Knowledge Management System and African Development In the 21st Century

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a) Background

Within the framework of the Institutional Capacity Building Programme, the AUC is implementing a Knowledge Management System. It is known that such a system, if implemented correctly with cultural buy-in from users and management, can improve the productivity and efficiency of the Commission and guided them to better services the Development of African Countries.

The activities carried out by KM African Union are of strategic importance to our Continent, as evidenced by the theme: "**Lessons and challenges in implementing knowledge solutions in Africa**". Soon after it was launched, the African Union began to put in place a strategic plan, the content of which is the fruit of a series of brain storming covering topical issues for Africa.

Almost all of the employees of the AUC are Knowledge workers. To be more productive, the AUC staff need to be able to quickly find key information across the Commission no matter who created it or where it resides. It is reported that "Knowledge workers can spend up to 25% of their work time just looking for information" (Delphi Group); moreover, "40% of employees report that they cannot find the information they need to do their jobs. Currently, the best way to reduce time wastage and paper use is to implement a system that helps employees to find information quickly and easily.

b) Goal

Build a collaboration & knowledge sharing tool with a view to transforming the AUC to an integrated, intelligent and knowledge networking organization.

c) Objectives

1. Capture the knowledge correctly and empower the staff to add new content;

2. Generate a cultural change by bringing the staff to move towards a system where they share their expertise;
3. Help the AUC to measure its activity and then enable the executive management to set appropriate expectations;
4. Re-use knowledge with a view to allowing the existence of a knowledge spiral and to improving the work processes.

d) Scope

The Knowledge Management System being operational and having been launched, a plan to use the system as main source of information and knowledge.

e) Methodology

The Knowledge Management System was built on bases of open source software. An essential step in the ownership process will be the training all the regional offices and organs staff to be in the same level of the information and knowledge. As we are in the 21st century, the AUC has to assist the African countries to develop their economies.

f) Why the Knowledge management is a must for Implementing the AUC Strategic Plan:

The AUC strategic plan is finalized at a time of multiple shocks to the global economy. The current global economic crisis is the most serious since the Second World War, with Africa shouldering a disproportionate burden of the adverse effects of the crisis.

The financial crisis and the ensuing credit crunch, combined with rising inflation worldwide and the consequent slowdown in demand in many advanced economies have engendered significant uncertainty about the short-term outlook for the world economy. While Africa is not quite as strongly exposed to the risks of the global economic crisis, as is Asia, there will, however, be significant indirect effects if Official Development Assistance (ODA) is curtailed and exports, foreign direct investment and Diaspora remittances are reduced. Furthermore, the situation will worsen if commodity prices remain volatile and other economies adopt inward looking and protectionist policies. There is therefore need to develop and stabilize the financial markets in Africa

With the world economy faltering, and global institutions under immense stress and change the importance of regional blocs or groupings is strikingly clear. Africa has made progress towards economic blocs that enlarge national markets and develop

harmonized regulatory frameworks and policies conducive to investment and export development. However, progress towards regional integration has been hampered by poor transport and communication (e.g. air, road and rail) interconnectivity. Poor transport infrastructure has been a major impediment to intra-African trade which, in 2007, accounted for only 10 per cent of Africa's overall trade. Africa's share of global trade declined from 6 per cent in 1980 to less than 3 per cent in 2008. This is due to the uncompetitive nature of African products, Africa's reliance on commodity export with low value addition and protectionist practices such as technical and non-technical barriers to trade within trading partner markets. Technological innovation and the dismantling of technical and non- technical trade barriers have contributed to accelerated growth in global trade. Developing countries have generally benefited from this. But the benefits of globalization have been unequally shared, with rich nations capturing most of the benefits; and many of the poorest States, especially in Africa, not keeping pace. Improved and more intensive agricultural methods, greater industrialization and growing energy needs, urbanization and rising incomes in emerging economies already constitute sources of pressure on water resources. Globally, agriculture accounts for 69 per cent of all renewable water consumption; industry for 23 per cent; and domestic use, 8 per cent. The push to improve agricultural productivity in a number of countries will drive water consumption even higher. In this regard, the AUC has taken the lead to implement the CAADP (Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme) to eliminate hunger and reduce poverty through agriculture, while African governments have agreed to increase public investment in agriculture by a minimum of 10 per cent of their national budgets and raise agricultural productivity by at least 6 per cent.

