

African nations need to better utilize emerging technologies, say UN experts



Participants at the "Electronic/Mobile Government in Africa" workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

18 February 2009 – African Governments are failing to take advantage of technological advances that can improve the delivery of services to their citizens despite the growth in mobile and information and communications technology (ICT) across the continent, United Nations experts told a meeting in Ethiopia.

"Such developments have not helped Africa to come to the forefront of e-government development," said Richard Kerby, Inter-regional adviser on E-government for the UN Division for Public Administration and Development Management (DPADM).

The "Electronic/Mobile Government in Africa" three-day workshop, which kicked off yesterday in Addis Ababa, aims to analyse how governments in the region have put various ICT and mobile applications to use, with a view to developing partnerships for capacity building.

It is also an opportunity for the UN to further its thinking on the development of the UN Global Knowledge Repository, an online storeroom for local and national governments to access up-to-date information on electronic/mobile governance.

For African Governments to make the most of emerging technologies, countries need to invest heavily in infrastructure, Aida Opoku-Mensah, Director of the ICT, Science and Technology Division of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (**UNECA**) told participants in her opening remarks.

"We need to capitalize on M-applications for public service delivery in areas such as health and education services," she told the senior policymakers, practitioners and experts on electronic and mobile government initiatives attending the workshop.

The workshop has been organized by UNECA in partnership with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.