

Ministerial Forum in Tunis will discuss ICT integration policies that drive and accelerate the transformation of Africa's education and training systems

Tunis, 5 December 2013. From 9 to 11 December, Tunis will host the First African Ministerial Forum on ICT Integration in Education and Training. The aim of this initiative is to help African education ministers to introduce effective, relevant policies integrating information and communication technology (ICT) that will drive and strategically accelerate the transformation of their education and training systems. These systems must become powerful instruments for producing the human capital that Africa needs for its sustainable development.

The Forum is organized by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the African Development Bank (AfDB), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the *Organisation internationale de la francophonie* (OIF) and Intel, under the auspices of Tunisia, through the country's Ministry of Education.

The event will start with a high-level policy workshop on 9 December, followed by the ministerial meeting, which will be officially opened on 10 December by the Honorable Mongi Marzouk, Tunisia's Minister of Information and Communication Technology.

Although the challenges facing African education and training systems are formidable, some of them can be considerably eased through the use of ICT. These include providing access to quality education and training for all African citizens (at present, more than 30 million children of primary school age do not attend school); making up the shortage of teachers, which is estimated at over 30% of the teaching force, or more than a million teachers; improving the quality of instruction and of teaching methods; and enhancing both the availability and the relevance of school textbooks.

The fact is that the use of ICTs can : (i) enhance the relevance and quality of education and training; (ii) offer marginalized population groups, particularly female and rural learners, increased opportunities for learning and skills development. Education systems must also empower learners by giving them a digital culture and the ICT knowledge, skills and qualifications that will enable them to become full-fledged stakeholders in the knowledge society.

The lessons drawn from the past show, however, that integration of ICT in education and training is still a challenge, owing in particular to the insufficient involvement of education stakeholders in the process of policy-making and steering. Moreover, the cultures brought together by the integration process are very different – on one side, the highly innovative and dynamic ICT sector, and on the other, the relatively conservative education sector – which makes their interaction more difficult.

The first objective of the Forum is therefore to create a high-level platform for dialogue that will bring together decision-makers from African education ministries and representatives of development bodies, of the private ICT sector and of civil society. This platform is indispensable in order to give the various stakeholders a common understanding of the opportunities offered by ICT,

the policies and strategies needed for the efficient use of ICT by education and training systems, and the paradigm shifts required to for successful integration of ICT.

The Forum will address a variety of topics: lessons drawn from countries that have reached different phases of ICT integration in education and training; the formulation, financing, implementation and monitoring of ICT policies; ICT as a contributor to teachers' professional development and improvement in teaching practices; the development and sharing of digital content; the deployment of ICT hardware and connectivity issues; challenges in scaling up ICT integration practices; learning opportunities via cell phones; the use of ICT to expand learning opportunities for marginalized population groups; and public-private partnerships for ICT in education.

In order to give participants a broader perspective, the Forum will also present a wide range of experiences drawn from countries in Africa and other regions of the world, including Argentina, Côte d'Ivoire, Finland, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lebanon, Madagascar, Niger, Senegal and Uganda.

The Forum will conclude with a ministerial panel that will formulate and issue the recommendations of the meeting.

It will be officially closed by the Honorable Moncef Ben Salem, Tunisia's Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

Some 200 participants are expected, including 19 African ministers responsible for education and or/training. Other participants will include representatives of AfDB, UNESCO, OIF, INTEL and ADEA, representatives from other development agencies, and other partners and stakeholders from the private sector, the specialized ICT sector and civil society.

Further information on the Forum is available at <http://www.africaictedu.org/>

Follow the proceedings of the Forum Live : <http://africaictedu.info/>

The Ministerial Meeting will be webstreamed Tuesday 10 and Wednesday 11 December.

Journalists who wish to cover the Forum are cordially invited to contact:

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