

24TH EACO CONGRESS

06TH - 09TH JULY 2021

**REPORT OF THE EACO CHAIRMAN ON PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES
OF EACO IN THE LAST TWO YEARS**

(2019-2021)

1.0 BACKGROUND

It is now two years, since the last EACO Congress which was held in Mwanza, Tanzania from 1st – 05th July 2019

I extend my gratitude and appreciation to EACO Members, Partners and stakeholders for their continued support and contribution to our organization which has expanded its programmes and networks in the last two years.

Additionally, I want to specifically thank and commend the Executive Committee (EXCOM), the EACO Secretariat and Working Groups (WGs) and Committees, which through their joint effort and commitment, have sustained and satisfactorily coordinated the various tasks and programmes of our organization in the last two years.

As it will be reflected later in this report, the organization has not only expanded its programmes and network, but has also made some visible contributions to the ICT sector in the region and beyond. In 2018, the Executive Committee of EACO approved a Five Years Strategic Plan for 2018-2023, which guided the Action Plans and programmes of the Secretariat, and in which all EACO members were

invited to contribute. A mid-term review of this Strategic Plan (2018-2023), was done in March 2021.

This report will briefly highlight some of the key activities and programmes in which the organization was engaged in during the last two years and some challenges which impacted on the achievement of the set objectives and strategic activities.

2.0 EACO' S PROGRAMMES AND KEY ACTIVITIES FOR 2019-2021.

2.1 Establishment of Strategic Relationship with the East African Community (EAC)

Since its establishment, EACO has built good relationship with the EAC Secretariat. In the year 2013, EACO was granted an observer status at the East African Community.

Furthermore, EACO has also signed an MoU with the EAC which underlines key areas for possible cooperation and collaboration, allowing it to participate in all EAC meetings and programmes.

Going forward, EACO has initiated the process of becoming a semi-autonomous institution of the EAC. This position will enable EACO accomplished works/assignments, to find their way to the Policy Makers for consideration and adoption for the EA region. I would like to report in this meeting that our request for EACO to be an Institution of EAC has progressed well and soon it will be considered by the EAC Council of Ministers for final decision. We appreciate that all EAC countries are in support of establishment of an EAC institution to coordinate communications issues; and propose that EACO be upgraded to an EAC institution. In this regard, if we succeed, there are number of changes which may be take place, including dissolving current form of EACO. I believe when this happens, all members will be informed.

2.2 EACO's ICT Capacity Building Programme.

a) Capacity Building for Members

The Secretariat developed a capacity building programme for its members.

- The e-waste Statistics Training took place on 21st to 25th October 2019 at Imperial Royale, Kampala, Uganda.

- However, two programmes that had been scheduled for 2020/21 financial year, were postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic challenges. They are as follows:
 - (i) Cyber security training scheduled to take place in Tanzania
 - (ii) Broadcasting training scheduled to take place in Burundi.

(b) For the Secretariat

The EACO Driver attended a training at Automobile Association of Kenya on Motor Transport Management Course from 11th to 22nd November 2019.

(c) SPIDER Capacity Building

In collaboration with Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Swedish Post & Telecommunications Authority (PTS) is implementing a capacity building programme for regulators in Africa (East Africa, South Africa and West Africa) to support ICT regulation, policy and practice. EACO collaborates with SPIDER in the programme by participating in the relevant training programs and playing the role of a coach to participants in the implementation of their selected change initiatives.

During the period 2019-2021, EACO provided support (coach) in the change initiatives as following:

i) Round 2019A (June 2019 – February 2020)

Kenya: Development of Frequency Spectrum Management Guidelines

Uganda: Development of Service Coverage Obligations

Burundi: Cost modelling and pricing regulation

ii) Round 2019B (September 2019 - 31st December 2020)

Rwanda: Consumer protection under the digital era

iii) Round 2020A (September 2020 – July 2021)

(iii) Frequency spectrum transfer guidelines by CA, KENYA;

(iv) Development of a framework for Valuation and Pricing of Spectrum Resources by UCC, UGANDA;

- (v) Regulatory framework for combating the importation, supply and use of counterfeit / substandard terminals by ARCT, BURUNDI;
- (vi) Strategy for Implementation of Smart City in Dodoma by TCRA, TANZANIA.

2.3 WRC Preparatory Process

EACO conducted a number of EACO WRC-19 preparatory meetings from 2016-2019. EACO members were ready and well prepared for the discussions and negotiations which took place in Sharm el-Sheikh in November, 2019. For the first time, EACO developed an EACO WRC-19 delegate's handbook. The document presented the agenda items and summary of the studies that were conducted. It also provided the EACO positions for the different agenda items.

EACO post WRC-19 workshop took place virtually on 30th June 2020.

Preparation for WRC-23 has already started. A work plan and leadership structure of EACO for WRC-23 was established including EACO nominees to the ATU working groups.

