

ECOWAS COMMISSION
ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES

COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO
COMMUNIDADE DOS ESTADOS DA AFRICA DO OESTE

COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO
COMMUNAUTE ECONOMIQUE DES ETATS DE L'AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST



**A4AI-Nigeria Coalition Meeting
NICON LUXURY, Abuja
25 January 2017**

**STATEMENT OF THE
ECOWAS COMMISSION**

25 January 2017

“Affordable Broadband in ECOWAS Region”

- The Honorable Minister of Communications of the Federal Republic of Nigeria
- Alliance for Affordable Internet Policy Advocacy Manager
- Alliance for Affordable Internet Nigeria National Coordinator
- Distinguished Representatives from the ICT Sectors
- Distinguished guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the ECOWAS Commission, I would like to thank the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) for extending an invitation to ECOWAS to participate in this important event with the theme Affordable Broadband in the ECOWAS Region.

I would also like to seize this opportunity to thank the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the ECOWAS host country, who is always committed to supporting our regional Institution in the implementation of its programs and projects to achieve the regional integration goal.

As you may all be aware, the ECOWAS vision is to create a borderless West Africa which is competitive in all areas of economic activities with free movement of citizens, goods and services to foster development in a peaceful and democratic environment. The deployment of ICT is therefore a key tool for ECOWAS in achieving its Vision 2020 of an ECOWAS of the people as these ICT opportunities must be embraced to ensure that the benefits of technology reaches all its citizens.

To do this, the ECOWAS Commission is working towards the establishment of a single digital ICT market in West Africa by the harmonisation of its Member States' national policies and legislations, the implementation of common sectoral policies in the key sectors of their economies and the development of regional broadband infrastructure.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As there can be no access without infrastructure, Article 33 of the ECOWAS Treaty on Posts and Telecommunications stipulates that Member States shall undertake to develop, modernise, coordinate and standardise their national

telecommunications networks in order to provide reliable interconnection between Member States and promote private sector participation in the provision of telecommunications services.

In this regard, considerable achievements have been recorded over the last decade in terms of infrastructure development:

- Several submarine cable projects have been completed with at least one landing point operational in all the coastal countries in the ECOWAS region except Guinea Bissau. ECOWAS region is now connected to the worldwide broadband network with enough capacity for businesses and users.
- The three (3) landlocked countries (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger) now have at least two (2) routes for their access to the submarine cables. Therefore, the access of landlocked countries to submarine cables are secured and competition is rising.

Unfortunately, the price gap between international connectivity and transit costs continues to grow and represents over 70% of the overall cost of the international connectivity for the landlocked countries. It is to tackle this issue that a regulation on the conditions for access to national and international bandwidths on terrestrial networks within ECOWAS was adopted in December 2016 by the Council of Ministers.

This regulation is to facilitate connectivity to landing stations of submarine cables within ECOWAS at an affordable price.

It is in the same vein, that a Regional Cross-Border Interconnection Policy Framework for the implementation of a Regional Internet Exchange Point (IXP) was adopted by ECOWAS ICT Ministers to reduce the cost of internet access.

Affordability of the internet is also a consideration for the currently unconnected, who are mostly in the rural parts of the region. The ECOWAS Supplementary Act on universal access and service requires Member States to have a strategy for financing the deployment of basic communication services to the remote areas, including internet access, again at an affordable price.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In pursuing this effort to connect the unconnected at an affordable price the ECOWAS Commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Alliance for Affordable Internet to build on this shared vision and to expand affordable access to both mobile and fixed-line Internet.

The Commission acknowledges the efforts of A4AI in the region and commends its ongoing projects in Ghana, Liberia and Nigeria. The Commission urges A4AI to extend its coalition movement to the other twelve Member States for the benefit of all the citizens of our community.

To conclude, it is the hope of the ECOWAS Commission that the region will be able to realise A4AI's objective: achieve a "1 for 2" target i.e. that 1GB of data should not be more than 2% of average monthly income for the bottom 20% (least earners) in a country.

Thank you very much for your kind attention