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EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
Thirty-Sixth Ordinary Session
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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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**REPORT OF THE 3RD ORDINARY SESSION OF THE SPECIALIZED
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATION AND ICT,
SHARM EL SHEIKH, EGYPT, 25-26 OCTOBER 2019**

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

1. The 3rd Ordinary Session of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and Information Communication Technologies held in Sharm El Sheikh, (Egypt) on 25-26 October 2019. The experts' meeting held from 22 to 24 October 2019 preceded the Ministerial Conference.

2. Thirty-Eight (38) African Union Member States as well as representatives of ECOWAS, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, African Telecommunication Union (ATU), Pan African Postal Union (PAPU), the International telecommunication Union (ITU) and UNESCO were in attendance.

3. The following institutions were also present: Internet Society (ISOC), Intel and Association of Progressive Communications (APC).

4. At the onset of the meeting, the Third Bureau of the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Communication and ICT was elected to lead its work for a two-year period (2019 – 2021). The Bureau, which was elected on the basis of geographical and rotation, is composed as follows:

Chair	:	Egypt (North Africa);
1 st Vice-Chair	:	Burundi ((Central Africa);
2 nd Vice-Chair	:	Malawi (Southern Africa);
3 rd Vice-Chair	:	Sierra Leone (West Africa);
Rapporteur	:	Djibouti (East Africa).

MAIN AGENDA ITEMS

5. The Ministers considered (i) the Report of the Experts, (ii) the Draft Digital Strategy for Africa – DTS - (iii) as well as the Draft 2019 Sharm El Sheikh Declaration.

OUTCOME

6. The Committee discussed the Digital Transformation Strategy (DTS), commended AUC for the initiative and requested more time to provide inputs to the DTS.

7. In line with the above, the Committee agreed to open the DTS for online contributions until 8 November 2019. The AU Commission is requested to duly consider the received inputs and finalize the document by 15 November 2019 and submit for consideration and adoption by the AU Summit in January 2020.

8. In this respect, the Committee calls upon all African ICT and Communication Stakeholders to accelerate the implementation of the Digital Transformation Strategy, the AU communication and advocacy strategy, the Brand Identity Style and Communication Guide and key projects of the continent.

9. The Committee also adopted the 2019 Sharm El Sheikh Declaration whereby the ministers' (i) renewed their commitment to continue promoting the implementation of previous Decisions and Declarations adopted by the Assembly of the African Union, the Executive Council and the Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and Information & Communication Technologies and (ii) specially requested the AU Commission to:

- (i) **MOBILIZE** the necessary resources to implement the Comprehensive Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa and develop the matrix for the implementation of the Strategy;
- (ii) **DEVELOP** guidelines on Privacy, Over The Top services (OTT), a continental framework on data policy and a road map and guidelines for spectrum harmonization and deployment for current and future mobile and wireless broadband networks such as IMT2020 /5G;
- (iii) **DEDICATE** appropriate resources for the implementation of a comprehensive Cybersecurity program which includes assistance to AU Member States to adopt cyber strategies, Cyber legislation and establishment of CIRTs/CERTs ¹;
- (iv) **TRANSFER** the common assets of the Pan African e-Network to the management of the Regional Satellite Communication Organization (RASCOM);
- (v) **ENSURE** that the Brand & Communication Style Guide and the Communication Policies and Procedures are instituted within the organization.

CONCLUSION

10. The EXECUTIVE COUNCIL is invited to endorse the enclosed Report and 2019 Sharm El Sheikh Declaration of the Third Ordinary Session of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and Information Communication Technologies and its main outcomes as adopted by the sector Ministers at the Conference.

11. The EXECUTIVE COUNCIL is also requested to endorse the enclosed draft Digital Strategy for Africa (DTS) in order to make effective the outcome of the session of the Committee on Communication and ICT.

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**SPECIALIZED TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON
COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES (STC-CICT)
THIRD ORDINARY SESSION,
25 - 26 OCTOBER 2019,
SHARM EL SHEIKH, EGYPT**

AU/STC-CICT-3/MIN/Rpt
Original : English

MINISTERIAL REPORT

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Third Ordinary Session of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and Information Communication Technologies (STC-CICT-3) was held at Rixos Premium Seagate Hotel, Sharm El Sheikh, Arab Republic of Egypt, from 25 to 26 October 2019. The Experts' Meeting held from 22 to 24 October 2019, preceded the Ministerial Conference. The Ministers deliberated on the Report of the Experts' Session and other agenda items as per **Annex 1**.

