East Africa Regional E-Government Consultative Workshop

28th –29th June 2005

The East African Community member states of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania held discussions yesterday aimed at consolidating the region's e-government strategy that will streamline communication systems.

The discussions were centred around minutes of an earlier meeting in Tanzania last year.

The Tanzania meeting identified customs and immigration control, e-parliament, e-health, e-banking and procurement as strategic areas to be tackled in the push for an economic community based on information knowledge.

Mbaye Diouf, the Regional Economic Commission for Africa Director, said the areas outlined agreements and protocols that should sustain e-government services, applications and content in a harmonised manner.

About 80 participants, among them resource representatives from Rwanda, Ethiopia, Canada and South Africa, are attending the two-day meeting at a Nairobi hotel.

Kenya's Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology, James Rege opened the meeting.

The meeting will review progress since the November 2004 Dar meeting, including challenges, opportunities and the platform for e-government partnership.

Canadian High Commissioner Jim Wall said an e-enabled government will save costs and assist in combating terrorism and crime.

Wall said the initiative to encourage uptake of technology would make it easier for governments to collect taxes.

A similar meeting is scheduled for Uganda later in the year. The regional players are holding the talks against a backdrop of trade liberalisation and increasing awareness of the benefits of ICT.

Canada is a leading financier of the e-governance project.

It has invested Sh760 million (US$10 million) through the Economic Commission for Africa to support projects such as the Kenyan-based African Virtual University that uses Internet and television to encourage education in Africa.

Source: The Standard, Kenya