Africa is endowed with huge renewable and non-renewable energy resources that are largely under-utilized. These resources are unevenly distributed. Yet, there is minimal interstate energy trade which would have created economies of scale to attract investment. Geothermal resources are available in abundance in Africa; and yet, the Continent exploits less than 1 per cent of its estimated geothermal potential. Furthermore, the Continent receives abundant solar radiation and has coal and wind energy resources. These energy resources could be harnessed to meet the Continent's energy needs. Lack of coordination and linkage in the New and Renewable Sources of Energy programmes; pricing distortions; inadequate dissemination of good practices and

strategies; lack of skilled manpower; poor baseline information and poor maintenance service and infrastructure are, among others, the challenges that need to be addressed. Cleaner energy alternatives to oil and coal may, in fact, drive us towards more water intensive energy paths.

VISION OF THE AFRICAN UNION

The vision of the African Union is that of: "**An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena**."

This vision of a new, forward- looking, dynamic and integrated Africa will be fully realized through relentless struggle on several fronts and as a long-term endeavour. The African Union has shifted focus from supporting liberation movements in the erstwhile African territories under colonialism and apartheid, as envisaged by the OAU since 1963 and the Constitutive Act, to an organization spear-heading Africa's development and integration.

MISSION AND VALUES OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

The mission of the Commission is become **"An efficient and value-adding institution driving the African integration and development process in close collaboration with African Union Member States, the Regional Economic Communities and African citizens".**

The values to guide and govern the functioning and operations of the Commission are:
- Respect for diversity and team work;
- Think Africa above all;
- Transparency and accountability;
- Integrity and impartiality;
- Efficiency and professionalism; and
- Information and knowledge sharing.

The Strategic Plan of the African Union revolves around 4 areas, the Strategic Pillars that have been drawn from the Commission's mandate, Mission, stakeholder

expectations, assessment of the external and internal environment and SWOT analysis. Four broad intervention areas or strategic pillars are identified:

       I. Peace and Security;

       II. Integration, Development and   Cooperation;

       III. Shared Values; and,

       IV. Institution and Capacity Building.

The pillars are strategic issues around which the core business of the Commission will be organized, and resources applied for the realization of expected results.   The Commission will subsequently develop and roll out cross-sectoral programmes for each pillar to ensure a holistic and integrated approach. In so doing and in order to enhance synergies and complementarity within the Commission, each department or directorate will be required to clearly identify its contribution to the implementation of each pillar and remain collectively accountable to the delivery of the Expected Results. This approach represents a paradigm shift in that with this Strategic Plan, the Commission is emphasizing a programme and results based orientation, as opposed to an activity approach. Through 18 strategic objectives, the Commission will implement programmes under each pillar as follows:

a) Programme for Peace and Security;

b) Programme for Development;

c) Programme for Integration;

d) Programme for Co-operation;

e) Programme for Shared Values; and

f) Programme for Institution and Capacity Building.

The 18 strategic orientations are the supporting the implementation of the AUC strategic plan which it is faced with many challenges in the all areas mentioned above. The Knowledge management system will assist and support the AUC Strategic Plan to face the challenges by feeding the staff with the information and knowledge.

