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Knowledge crucial for African development – UN officials



Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) head office in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

2 July 2009 – With knowledge being an essential element in Africa's development process, a United Nations librarian has called on African governments to help narrow the digital divide.

Citing the example of the United States, where people can access the Internet in public libraries for free, Abraham Azubuike, Chief Librarian of the Economic Commission for Africa ([ECA](#)), said that even with limited resources, African countries can still afford to help people go online.

“Development plans without an emphasis on access to, and utilization of, knowledge are bound to fail as development itself is a learning process,” he said, speaking at the First International Conference on African Digital Libraries and Archives which began at ECA headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The three-day event has drawn some 250 people – representatives from international and inter-governmental organizations, universities and libraries – and is exploring how to disseminate knowledge to promote development, from the grassroots to upper political levels.

“The most successful route to building knowledge societies is through building strong knowledge institutions and spreading awareness of new technical and cultural possibilities for sharing of information and resources,” Lalla Ben Barka, Deputy Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), said yesterday at the start of the Conference.

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