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**Department of Infrastructure and Energy**  
**Information Society Division**

***Concept Document***

***Policy and Regulation Initiative for Digital Africa (PRIDA)***

***Continental Meeting on Harmonization***

***2-6 September 2019***

***Addis Ababa, Ethiopia***

## *Background and justification*

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In today globalized world, Information Telecommunication Technology (ICT) has become an essential component of modern society and economy. With the digitalization and fast-paced technological change, convergence has blurred boundaries between sectors and ICT regulations have witnessed a shift to more collaborative and cross-sectoral regulations that require a problem-solving attitude and involvement of new market players according to what is regulated and how.

Moreover, the scope of regulations continues to widen as a result of fast moving digital landscape. For instance, in digitally advanced countries, regulators are constantly reinventing the rules as new issues emerge to better trigger an opening up of ICT markets for more efficiency and affordability of services. Nevertheless, there are challenges that require inclusive and multistakeholder' dialogues, harmonized approach as well as collective actions to enable people to fully harness the potential of digital technologies.

Africa, like other regions in the world, is embracing its digital future, this has been clearly stated in many different decisions and commitments of the African Union Organs. Therefore, it is without doubt that African governments and regulators have a key role to play in creating an enabling and trusted environment to achieve Africa digital transformation.

In line with the African Union Commission (AUC) mandate in developing continental strategies and related norms. The latter initiated several studies on harmonization of policies, legal and regulatory frameworks conducive for the development of regional and continental ICT networks and services.

In May 2008, the Ministers in charge of Communication and Information Technologies (CIT) adopted the so called "Cairo Declaration" during the Second Ordinary Session of the African Union Conference. The aim of the "2008 Cairo Declaration" was to establish harmonized policy, legal and regulatory frameworks at the regional and continental levels to create an enabling environment that will attract investment and foster the development of competitive African Telecommunication/ICT market and to increase access to digital services across the region.

After a decade, it is now time to (i) assess what has been tested within the AUC mandate (diagnostic), (ii) review different potential harmonization options, and (iii) decide on the way forward based on the lessons learned.

This continental harmonization workshop is taking place in the frame of the "Policy and Regulation Initiative for Digital Africa" (PRIDA) <sup>1</sup> Program.

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### ***Expected Outcome of the workshop***

The meeting will be a platform for the representatives of Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Regional Association of Regulators and AUC to discuss specific Africa concerns, make an analysis of current and past ICT policy, Legislative and Regulatory harmonization, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) initiatives in Africa and compare with other international initiatives.

Based on the lessons learned, discussions will take place during the workshop with each Member State, and Association of Regulators on different options regarding the most appropriate harmonization process with the aim to agree on an ad hoc Methodology strategy including a Monitoring & Evaluation as well as Impact Assessment component. This Methodology should be applicable to Africa context and reflect the constraint environments of RECs and AUC (limited human and financial resources) in order to guarantee a sustainable approach.

Subsequently, the participants will be invited to identify a limited number of key priorities and topic of common interests that reflect the political and economic agenda of the continent.

Finally, participants will agree on a two-year roadmap to apply this Methodology and the associated priorities.

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### ***Target Participants.***

The discussions will be of particular interest to Senior ICT Policy Makers, Regulators as well as representatives of Regional Economic Communities and Association of Regulators.

In order to support effective discussions, a Working Document on Harmonization, Monitoring and Evaluation and Impact Assessment will be shared before the workshop. It is currently under preparation.

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## *Location*

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The workshop will be held in The African Union Commission Headquarters on 2-6 September 2019

## *Contacts:*

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<sup>1</sup> This is a joint initiative of the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), that enables the African continent to reap the benefits of digitalization by addressing various dimensions of broadband demand and supply in Africa and building the capacities of AU Member States in the Internet Governance space. It is supported by the EU-funded Pan African Programme.