Moreover, the Knowledge Management system will play a vital role to modernize the budgetary methods, the search for alternative sources of financing, coordination with a Pan-African institutions and the International Partners of the African Union constitute

the essential elements for the realization of this objective. These principles underpin the launching of the following 2 flagship projects: Implementation of an Integrated Management Information System (**IMIS**). This two component system (one financial, the other administrative) will not only modernize the budgetary methods, but also enhance the feeling of transparency among the staff. Indeed, each staff member can access all the information concerning him/her personally.   Development of a computer tool to monitor and evaluate projects and draft reports at the level of the various Departments and Directorates, **AMERT**, standing for "Africa Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Tool". AMERT will also serve as a benchmark of transparency for the Partners which can access it and monitor the implementation of projects to which they have contributed. Additionally, AMERT has a component devoted to the monitoring of the major indicators of the Millennium Development Goals for African countries.   Coming back to the Strategic Plan as a whole, its implementation requires coordination which has been assigned to the Directorate for Strategic Planning Policy, Monitoring, Evaluation and Resource Mobilization.   This Directorate has 4 Divisions, namely: a) Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Division; b) Resource Mobilization Division; c) Policy Analysis and Research Division; and d) Knowledge Management Division. In addition to inputs coming from various Departments, the Directorate prepares its own projects, plans the budget, mobilizes resources and ensures monitoring and evaluation.

In the process of the implementation of the strategic plan, it was noted that the flow of information between the Departments is the key to its success. This leads us to the creation of a Knowledge Management Portal, the virtual place for collaboration and knowledge sharing, as well as an access to IMS and AMERT referred to earlier. This Portal which is already accessible to the staff of the African Union became accessible to our African and International Partners.

J. The Knowledge Management as tool for Economic Development

The African Union will, as it were, be a knowledge-based organization at the service of the development of the African Continent. The motto "knowledge" is launched. Exchange of information promotes the expansion of information. The more we share knowledge, the more we are in possession of knowledge. Information and knowledge are two concepts with nuances which are sometimes hardly perceptible. The

raison d'être of your KM AU African Network is knowledge sharing and dynamic best-practice in Africa. In your efforts to attain your objectives, you create immaterial wealth which has two aspects, namely knowledge and innovation. As a matter of fact, it is this knowledge and this faculty of innovation which, in the main, constitute what is called knowledge-based economy. Innovation is necessary to strengthen knowledge. Generation and use of knowledge are therefore key factors of progress and development. The new predominance of information and knowledge-based economy is a giant step by mankind, a new era in technological progress. As a matter of fact, economics, as a discipline geared towards the creation of wealth, is based, first and foremost, on agrarian property and manpower, and also on capital and energy. Today, information and knowledge are the major pillars for wealth creation. At this juncture, we shall talk of immaterial assets.

In fact, **knowledge** is nothing other than human capital. The individual is the one who possess knowledge. Without him there is no knowledge. To acquire knowledge, preserve it and improve on it, there is need to educate the youth; there is need for continuous training and good health at the work place. The African Union has taken this on board in its Strategic Plan which places special emphasis on continuous training of the staff and modernization of its clinic.

It is necessary to keep in mind current traditional knowledge which remains an integral part of the **knowledge-based economy**. What is striking is the precedence of this form of economy of knowledge recognized by African traditional societies in relation to the new notion that appeared through the various ages (primary, secondary and tertiary) which we mentioned earlier. Allow me to conclude with a quotation from Wired magazine:

> **"When we talk about the new economy, we're talking about a world in which people work with their brains instead of their hands. A world in which communications technology creates global competition A world in which innovation is more important than mass production. A world in which investment buys new concepts or the means to create them, rather than**

new machines. A world in which rapid change is a constant. A world so different its emergence can only be described as a revolution."

This quotation is a challenge which, if it is to be addressed, requires the construction of an ICT infrastructure in African countries so as to bridge the digital gap. African union have many challenges related Peace and Security; Development; Integration; Co-operation; Shared Values; and Institution and Capacity Building. Therefore the knowledge management system will play a great roles in that context.

