

The Africa Civil Society for the Information Society –

ACSIS



CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE (open)

The representatives of the African Civil Society, meeting in Geneva and Tunis, during the First and Second Phases of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), from 10 to 12 December 2003 and 16 to 18 November 2005;

Conscious of the importance of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on the global development of societies as well as the challenge that the full engagement in the Information Society represents for African countries;

Firmly convinced of the necessity to chart an African vision of the Information Society which will take from governments, the private sector and the global Civil Society into consideration;

Aware of the decisive role that can be played by the continental African Civil Society and that of the Diaspora in the mobilization of human, logistical and material resources for the promotion of health, education, culture, a knowledge economy, conflict resolution, fight against poverty, exclusion, and brain drain through the use of Information and Communication Technology;

Deeply preoccupied by the challenge of the Digital Divide between the North and the South, and determined to contribute in the transformation of this digital divide into Digital Opportunity;

Preoccupied by access of Africans, especially women, the youth and persons living with a handicap, to ICT, notably because of high costs of equipment and the difficulty in the access to credit closely linked to the ownership of property;

Considering the resolutions and important recommendations of international and regional conferences of the WSIS (notably those of Istanbul, and Bamako in 2002, of the Strategic Plan of the African Union on ICT and the principal documents of the two phases of the WSIS:

- The Geneva Declaration of Principles and Action Plan
- Te Tunis Engagement
- The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society
- The two Declarations of the global Civil Society (Geneva and Tunis);

Affirming their determination to implement these different documents which are strong and essential contributions to the establishment of a balanced, and equitable Information Society that will enable human development in solidarity;

Recognizing the cross-cutting nature of ICT and their its undeniable impact on all the components of the New Partnership on African Development (NEPAD), as well as the decisive contribution of ICT to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);

Strongly convinced that the Information Society, as we envision it, is that which will see to poverty reduction, eradication of pandemics like HIV/AIDS, reinforcement of the fight against illiteracy, promotion of education, culture, the quest for traditional knowledge, governance, recognition of respect in all circumstances, the sacred and inalienable nature of human life and the fundamental rights of the human being, the promotion of gender equality, the end of marginalization of rural areas, and the establishment of coherent policies of human development;

Adopt the following:

CHAPTER 1: Creation, Denomination

Article 1

Is created, an international association, of all adhering to the present constitution, and those that shall do so hereafter, under the following articles, and in accordance with the Ethiopian Civil Law.

The association shall be known and addressed as The Africa Civil Society for the Information Society (ACSIS) in English and *Société Civile Africaine pour la Société de l'Information (SCASI)* in French.

The official name of the organization is ACSIS.

CHAPTER II: Headquarters and Duration

Article 2

The headquarters of ACSIS is located in Addis Ababa, in Ethiopia.

On the decision of the cabinet and on approval by the General Assembly, the headquarters may be moved to another African city at any moment.

The duration of ACSIS is unlimited.

CHAPTER III: Objectives

Article 3

The aim of ACSIS is to:

- Sensitize the African population and decision makers on the importance of the challenges as well as the potentials of ICT for Africa's economic integration and the global development of the continent.
- Stimulate the implementation of national and sub-regional Action Plans on Information Society.
- Contribute to the promotion and visibility of African Civil Society initiatives through pilot projects and programs by the association's member organizations towards the consolidation of the African Information Society.
- Furnish institutional support to associations and organizations in Africa working in the ICT domain, and by this, reinforce their competences and their efficiency in the realization of their assigned objectives.
- Reinforce cooperation and coordination among the continent's Civil Society, the private sector and the governments at regional and international levels.

CHAPTER IV: Mission

Article 4

In pursuit of its objectives as outlined in article 3, ACSIS shall accomplish the following as its mission:

- a. Develop partnerships among actors in the government, private sector and Civil Society, enabling it to constitute a veritable force for action and proposals for the reinforcement of a dynamic, strong and inclusive Information Society.
- b. Create a database on African expertise and on important data concerning research and study centers belonging to governments and non-governmental entities operating in the ICT domain, as well as finance institutions, African and international, for eventual partnerships.
- c. Carry out research for the benefit of the public and decision makers in Africa, notably, in the identification of fundamental elements of the Information Society and in the proposal of mobilizing projects that will lead to national or sub-regional Action Plans for the Information Society.
- d. Furnish, if need be, institutional and technical support to African Civil Society associations and organizations with an aim of reinforcing their operational capacities on the field.
- e. Organize seminars and thematic workshops and training internships on ICT for African Civil Society associations and organizations working for human development in the continent.
- f. Build strategies and specific sensitization actions on ICT for women, major economic actors in the informal sector to reinforce their capacities in vital domains like trade and agriculture.

