

# Central African States adopt cyber-security cross-border laws

BRAZZAVILLE, Congo (Republic of the) - An exacting endeavour of the Central African Economic Community (ECCAS) member states - supported by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) - has yielded fruit, with the adoption by countries of the sub-region, of model laws on telecommunications, cyber security and the regulatory framework to govern cross-border interconnection.



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Such is the outcome of a session of the meeting of Ministers of Posts and Telecommunications of the Economic Community of Central African (ECCAS) member States, which has just taken place in Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of Congo.

The adoption is the outcome of a long process (initiated in 2011) and of a request by Ministers in charge of Telecommunications and ICTs of ECCAS member states in 2010, requesting the statutory Council of ECCAS Ministers to submit for approval to the ECCAS Conference of Heads of state and government four policy documents, including one on harmonisation of national policies and regulations and plans of action for development of ICTs in the Central Africa sub-region.

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The ECCAS Secretary General was tasked to initiate forthwith and in cooperation with ECA and ITU, the drafting of model laws and regulations pertaining to: (a) electronic transactions; (b) protection of personal data; and, (c) cyber security.

In a bid to provide technical assistance to the Secretariat General of ECCAS and CEMAC, the sub-regional Office of ECA for Central Africa, in collaboration with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), co-organised a workshop on harmonisation of the cyber-security legal framework for Central Africa in 2011 in Libreville, Gabon. This workshop culminated in draft model laws on the protection of personal data, electronic transactions and cybercrime control to be adopted by the statutory organs of both communities.

Subsequently, three sub-regional meetings on these preliminary draft laws were organised by the ECA in collaboration with ECCAS (2012, 2013 and 2014) to sufficiently mature the document for adoption by ECCAS Telecommunications/ICTs Ministers. Accordingly, it is in December 2016 that the Ministers of Posts and telecommunications of ECCAS member states adopted these laws and drafted a declaration dubbed 'The Brazzaville Declaration'.

This harmonised legal framework is an essential frame of reference propitious for the development of ICTs through a sound, transparent and robust regulation, but especially a tremendous catalyst for attracting investors and capital that would, *inter alia*, help the sub-region to successfully achieve digital transformation. It should also greatly contribute to bolster citizen's confidence in using ICTs and electronic communication services on the one hand and, on the other hand, foster the development of a digital economy or other online transactions while ensuring protection for personal data.

One of the recommendations of the declaration urges the ECA to support the ECCAS Secretariat General in: firstly, developing a roaming frame of reference in the Central Africa sub-region; and, secondly, in establishing mechanisms for the monitoring and evaluation of the level of adaptation of legislative and regulatory frameworks.

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