The EACO preparatory meetings for WRC-23 that have been held have been as follows:

- 12th November 2020 with 59 participants
- 30th March 2021 with 72 participants

2.4 Cross border coordination

Forced roaming has been identified as a problem affecting residents staying at border areas, due to signal spill over from neighbouring countries. In July, 2017 EACO Congress that convened in Kampala-Uganda, noted the continued existence of cross border interference and forced roaming amongst its member states.

It was noted that the two major services that required Cross Border Coordination were: Broadcasting and Mobile services.

EACO Working Group 05 (WG5), developed a Mechanism for Cross Border Frequency Coordination for Mobile Services in 2017. The Mechanism was a guide with parameters that Operators used to mitigate the signal spill over at the borders.

Planned activities for the next FY in handling cross border coordination are as follows:

- i. Schedule a Verification exercise at the border areas for the year 2021/2022 and a consolidated report will be provided by WG5. A request was made through letter dated 2nd June 2021 from EACO secretariat to NRAs for verification exercised to be scheduled.
- ii. WG5 is in the process of revising the 2017 Mechanism for Cross-border Frequency Coordination for Mobile Services. A draft document was present during WG5 meeting held on 31st March 2021, and it was agreed that the same is shared with operators within the EACO region for their comments and inputs.
- iii. In regard to FM Coordination of Cross Border Coordination, WG5 will work towards completion of the FM Agreement
- iv. WG6 is in the process of developing a concept paper for Scrambling codes at the border areas. Scrambling codes are unique identifiers used in 3G networks. Scrambling Codes are used to identify and distinguish cells from one another in 3G networks.

2.5 EACO Databank Project

Implementation of the EACO Databank was completed and signed off in 2020. Currently EACO is collecting data quarterly for the databank.

Data validation and generation of reports is ongoing with a Consultant, and is expected to be completed soon.

2.6 EACO CubeSat Project

The main goal for the EACO CubeSat project, is to plant a seed for innovation and investment in the Space sector in the EAC region. The project will demystify

satellites by demonstrating how some of the needs can be met using lean satellite technologies (CubeSat).

A project concept paper was developed that explains the technology of Cubesats and requirements for designing, assembling, testing and launching EACO Cubesat(s).

2.7 Development of Harmonized National Addressing System in East Africa

During the period under review, Working Group 4, on Postal Services Development and Regulation; continued to coordinate and follow up implementation of decisions of Postal regional and international organizations namely PAPU and UPU.

Following the study made by the UPU Consultant engaged in support of EACO in 2016, a number of countries in EAC have embarked on the process of implementing the recommendations of this report by establishing their National Addressing System and Postcodes.

The individual projects have reached different implementation stages. All projects face several challenges; but the most important problem is the inadequate funding. Certainly, for this to succeed, governmental interventions are required.

In order to increase awareness of the importance of addressing and postcodes system, EACO in collaboration with the Pan African Postal Union (PAPU) convened a workshop which was held on 18th November 2020. The main objective was to ensure that postal actors are aware of the need of developing and implementing a good addressing and post code system; with a specific objective of coming up with a “Harmonized Addressing and Post Code Systems in the East African Region”.

2.8 Regional E-waste Management Strategy.

The five (5) year, regional e-waste management strategy was developed in 2017. The regional strategy is at different levels of implementation. The following are the milestones under the two-year cycle;

a) E-waste Awareness activities

1st EACO Webinar on Sustainable e-waste management whose theme was “E-waste to Wealth” and 3rd International E-waste Day, were held to identify the opportunities for sustainable e-waste management in the region through evaluating the status of implementation of the regional strategy on e-waste management by EACO member states; dissecting and strengthening sustainable mechanisms for successful implementation of the regional strategy on e-waste management; and identifying and proposing strategies towards enhancing stakeholder collaboration and partnership for sustainable e-waste management in the region.

b) Funded Projects

i) ReduCE-waste Project

REDuce Waste Prevent project is being coordinated by UNU-UNITAR SCYCLE and is funded by GIZ. The project’s contract period is 1st February 2021 to 30th June 2022, with a budget of 22,413 Euros. The contract between EACO and WRF (subcontractor) has been signed. The kick-off webinar was held on 4th May 2021. Other partners in this project include NEMC and the Office of the Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania. This is a pilot project being implemented in Tanzania on guidelines of Trans-boundary movement of e-waste and later be replicated in other EACO countries. The project is currently in its first phase of implementation. EACO’s role includes the following; assisting in the analysis of transboundary movements and the development of national guidelines, the organization of an international workshop for local and international stakeholders and supporting the drafting of a roll-out plan for Tanzanian national implementation plan towards a broad replicability in the EACO region.

ii) EACO WEEE Data Harmonization Project

This project is being coordinated and funded by ITU, and also backed by UNITAR. The project’s contract period is 1st March 2021 to 31st December 2022, with a budget of 130,000 USD. The project between ITU and EACO on Data Harmonization of WEEE held an introductory webinar on the 27th April 2021. The overall aim of this project is to offer support and technical assistance to the relevant strategic actions of the Regional E-waste Management Strategy, notably to track progress and its achievement and to harmonize the collection of e-waste statistics in the six (6) EACO countries, eventually helping to sustain a central databank within the EACO secretariat.

2.9 EACO's collaboration and Partnerships with its Stakeholders.

During the two years under review, EACO continued to consolidate its relationship and collaboration with the following organizations:

- East African Community (EAC)
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
- Universal Postal Union (UPU)
- African Union Commission (AUC)
- Pan African Postal Union (PAPU)
- African Telecommunications Union (ATU)
- Internet Society
- Ericsson
- African Advanced Level Telecommunications Institute (AFRALTI)
- Swedish Programme for ICT in Developing Regions (SPIDER) with the University of Stockholm
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)
- Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA)
- SMART Africa
- Access Partnership
- Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
- Communications Regulators' Association of South Africa (CRASA)
- Southern Africa Postal Operators Association (SAPOA)
- West Africa Telecommunications Regulators Assembly (WATRA)
- JMAT Business Advisory Services

- HUAWEI

The scope of EACO's collaboration/ partnership with these organizations involved:

- (i) Capacity Building initiatives
- (ii) Provision of technical or financial support
- (iii) Sharing of Information
- (iv) Participation in each other's programmes
- (v) Organisation of Joint events/ workshops/ Seminars.

The collaboration and partnerships with the above organizations has not only contributed to the expansion of EACO's programmes but has enhanced its image and visibility at regional, continental and International level.

Specifically, during the period under review, EACO created new collaborations and partnerships with a number of organizations some of which resulted in the signing of MoUs to carry out collaborative projects and activities of mutual interests. These include: GSMA for capacity building and co-organising ICT events; SPIDER for capacity building programs, JMAT for the establishment of EACO Postal & Logistic Forum (EPLF), HUAWEI for human resource development in ICT.

2.10 Harmonization and coordination of the implementation of ICT Policy and Regulatory Frameworks in EAC

Through Working Groups, EACO has created multistakeholder fora for dialogue on a number of emerging ICT issues which has also facilitated collaboration among key sector players.

In this regard, the Secretariat in conjunction with the Working Groups and Committees, continued to contribute to ICT policy and regulatory frameworks development and harmonization process in the region by developing a number of policy guidelines and frameworks, which are at different stages. We had an opportunity of listening to their progress reports, during the Assemblies meetings.

3 EACO'S SECRETARIAT AND PERFORMANCE

3.1 EACO Secretariat

It is now nine years, since EACO Secretariat was established permanently in Kigali, Rwanda.

The Secretariat continued with its role of coordinating EACO's programmes and following up implementation of the decisions of the Executive Committees and Congress.

During the period under review, the organization continued with the process of building the institutional capacity of its Secretariat by putting in place and implementing the following operational policies, systems and procedures, namely:

- i) Human Resources Manual
- ii) Financial, Procurement Rules & Regulations
- iii) Rules of Procedure for EACO organs

The above policies contributed to the improved efficiency and effectiveness of EACO.

3.2 EACO's Audited Financial Statements for the financial years 2018/19 and 2019/20.

EACO's Annual Accounts for 2018/19 and 2019/20 were audited, and the Audited Financial Statements for 2018/19 and 2019/20 are submitted to Congress for consideration and adoption.

4 CHALLENGES

Although the organization has made some major strides and accomplishments in the last two years, this has not been without challenges. Some of those challenges include the following:

- a) Inadequate resources to adequately finance EACO's programmes and projects.

- b) COVID-19 pandemic which affected some planned activities due to restricted movement within the region and staff ordered by governments to work from home.
- c) Over dependence on membership contributions as a major source of revenue and a growing size of account receivables brought about by non-payment of annual memberships contributions by a majority of members.
- d) Low participation of telecom and broadcasting operators in the work of Working Groups.
- e) Lack of a legal framework for monitoring, implementation and enforcement of compliance of EACO decisions at national and at EAC level.
- f) Increasing e-waste volumes and inadequate environmentally sound e-waste management systems at national and regional level which is a threat to human health and the environment.
- g) Lack of commitment and participation of EACO members in working groups and committees' meetings.

5 CONCLUSION

In the last nine years, since the establishment of a permanent Secretariat in Rwanda, not only has EACO expanded its institutional capacity, but also, has managed to position itself regionally and internationally, as a key player and contributor to the development of the global ICT ecosystem.

Nevertheless, EACO has continued to establish a wider network, collaboration and partnership with its regional and international stakeholders which has attracted support for its programmes and projects.

Of course, there are a number of challenges; however, if we pull this rope together, everyone playing his role, for sure, we will overcome these challenges.

I sincerely thank the members of EACO especially the National ICT Regulators for their commitment and substantial support to EACO and its programmes.

Special thanks and recognition go to the Government of the Republic of Rwanda, and Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA), for the support to EACO

Secretariat, as host country. Lastly, I thank you for agreeing to host the 27th Assemblies and 24th EACO Congress.

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