Speaking at the opening ceremony Malcolm Johnson, director of the Telecommunication Standardization Bureau, ITU: "We congratulate the appointment of the new Minister of Communications Yunus Carrim, and equally we would like to thank the past Minister Dina Pule for the contribution she has made in this crucial work in ITU. Growing at very healthy rates, African economies will be at the heart of global economic growth over the coming decades, and the new ITRs establish a sound framework in which to frame policies to enable the continued development and expansion of African ICT networks."

Abdoulkarim Soumalia, secretary general, ATU: "Grateful to all the African countries for their commitment and hard work in making the voice of Africa heard globally. ATU is always at hand to work closely with all the stakeholders in the implementation phase of the Durban Action Plan. Working together in this fairer and sustainable framework, I take this opportunity to kindly invite all other regions to prioritize this issue and suggest some of the key elements that could be considered in the implementation of the framework".

Free flowing information

The treaty sets out general principles for ensuring the free flow of information around the world. Provisions in the text require member states to take action against any misuse of names and numbers in their territory; to cooperate on network security; to improve transparency of mobile roaming charges; to enhance energy efficiency and cut e-waste; to bring access to the 650 million people living with some kind of disability; to improve broadband connectivity for landlocked developing countries and small island states; and to encourage investment and competition.

The African members reemphasised the importance of upholding freedom of access to international telecommunication services, and the dignity, rights and freedom of all people, as highlighted in the Preamble of the ITRs.

For more, visit: https://www.bizcommunity.com