- g. Propose mobilizing pilot projects and programs that will encourage larger participation of women and the youth in the Information Society.
- h. Contribute to the establishment of “Digital quarters, villages, and towns” in liaison with comparative experiments in other places for better collaboration.
- i. Establish a follow-up cooperation among Civil Society actors, finance institutions, the private sector, and government entities for the mobilization of resources to be used for programs and projects that reinforce the African Information Society.
- j. Network national centers or excellence in health, education, environment and culture in all the sub-regions using ICT.
- k. Contribute to the creation of public access points and polyvalent community multimedia centers, open to all, to familiarize with ICT and its constant evolution.
- l. Engage individuals, local, national, and sub-regional institutions in the Information Society movement by exchanging follow-up information and a close collaboration with national decision makers, sub-regional development organizations, research and university institutions, resource persons, development agents, non-governmental organizations, private sector and Civil Society actors.

CHAPTER V: Membership (Articles 5 – 23 have been adopted)

Article 5

Membership is open to all apolitical, non-confessional African Civil Society entities, legally constituted, who adhere to the statutes of ACSIS.

Membership demands shall be addressed to the national Coordinator, who will transmit such to the President through the sub-regional Coordinator.

Membership status is decided by the Cabinet within 01 month.

Membership refusals shall be accompanied by explanations.

CHAPTER VI: Loss of membership

Article 6

Membership is lost in the case of:

- Death of individuals
- Dissolution for moral entities
- Written renunciation announced at least 03 months before end of year

- Removal by the sub-regional Coordination for lack of payment of dues or for any other grave offense tainting the image or the integrity of the association.

Article 7

Readmission may only be accorded by approval of the General Assembly.

CHAPTER VII: Organs

Article 8

The organs of ACSIS are:

1. The General Assembly
2. The Cabinet
3. The sub-regional Coordinations
4. The National Coordinations

In addition to these, ACSIS will have a permanent Executive Secretariat whose members shall be remunerated. The modalities shall be in the Bye-laws.

CHAPTER VIII: General Assembly

Article 9 – Ordinary General Assembly

The General Assembly is the supreme organ of the association.

The General Assembly is made up of all the members of the association.

Its mission shall be as follows:

- a. Adoption of the constitution, bye-laws and their amendments;
- b. Approval of the general policies of ACSIS
- c. Approval of the ACSIS Action Plan
- d. Examining and approving accounts, financial reports and budget
- e. Removal and readmission of members.

The General Assembly meets at least once every 02 years, not later than 03 months after the end of year; as well as any time when it is convened by the Cabinet, or on the demand of 2/3 of the members.

For all General Assembly meetings, invitations and the agenda shall be sent 02 months in advance.

The Agenda is drawn by the Cabinet.

The President presides over the General Assembly.

The Treasurer presents the financial management report which shall be approved by the General Assembly.

The General Assembly receives the report on Cabinet management.

It shall approve the accounts of the past year, vote the budget of the following year, deliberate on the items on the agenda, and if need be, renew the Cabinet.

Decisions by the General Assembly shall be by consensus or by simple majority vote. In the case of a tie, the vote of the President shall overrule.

Secret ballots may be called by a member.

General Assembly reports are taken by the Executive Secretary and registered, signed by the President.

Article 10: Extraordinary General Assembly

On the proposition of the cabinet or of at least 2/3 of its members, the extraordinary General Assembly may modify the constitution.

The constitution may only be modified by 2/3 of its present or represented members.

In either case, the proposed modifications shall be an item in the agenda of the next General Assembly, which shall be sent to all members at least 02 months in advance.

The Extraordinary General Assembly shall only hold when 2/3 of the members are present.

CHAPTER IX: The Cabinet

Article 11

The Cabinet is the organ responsible for guiding, defining and following-up of activities relevant to the general policies adopted by the General Assembly.

Article 12

The Cabinet is composed of:

- 01 President

- 01 Vice President
- 01 Treasurer
- 06 Sub-regional Coordinators

Article 13

Members of the Cabinet are elected by the General Assembly for a tenure of 04 years non renewable.

Voting is by secret ballot. Each member entity shall have one vote.

CHAPTER X: Attributions of Cabinet members

Article 14 – The President

The President is the legal representative of the association. S/He convenes the General Assembly.

S/He is responsible for the overall welfare of ACSIS.

Article 15 – The Vice President

S/He supports the President in her/his mission.

S/He shall replace the President in her/his functions in the case of absence.

S/He is invested with necessary prerogatives.

Article 16 – The Treasurer

S/He is responsible for the management of the financial resources of the association.

S/He keeps the treasury and regular accounts, receives membership fees.

CHAPTER XI: The Executive Secretariat

Article 17

The Executive Secretariat is the executive organ of the association. It shall implement ACSIS policies. It is established by the General Assembly and is composed of:

1. An Executive Secretary
2. A Secretary

In carrying out its missions, the Executive Secretary may be assisted by technical commissions created for such purposes.

The Executive Secretary ensures the administrative management of the association. S/He keeps correspondence on behalf of the association and assumes the following tasks:

- a. Management of ACSIS personnel and resources.
- b. Drafting reports for submission to the Cabinet.
- c. Implementation of ACSIS Action Plan

CHAPTER XII: Sub-regional Coordinations

Article 18

The Sub-regional Coordinations are made up of the total National Coordinations. Sub-regional Coordinations are classified as follows:

Northern Africa
Eastern Africa
Western Africa
Central Africa
Southern Africa
African Diaspora

Article 19

Sub-regional Coordinations shall:

- a. Ensure coordination between the Executive Secretariat and National Coordinations.
- b. Propose and implement sub-regional plans and programs in accordance with the ACSIS general policies.
- c. Take active part in national programs and ensure their correct implementation.
- d. Draft and present annual reports to the Cabinet, with copies to the Executive Secretariat and National Coordinations.

Sub-regional Coordinations meet at least once a year.

Article 20

Sub-regional Coordinations are led by sub-regional Coordinators who are elected by the respective National Coordinators during the General Assembly for a tenure of 04 years non renewable.

The function of a Sub-regional Coordinator shall not be cumulated with that of any other in ACSIS.

CHAPTER XIII: National Coordinations

Article 21

National Coordinations represent ACSIS in African countries as well as in the Diaspora.

Article 22

National Coordinations shall:

- a. implement ACSIS global policies at the national level
- b. propose and implement national programs and plans in conformity with ACSIS objectives
- c. Draft and present annual activity reports to the sub-regional Coordination

Article 23

National Coordinations are led by National Coordinators who are elected by the representatives of member associations during its General Assembly for 03 years renewable.

National Coordinations meet at least once a year.

The function of a National Coordinator shall not be cumulated with that of any other in ACSIS

CHAPTER XIV: Financial resources of ACSIS (Open)

Article 24

The financial resources of ACSIS include:

- Membership fees
- Monies from ACSIS services and activities (studies, consultations, organization of conferences, exhibitions, sale of publication)
- Subventions, gifts and bequests
- All other non-illegal resources

Article 25

Expenses shall include:

- Investment
- Functioning
- Activities

Article 26

The President of ACSIS orders expenses. Management of finances shall adhere to the following conditions:

- a. ACSIS funds are lodged in an independent account bearing the name of ACSIS in any financial institution determined by the Cabinet
- b. Three signatories shall make the engagement official on the occasion of the account opening: the President, Treasurer and Executive Secretary.
- c. Withdrawals are made on the basis of a double signature, which includes that of the President.
- d. All expenses of the association shall be approved by the Cabinet
- e. ACSIS must keep accounts
- f. ACSIS accounts shall be verified by an external auditor in the 04 months that follow the end of the financial year
- g. The financial year shall be from 1st of January to the 31st of December of the same year.

CHAPTER XV: Property rights

Article 27

AC SIS shall have the rights to contract, acquire, and dispose of property in accordance with the realization of its objectives.

CHAPTER XVI: Languages

Article 28

The working languages of ACSIS are English and French, and eventually, the official language of a hosting country during a mission outside African zones where neither English nor French is spoken.

CHAPTER XVII : Amendements

Article 29

This present constitution can only be amended on the approved decision of two-thirds 2/3 of the voting members present during a General Assembly.

Article 30

The President shall inform the competent authorities of any changes in ACSIS administration or decision-making instances within 02 months.

CHAPTER XVIII: Dissolution of the Association

Article 31

The dissolution of the Association shall be done under the same conditions as those of the amendments.

Article 32

In the case of an eventual dissolution, the General Assembly shall name the liquidators.

CHAPTER XIX: Bye-laws

Article 33

Bye-laws adopted by the General Assembly shall determine the modalities of the application of the present constitution

CHAPTER XX : Final dispositions

Article 34

In the case of any litigation, the tribunals of the host country shall be competent.

The present constitution shall apply only after approval by the General Assembly.