II. ATTENDANCE

2. The following Member States took part in the Meeting: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Eswatini, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

3. Seychelles, South Sudan and Tunisia sent apologies. The List of Participants is attached as **Annex 2**.

4. The following Regional Economic Communities (RECs) were also in attendance: Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

5. The following African and International Organizations and Agencies also took part: African Telecommunication Union (ATU), Pan African Postal Union (PAPU), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

6. The following organizations were also present: Internet Society (ISOC), Association of Progressive Communications (APC) and Intel.

III. OPENING CEREMONY

7. The official opening was officiated by the Minister of Communications and Information Technology of the Arab Republic of Egypt, who also gave the keynote address. The following officials also delivered opening statements: the Representative of the outgoing Chairperson of the STC Bureau, H.E Dina Mufti, Ambassador of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Arab Republic of Egypt, H.E Houlin Zhao Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and H.E. Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, African Union Commission.

Remarks by H. E, Dr. Amr S. Talaat, Minister of Communications and Information Technology of the Arab Republic of Egypt

8. H.E. Dr. Amr S. Talaat, Minister of Communications and Information Technology of the Arab Republic of Egypt extended his gratitude to the AU Member

States for having entrusted Egypt to serve as Chair of the Bureau. He warmly welcomed the delegates to Sharm El Sheikh and conveyed the greetings of H.E. Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt and Chairperson of the African Union (AU).

9. The Honourable Minister highlighted the strategic importance of ICTs in the socio-economic development of Africa, and further highlighted the transforming power of Artificial Intelligence (AI), calling for the establishment of an African Expert Working Group to develop a common African approach on AI, as well as capacity building framework that supports the adoption of AI by Africans to achieve the SDGs.

10. The Honourable Minister concluded his remarks by thanking the outgoing Bureau, Member States Experts and the African Union Commission for the support rendered during their tenure, and welcomed all African Ministers and delegates to participate in the World Radiocommunication Conference 2019 (WRC-19) hosted by Egypt.

Remarks by H. E Houlin Zhao Secretary General of ITU

11. H.E Houlin Zhao recalled that ICTs today are on the top of the agenda of all international meetings and summits notably the FOCAC, TICAD and the very recent Africa-Russia Summit. He also stressed the significant progress made by African countries in increasing access to their populations.

12. H.E Houlin Zhao reiterated the support of ITU to work with the African Union and all African States to speed up the digital transformation, and enable the Continent to reap the social and economic benefits of new technologies. He concluded by congratulating Africa and Ethiopia for the award of Nobel Peace Prize to H.E Abiy Ahmed Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Remarks by H.E. Dr Amani ABOU-ZEID, AU Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, African Union Commission

13. In her speech, the AUC Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, outlined the contributions of the African Union Commission to the development of the ICT and Communication Sectors in Africa and noted a number of AU programmes and projects that have been implemented in this regard.

14. H.E. Dr Amani ABOU-ZEID seized the opportunity to highlight the need for African countries to work together to ensure connectivity and access to all African citizens before 2030. She further emphasized the importance of adopting a comprehensive Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa, to serve as a blueprint and master plan for transforming the African economy and society.

Remarks by H.E Dina Mufti, Ambassador of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Arab Republic of Egypt.

15. H.E Ambassador Dina Mufti, representing Ethiopia as Chair of outgoing Bureau, gave an overview of the activities of the STC Bureau since the last session of the STC,

and highlighted how they set important directions towards establishing the roadmap and ICT vision for Africa.

16. He noted that ongoing ICT and communication initiatives are taking Africa forward and assisting Member States in their endeavour to build a connected and secure Africa. He also briefed the Meeting on Ethiopia's enthusiastic plans to develop green ICT infrastructure and Indigenous ICT technology, in response to the human needs of the current century that will help to connect Africa with full-fledged security.

IV. PROCEDURAL MATTERS

17. The session adopted the agenda and work program attached as **Annex 1**.

V. ELECTION OF CCICT-3 BUREAU

18. Following due consultations within the regions, and taking into account geographical rotation in accordance with Rules and Procedure of the STC-CICT, the Bureau was elected. The Central African Region ceded the chairmanship of the Bureau for the next 2 years to the Northern region. Egypt was nominated by the Northern Region. Accordingly, the composition of the Bureau of the STC (2019-2021) is as follows:

NORTHERN AFRICA	
Egypt	Chair
CENTRAL AFRICA	
Burundi	1 st Vice Chair
SOUTHERN AFRICA	
Malawi	2 nd Vice Chair
WESTERN AFRICA	
Sierra Leone	3 rd Vice Chair
EASTERN AFRICA	
Djibouti	Rapporteur

VI. CONSIDERATION OF THE EXPERTS REPORT

19. The Rapporteur of the outgoing Bureau (Ghana) presented the Report of the Experts' Session, highlighting the progress achieved in various ICT and Communication projects and programmes, as well as the outcome of the discussions on the draft Africa Digital Transformation Strategy (DTS) and the implementation of the African Union communication and advocacy strategy.

