



Declaration

on

Information and Communications

Technology (ICT)



PREAMBLE

We, the Heads of State or Government of:

The Republic of Angola
The Republic of Botswana
The Democratic Republic of Congo
The Kingdom of Lesotho
The Republic of Malawi
The Republic of Mauritius
The Republic of Mozambique
The Republic of Namibia
The Republic of Seychelles
The Republic of South Africa
The Kingdom of Swaziland
The United Republic of Tanzania
The Republic of Zambia
The Republic of Zimbabwe

RECOGNISING that the Southern African Development Community needs a coherent regional policy and strategy on Information and Communications Technology (hereinafter referred to as "ICT") that promotes sustainable economic development, technology and bridges the digital divide within the Region and the rest of the world;

CONVINCED that a pervasive, reliable and affordable information and communications infrastructure is the foundation upon which the Southern African Renaissance can be built and sustained;

RECALLING the priority accorded to the challenge of bridging the digital divide in the Millennium Declaration adopted by the Millennium Assembly and statements made in the G8 Summit in Okinawa and the Southern African Economic Summit, 2001;

NOTING the capacity limitations in the Region, in particular shortage of skilled ICT personnel, high cost of development of ICT infrastructure, slow progress towards the deregulation of the telecommunications sectors leading to monopolies, unaffordability of universal access due to high tariffs and internet charges, lack of economic commerce readiness, reluctance of acceptance for ICT culture and innovations;

CONCERNED about the lack of regional policy and strategy on ICT and the digital divide between and within countries and the Region, which have the potential to widen the socio-economic disparity that exists;



FURTHER NOTING that international experience has shown that ICT, if harnessed, can contribute significantly to the economic development of countries and facilitate the provision of a better life for citizens;

AWARE that the digital divide does not only manifest itself economically or technologically but also culturally, creating a world that is increasingly less representative and reflective of the languages, cultures, ideas and diversity of the peoples of the world;

RECALLING Decision 52/2000 of the SATCC Committee of Ministers which urged Member States to give ICT priority for national and regional socio-economic development and accord such recognition in their national programmes in the effort of turning the Region into an information – based economy;

RECOGNISING that ICT is a fast, reliable, efficient and easy way of communication and information exchange;

ACKNOWLEDGING that effective information communication is best achieved under an environment characterised by:

- policy guidelines;
- legislation;
- well defined strategy;
- telecommunications deregulation;
- reliable, efficient and scalable network infrastructure;
- human resources development in the area of ICT;
- knowledge management;
- affordable access to information;
- natural way for collaboration and conversation;
- seamless integration;
- ubiquitous access; and
- security;

AWARE that the challenge for SADC is to ensure improved living standards for all its people, by harnessing the human, capital, technology and material resources at its disposal in the most productive and sustainable manner,

WE, THEREFORE

1. **COMMIT** ourselves and our respective countries to meeting these challenges through prioritizing areas of action for bridging the digital divide in the Southern African Development Community; and



(c) **Community Participation and Governance in ICT Development**

WE UNDERTAKE to ensure that information and communication technology does not increase existing disparities between men and women, the rich and poor, rural and urban populations: to enable them participate in the global information society as equal partners thus contributing to its diversity and making it more reflective of the peoples of the world;

(d) **ICT in Business Development**

WE SHALL UNDERTAKE to work together to remove barriers of electronic commerce in our SADC countries as a means to opening opportunities and benefits such as increased access to markets, opportunities to create economic value from cultural assets, reduced administrative costs, and improvement of public services. There is a need to adopt and adapt technologies that enable e-commerce capability to avoid increasing exclusion from the global economy; and

(e) **Human Resource Capacity for ICT Development**

WE UNDERTAKE to formulate a comprehensive human resource development plan in the area of ICT to enable the Region to meet its needs and participate as an equal partner in the new technologically informed global economy. The effective use of ICT presumes a literate population able to use the tools provided by the new technologies.



IN WITNESS WHEREOF, WE, the Heads of the State or Government, or our duly authorised representatives, have signed this Declaration.

DONE AT Blantyre, on this 14th day of August, 2001 in three (3) originals, in the English, French and Portuguese languages, all texts being equally authentic.

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REPUBLIC OF ANGOLA

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REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA

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DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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KINGDOM OF LESOTHO

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REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

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UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA

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REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE