MEDIA STATEMENT ON THE VALIDATION WORKSHOP FOR THE E-COMMERCE READINESS STUDY IN THE SADC SUB-REGION CONVENED AT THE MARITIM HOTEL, BALACLAVA, MAURITIUS

17th APRIL 2012

The Validation Workshop for the e-Commerce Readiness Study in the SADC Sub-Region was convened from the 16th to 17th April 2012 at the Maritim hotel, Balaclava, Mauritius. The Forum was officially opened by the Honourable Tassarajen Pillay Chedumbrum, Minister of Information and Communication Technology of Mauritius.

The Validation Workshop for the e-Commerce Readiness Study in the SADC Sub-Region Forum was attended by delegates from fourteen SADC Member States namely Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The validation workshop was also attended by representatives of Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and Communications Regulators' Association of Southern Africa (CRASA). There were approximately sixty delegates who participated in this validation workshop.

In May 2010 SADC created an ICT development strategy called the e-SADC Strategic Framework in order to develop a holistic approach to harnessing ICT for socio-economic development and regional integration. The e-SADC Strategic Framework was developed under the auspices of the Directorate of Infrastructure and Services and is part of the e-SADC initiative undertaken in the context of the SADC-UNECA Multi-year programme of collaboration between the two institutions. Specifically, formulation of the e-SADC Strategic Framework was undertaken as part of the implementation of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI). The e-SADC Strategic Framework addresses convergence challenges and harmonisation of ICT infrastructure, services and indicators and promotes ICT usage for regional economic integration, enhancement of connectivity and access to ICT services among and within the Member States.

The e-SADC Strategic Framework stipulates as one of its objectives the deployment of e-services, with e-commerce being one of them so as to empower SADC Member States to be part of the global marketplace 24/7. The e-Commerce Readiness Assessment in the SADC Sub-Region and the development of strategies for action will facilitate the deployment of e-commerce in the SADC sub-Region. The objective of this exercise, which was launched in collaboration with UNECA's Regional Integration and Trade Division (RITD) through the Africa Trade Policy Centre (ATPC), was to assess e-commerce readiness in the SADC region and develop a regional e-commerce strategic action plan. Six SADC Member States, namely Angola, Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Mauritius, and South Africa were earmarked for the readiness study.

The SADC ICT Ministers' meeting held in June 2011 in Gaborone, Botswana, endorsed the undertaking of the study and the ECA in consultation with SADC appointed Mr. Mustapha Mezghani as Consultant to undertake the project. The preliminary project meeting was convened at the SADC Secretariat in July 2011.

The e-Commerce Readiness Study Validation Workshop has been jointly organized by the Mauritius Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) and the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA).

After two days of comprehensive deliberations, the Meeting validated the draft SADC e-Commerce Readiness Assessment Report, Strategy and Plan of Action.

The validated draft SADC e-Commerce Strategy encompasses the following four main pillars:

- **Enabled e-Commerce Environment;**

- **A Capacity Development Programme for e-Commerce in Each SADC Member State;**

- **Strengthening e-Commerce Sub-Regional and National Infrastructure; and**

- **Institutionalized Framework to Implement, Evolve and Govern the Current Strategy at Regional Level.**

Mauritius, being one of the six SADC Member States on which the assessment was made, seized the opportunity to share their achievements, experience and know-how through very interesting and informative presentations on the following:

- **ICTA Public Key Infrastructure (PKI);**

- **Concept of e-Payment;**

- **Computer Emergency Response Team - Mauritius (CERT-MU); and**

- **e-Commerce Strategy for Mauritius Post Ltd.**

The Meeting expressed gratitude to the Government and People of Mauritius through the Ministry of ICT and the ICTA, for having generously hosted this important Validation Workshop for the e-Commerce Readiness Study in the SADC Sub-Region.

Balaclava, Mauritius, 17th April 2012.