20. Following very constructive discussions on the Digital Transformation Strategy (DTS), Member States commended AUC for the initiative and requested more time to provide inputs to the DTS.

21. It was agreed to open the DTS until 8 November 2019. The AU Commission is requested to duly consider the received inputs and finalize the document by 15 November 2019 and submit for consideration and adoption by the AU Summit in January 2020.

22. The Report of the Experts was endorsed by the session with amendments (**Annex 3**):

VII. CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE 2019 SHARM EL SHEIKH DECLARATION

23. The draft Declaration was presented by the Rapporteur of the Bureau (Djibouti). Following discussions, the Ministers adopted the **2019 Sharm El Sheikh Declaration (Annex 4)**.

VIII. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

24. The STC expressed its support for Côte d'Ivoire for hosting the UPU Congress in 2020, and took note of Burkina Faso's concern about the increasing use of ICTs for criminal activities and terrorism in the Sahel region and Mauritania's request for the AU Commission to support the exchange of best practices and experiences among Member States.

IX. VOTE OF THANKS

25. On behalf of all the delegations, the Minister of Communication of Sierra Leone gave a Vote of Thanks (**Annex 5**).

X. CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE MINISTERS' REPORT

26. The Ministers adopted this Report.

XI. CLOSING CEREMONY:

27. In her closing remarks, the AUC Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy expressed her gratitude for the presence and active participation of all delegates. She thanked the Egyptian Government for the excellent preparation and support to the Meeting. The Commissioner observed that the Ministerial Declaration shows the collective endorsement and consensus for digital transformation as an impetus for the integration of the Continent.

28. The Chairperson of STC-CICT-3 thanked all Members of the Bureau, the Ministers and all delegations of the Member States and Organisations that participated and worked hard towards the success of the Meeting. He observed that the results of the Meeting not only spoke for themselves, attesting to the efforts put into preparing for the Meeting, but also highlighted what needs to be done over the next two years, in order to effectively enable Africa to embrace its digital future.

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**SPECIALIZED TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON
COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES (STC-CICT)
THIRD ORDINARY SESSION,
22 - 26 OCTOBER 2019,
SHARM EL SHEIKH, EGYPT**

**AU/STC-CICT-3/MIN/Decl.
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH**

**2019 SHARM EL SHEIKH DECLARATION
STC – CICT-3**

2019 SHARM EL SHEIKH DECLARATION STC-CICT-3

PREAMBLE

We, the Ministers in charge of Communication and Information and Communication Technology (CICT) and Postal Services, meeting in the Third Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and Information & Communication Technologies, **(STC-CICT-3)** in Sharm El Sheikh, Arab Republic of Egypt, from 22 to 26 October 2019;

Guided by the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU);

Recalling Decisions Assembly/AU/Dec.227 (XII) and Assembly/AU/Dec.365(XIVI), adopted in January 2009 and July 2011, respectively, on the configuration of the Specialized Technical Committees (STCs) and the modalities for their operationalization;

Bearing in mind Declaration Assembly/AU/Decl.1(XIV), adopted at the 14th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU on Information and Communication Technologies in Africa, Challenges and Prospects for Development, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in February 2010;

Considering Declaration Assembly/AU/Decl.2(XVIII), adopted at the 18th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the AU, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2012, on the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA);

Recalling Decision EX.CL/Dec.987(XXXII) of the 32nd Ordinary Session of the Executive *Council* on the reports of the Specialized Technical Committees, including the Second Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and Information & Communication Technologies **(STC-CICT-2)** held in Addis Ababa, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, from 20 to 24 November 2017;

Considering AU Executive Council Decision EX.CL/Dec.739(XXII), requesting the AU Commission to develop an updated, integrated and coherent AU strategic Communication and Information and Communications Technologies (CICT) framework for Africa, in collaboration with the African Union Development Agency-NEPAD (AUDA -NEPAD), Regional Economic Communities (RECs,) Specialized Institutions (SI), African Development Bank (AfDB) and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), taking into account existing frameworks of all African CIT stakeholders;

Noting that while the digital revolution is well underway in Africa and is promising to be a positive multiplier for Africa's socio-economic development, the current digital landscape on the Continent still faces many challenges, despite the significant progress in some areas;

Recognizing the efforts of the Continent's leadership to prioritize and accelerate digital transformation, and conscious that achieving digital transformation in Africa will require

political commitment at the highest level, aligning of policies and sector regulation and a massive scaling-up of investment and dedication of resources;

Reaffirming that digital technologies and innovation can be harnessed to contribute to the achievement of the vision and goals of the African Union's Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals, by transforming Africa's societies and economies to promote Africa's integration, generate inclusive economic growth, stimulate job creation, erase the digital divide and accelerate poverty eradication;

Further noting that harmonization of ICT policy, legal and regulatory frameworks is a prerequisite for the creation of common Digital Single Market, and that Internet and Digital Infrastructure are an essential component for the development of Africa's digital ecosystem;

Bearing in mind the importance of cybersecurity to secure our cyberspace and foster trust and confidence in digital services to AU Citizens;

Acknowledging that the postal sector is an essential component of the digital economy, as well as part of the financial inclusion ecosystem;

Further noted the important role of the postal sector as a frontier for governance services;

Recognizing that the AU needs a coherent Digital Transformation Strategy to guide a common, coordinated response to reap the benefits of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR);

Taking note of the Report of the Experts' Session held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, from 22 to 24 October 2019;

Having elected the following Bureau of the STC-CICT for a period 2 years:

NORTHERN AFRICA	
Egypt	Chair of the Bureau
CENTRAL AFRICA	
Burundi	1 st Vice Chair of the Bureau
SOUTHERN AFRICA	
Malawi	2 nd Vice Chair of the Bureau
WESTERN AFRICA	
Sierra Leone	3 rd Vice Chair of the Bureau
EASTERN AFRICA	
Djibouti	Rapporteur of the Bureau

HEREBY COMMIT OURSELVES TO:

1. **CONTINUE** to promote the implementation of previous Decisions and Declarations adopted by the Assembly of the African Union, the Executive Council and the Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and Information & Communication Technologies, particularly those relating to:

- i. Policy and Regulatory Initiative for Digital Africa (PRIDA);
 - ii. Cybersecurity, Cybercrime, and Personal Data Protection;
 - iii. Dot Africa ownership and use by Member States and African people and Businesses;
 - iv. Action Plan for the Sustainable Development of the Postal Sector in Africa, including the implementation of projects on Addressing and Postcode Systems, Connectivity and Electrification of Post Offices in rural areas, Financial Inclusion of the Low-Income Population and e-Commerce Development in Africa;
 - v. African Union (AU) Communication and Advocacy Strategy;
 - vi. Building the AU brand identity and promoting Agenda 2063
 - vii. Improving corporate visibility: Advocacy and public relations
 - viii. Human resources capacity and competency in communication
 - ix. Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA);
 - x. Support of the African Satellite Communication Organization (RASCOM);
 - xi. Efficient management of Spectrum and harmonized use of the digital dividend;
 - xii. Access to rural communities and cooperation with Transport and Energy sectors on conduits and alternative ICT Infrastructure respectively;
 - xiii. Development and distribution of African Local Content and to further provide funding, infrastructure and skills development;
 - xiv. African Internet Governance to contribute to Africa digital economy ;
 - xv. Cooperation with the African private sector and institutions for coordinated mobilization of resources for Communication and ICT projects;
2. **WORK** together towards an integrated and inclusive Digital Society and Economy in Africa that improves the quality of life of Africa's citizens;
 3. **COMMIT** to develop and implement policies and regulations that create an enabling environment required to stimulate and accelerate digital transformation for national, regional and continental development;
 4. **ENCOURAGE** development partners to continue providing support to ensure digitalization is for everyone, everywhere, and is affordable and ubiquitous, thereby creating equal access to opportunities and mitigating risks of exclusion;

HEREBY REQUEST MEMBER STATES TO:

5. **PROMOTE** and implement the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030) as the common digitalization agenda for the Continent upon its adoption;
6. **PROMOTE** the adoption of green ICT Infrastructure
7. **SUPPORT** and facilitate the implementation of PRIDA activities at national, regional and continental levels;
8. **USE** the PRIDA Digital Platform as a space to build an African Common Position, coordinate and distribute roles to each stakeholder, share experiences and best practices, and exchange lessons learned on ICT and digital policies;

