ADF V Consensus statement and the way forward
(Contribution from ICT &Youth Entrepreneurship)

Part I: Preamble

1. A widespread consensus has been building throughout the continent that Africa's development in the 21st Century will depend on how best the continent's youth resources are nurtured and deployed, especially in the area of Information Society development. Young people are often the leading innovators in the use and spread of information and communications technologies.

2. Recalling the African Information Society Initiative (AISI) which stipulates that African youth must be empowered and involved in the processes that seek to establish Africa as a major partner in the Information Society; and existing Youth-led efforts and initiatives should be identified and encouraged in order to bridge the Generation Divide.

3. Recalling the African Union youth charter which urges for the promotion of youth entrepreneurship training in the school curricula, providing access to credit, business development skills training, mentorship opportunities and better information on market opportunities;

4. Noting that one of the objectives of the NEPAD ICT component is to "develop and produce a pool of ICT-proficient youth and students from which Africa can draw trainee ICT engineers, programmers and software developers".

5. Considering that the 2005 World Youth report highlighted that: "Measures to improve access to the Internet and to increase information technology literacy at large should be encouraged. The effective use of technology should help to strengthen various forms of youth engagement.";

6. Acknowledging the UN Secretary-General's Youth Employment Network (YEN), which identifies the four "e" area targets as a response to youth development challenges; these include: employability, equal opportunities, entrepreneurship and employment creation;

7. Recalling the Declaration of Principles of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which highlights that: "Young people are the future workforce and leading creators and earliest adopters of ICT. They must therefore be empowered as learners, developers, contributors, entrepreneurs and decision-makers. We must focus especially on young people who have not yet been able to benefit fully from the opportunities provided by ICT. We are also committed to ensuring that the development of ICT applications and operation of services respects the rights of children as well as their protection and well-being".

8. Recognizing that the success of the knowledge economy is dependent on the promotion of a culture of entrepreneurship and that youth have the capacity to understand it and be its pioneers.

9. Noting that building a prosperous, balanced and sustainable economy needs the development of a culture that is positive towards entrepreneurship and ensuring that young people are at the forefront of this change.

10. Recognizing that ICTs offer significant opportunities for job creation since they allow young people to receive the information they require to increase their education, as well as knowledge of how and where to find income - and employment - generating opportunities;

11. Taking into account the youth component of the African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE) adopted by the African Union Conference of ICT Ministers as Africa's road map for the Information Society up to 2015, and which requests creation of Youth Action Plan on ICT for Development.

12. Acknowledging that the African Youth Charter adopted by the African Union should be the continent's guiding principle for youth development, and that its implementation at national level should be translated to support the Youth Institutions in their participation in all sectors of society and economy.

Part II: Challenges & Opportunities

13. Supporting youth entrepreneurship is an investment in the future. It is widely recognized that entrepreneurial activity is a policy priority for all modern economies because new businesses are: (i) sources of innovation and new ideas, (ii) creates of wealth and employment, (iii) increases competition and (iv) allow people from all backgrounds to realise their potential;

14. Education reforms focusing on ICT, affordable educational systems based on excellence, energized by its human resources, dedicated to high standards, social values and a healthy spirit of competition, provides the basis for Africa's young people to be ICT-savvy as well as prepared for the evolving job market;

15. The legal and regulatory environment, the availability of appropriate skills, the ability to change organizational set-ups, as well as the strength of accompanying innovations in ICT applications, affect the ability of firms to seize the benefits of ICT;

16. The lack of access to appropriate infrastructure, venture/risk capital for innovation, startups initiative, business development, and other resources, continue to challenge African countries to empower its youth through access to ICT;

Part III: ICT & Youth Entrepreneurship

17. The government and other stakeholders need to play a key role in providing the basic socio-economic ICT infrastructure for the youth and promote youth employment and youth entrepreneurship policies and programmes;

18. Governments should take bold steps towards education policies to make them relevant to the needs of the knowledge economy. Comprehensively designed curriculum that deals with the culture of basic and social entrepreneurship and self-development;

19. Regulatory environments, conducive to effective public and private partnership, and ICT youth led investment should be put in place;

20. Strategies for removing administrative barriers, promoting incentives and stimuli in order to make new businesses attractive alternatives for youth, including special systems of micro financing and credit loans, support to start-up, businesses to encourage the youth to participate self-employment should be encouraged;

21. Human capital development, (general education and IT skills training), through formal or informal educational systems, lifelong learning schemes – is a prerequisite that be meet before ICT enterprises can become a reality;

22. Africa' Parliaments and parliamentarians have a central role to play in mobilizing and representing the people. National parliaments have the responsibility of passing the necessary legislation to promote legislative and regulatory environment conducive to youth enterprise development;

23. The private sector, in closer collaboration with governments, should increase its role in generating youth employment and enterprise;

24. The Private sector implication should target the facilitation of access to capital, mentoring, the development of market-driven training programmes, promoting internships and managerial training opportunities for young people. Bank and financial institutions, notably the African Development Bank (ADB) should be strongly involved;

25. The African Development Bank to initiate ICT Youth venture capital;

26. Civil society can bring in their perspectives in promoting equity, transparency and participation goals, by ensuring the promotion of ICT rural youth-centered policies;

27. The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) need to develop a web portal on best practices in generating ICT Youth enterprises supporting some programs;

Part IV: Way Forward

28. Mainstreaming ICT, youth employment and entrepreneurship strategies in broader national ICT policies and align them with strategic development objectives;

29. ECA in collaboration with UN Agencies, the African Union (AU), ADB and ICT partners in Africa should consider the possibility of providing support for youth employment and entrepreneurship programs at national and sub-regional levels;

30. African Union and NEPAD with the support of ECA, ADB, UN Agencies and Development partners to consider a Pan-African ICT Youth Program to support youth entrepreneurship and development in countries.