

**Delegates agree integration of ICT is essential for the future of Africa's education and training systems at Ministerial Forum in Tunis**

*Tunis, December 18, 2013.* Information and communication technology (ICT) must be integrated into Africa's education and training systems to boost the continent's competitiveness in the world and to ensure its economies continue to grow, delegates at a ministerial forum agreed in Tunis.

The First African Ministerial Forum on ICT Integration in Education and Training took place between 9 and 11 December.

The forum was co-organized by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the *Organisation internationale de la francophonie* (OIF) and Intel, under the auspices of the Tunisian government through its ministry of education.

The aim of the forum was to boost the ability of African education ministers to introduce strong policies on information and communication technology (ICT) to accelerate their education and training systems.

One central recommendation from the forum was that all African countries should have a national policy on how to introduce ICT at all levels of education, including the primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

The use of ICT can considerably ease the formidable challenges faced by African education and training systems, the delegates agreed.

The delegates also agreed that Africa's "marginalized populations" must benefit from this ICT in education policy. Women and girls do not always have access to education, and other excluded groups include people in remote parts of the continent, children working in agriculture, orphans, the disabled and people affected by HIV and Aids.

The delegates heard that more than 30 million African children of primary school age do not go to school and that Africa needs another million teachers.

Without ICT in education and training, Africa risked falling behind the rest of the world, despite its current high levels of economic growth, due to increasing globalization in science, technology and the media, the delegates agreed. Africa must invest in its human capital, they concurred.

The delegates benefitted from hearing about practical experiences in introducing ICT into education in different countries around the world.

They also agreed on the importance of the private sector and development organizations becoming involved in the process, particularly in the use of public-private partnerships. Integration of ICT into education and training should not just be the government's responsibility.

The forum heard from one delegate, Professor Peck Cho of Korea's Dongguk University said that ICT and distance learning were a gift to Africa's education system.

He said Africa could "leapfrog" into the new world of ICT-based education in the same way the advent of the mobile phone dispensed with the need to build a huge, wire-based telephone infrastructure.

Africa's education system could become much better and widespread without "building schools in every village and every corner of Africa".

Education and training ministers from all across Africa attended and spoke at the forum, including those from Angola, Djibouti, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal and Uganda.

One delegate quoted the late Nelson Mandela: "Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world."

**Further information** on the Forum is available at <http://www.africaictedu.org/>

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