9. **INCLUDE** postal digitalization in both national priorities and national digital strategies, pursue the digitization of postal financial services, and set up a cashless system;
10. **ACCELERATE** the establishment of national IGFs, and support national and regional IGFs;
11. **ACCELERATE** the ratification of the AU Convention on Cyber Security and personal Data protection (Malabo Convention);
12. **TAKE STOCK** of the provisions of the AU Convention and the Guidelines on Internet Infrastructure Security, in order to promote a safer African Cyberspace;
13. **REQUEST** Member States to encourage the use of DOT Africa
14. **ENCOURAGE** National Broadcasters to support dissemination of content produced by the AU, including supporting the editing of produced films to make them available in national and local languages in order to reach the widest audience;
15. **ESTABLISH** a working group on Artificial Intelligence (AI) based on existing initiatives and in collaboration with African Institutions to study:
 - a. The creation of a common African stance on AI
 - b. The development of an Africa wide capacity building framework
 - c. Establishment of an AI think tank to assess and recommend projects to collaborate on in line of Agenda 2063 and SDGs.
16. **COMMEND** the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe for funding the process for the creation of the first edition of the Africa Factbook, and call upon Member States to fund subsequent publications on a rotational basis;
17. **COMMEND** the Republic of South Africa on her offer to assist the AUC to hasten the refurbishment and operationalization of the AU Studio;
18. **CONTRIBUTE** to the validation of the PIDA PAP 2 studies;
19. **SUPPORT** the organization of the Universal Postal Union 27th Congress to be held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire in August 2020.

FURTHER DIRECT THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION TO:

20. **MOBILIZE** the necessary resources to implement the Comprehensive Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa and develop the matrix for the implementation of the Strategy;
21. **COLLABORATE** with UNECA, RECs, Member States, Specialized Institutions and all African ICT and Communication stakeholders, to accelerate the implementation of the digital transformation strategy, the AU communication and advocacy strategy, the Brand Identity Style and Communication Guide and key projects of the continent.

22. **ACCELERATE** implementation of the Policy and Regulatory Initiative for Digital Africa (PRIDA) and promote the development and use of the PRIDA Digital Platform;
23. **DEVELOP** guidelines on Privacy and Over The Top services (OTT) in collaboration with relevant continental and regional institutions, and submit the guidelines to the STC-CICT 4 in 2021;
24. **DEVELOP** a continental framework on data policy and submit to the STC-CICT 4 in 2021;
25. **WORK** with the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) to develop a road map and guidelines for spectrum harmonization and deployment for current and future mobile and wireless broadband networks such as IMT2020 /5G;
26. **MOBILIZE** resources in collaboration with PAPU to support connectivity and Electrification of Post Offices in rural areas;
27. **SPEED UP** the transfer of the AUC Website from au.int to au.africa and the mail services from africa-union.org to au.africa.
28. **COMMIT** an annual budget for the organization and support of the Annual African IGF and African School of Internet Governance;
29. **DEDICATE** appropriate resources for the implementation of a comprehensive Cybersecurity program related to this critical flagship project, including assistance to AU Member States to adopt cyber strategies and Cyber legislation and to establish CIRTs/CERTs ²;
30. **PROMOTE** the formulation of strategy and pilot projects for Unlocking Access to Basic Infrastructure and Services for Rural and Remote Areas including Indigenous Community Networks, and develop guidelines on legislation on deployment of technologies and ICT applications, to accelerate infrastructure role out in collaboration with ATU and other regional institutions;
31. **TRANSFER** the common assets of the Pan African e-Network to the management of the Regional Satellite Communication Organization (RASCOM);
32. **DEDICATE** realistic and appropriate resources (human, material and financial) to capacitate the AUC to enable it to better and more effectively communicate to various stakeholders and audiences on different media platforms, in a strategic, consistent and timely manner;
33. **ENSURE** that the Brand & Communication Style Guide and the Communication Policies and Procedures are instituted within the organization;
34. **PROVIDE** the necessary support to ensure the effective implementation and

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launch of the AU Media Awards within the period 2020-2021;

35. **FINALIZE** the production of, and launch the first edition of the Africa Factbook:

APPRECIATION:

36. **EXPRESS** our gratitude to H.E. Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt and Chairperson of the African Union (AU), the Government and the people of the Arab Republic of Egypt, for the warm hospitality and excellent organization of this conference.

Done in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, on 26 October 2019

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Report of the 3rd Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and ICT, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, 25-26 October 2019

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