The practice of knowledge management can be useful during tough economic times and in times of rapid growth. When an organization downsizes, critical knowledge and intellectual capital are lost. When business picks up it often picks up quickly. You can't hire and train fast enough to maintain a satisfactory level of performance using traditional methods. Even if you could, at some point it becomes cost-prohibitive to keep hiring. You can't hire your way out of growth. Instead, you need a more efficient way to deal with growth. Knowledge Management and a system for capturing and reusing knowledge can help businesses deal with the economic fluctuations.

k.   Principals of Knowledge Management comply with African countries to Achieve Economy:

Knowledge Management is an evolving discipline that can be affected by new technologies and best practices, but there are some things that we do know for sure. There is a systematic approach to successfully implementing knowledge management and if you analyse what you are trying to accomplish, map out a strategy, Gartner,inc outlined 10 key principles for Knowledge management, from which I selected 6 corresponding to the challenges faced by the AUC organization. It will serve as a primer to help the AUC to understand what it takes to have a successful Knowledge Management initiative.

Principle 1:

Knowledge Management is a discipline

A lot of people think knowledge management is a technology or software solution but it is much more than that; knowledge management is a discipline. Obviously, you have to

have a good piece of software or a good system to capture knowledge – but that's not the whole equation. Underestimating what it takes just to capture the knowledge correctly is a big risk, as is underestimating the integration task into your already complex environment.

There are some providers of pre-packaged knowledge out there, but my experience is that while they can be useful to the help desk they are not relevant to customer service centres which have business-specific content needs. In either case, you must ensure you have the adequate resources to create and maintain the content you promise. Creating content is not a one-time project.   Also, over time the content must be updated and supplemented as new products or services are supported. Empowering agents to add new content as resolutions are discovered is key to maintaining a robust system.

Principle 2:

Cultural change isn't automatic

Buy-in is needed at all levels, and this may require cultural change. The people that are going to use the tools have to be part of the design unless you plan on strong-arming them (and that doesn't work very well). Don't make this management decision in a vacuum. Include some people from the various groups that would directly or indirectly use the system. Sometimes there is a fear that knowledge management will be used to replace people. If your staff thinks that is what you are trying to do, then you really need to address that head-on. If that is not your intention, you should convince your team that current head count reduction is not the goal. Therefore, you need to look for and plan the motivation for each party. After all, you are asking people to shift from a system where being a tower of knowledge is rewarded to a system where they share their expertise with everybody on the team. Failing to see how knowledge management is going to fit into the rest of the organization is a mistake. You must invest the time and energy to understand the culture, identify motivations and ensure change happens where needed.

Principle 3:

Create a change management plan

The change management plan specifies how you will gain acceptance of knowledge management within the organization. Let's say you are a call centre manager and you

measure your employees' performance by call handle time and number of cases closed. Now you are going to be asking them to use a knowledge base on every call or email interaction – thus asking them to change the way they perform their job on a daily basis.

Also, if you don't make changes to their performance reviews and compensation, there may be friction because you're asking them to do one thing but you are judging them by another set of rules. As part of the overall change management plan you need to update job descriptions, feedback sessions and performance reviews to reflect the new workflow. Neglecting to make these changes may foster acceptance issues with your team members.

Principle 4:

Knowledge is a Center of Development

The advice that if you pick one area that needs improvement or has limited resources, and then build a robust knowledge base for that subject matter. Use that experience to learn about implementing knowledge in the organization; do one call centre or one product group and learn from there. It is much better to be comprehensive for a narrow topic than fail to get enough depth.

Today's systems should enable agents to contribute new knowledge during their natural workflow. This is critical to ensure that solutions that are not currently in the system can be quickly added once the resolution has been determined. It's also important to remember that regular and timely maintenance of the knowledge base is key to success. You should also consider appointing resources to maintain the knowledge. Be sure to build in a mechanism that identifies gaps in content (information sought but not found), and a process for filling those gaps. If people repeatedly fail to find what they are looking for they will stop using the system.

Principle 5:

Integrate KM into Existing Systems

Typically, organizations that are implementing knowledge management already have an established data centre of the excellency, so they are not only building a knowledge base – they must also integrate it into their existing environment – their call tracking system, email, remote diagnostics and other support systems.

When selecting a KM system, consider systems that have open architectures and proven integrations into existing call centre and help desk tools to ensure a successful implementation. Also, processes will be affected, requiring change to reporting and measurement systems as well. Integrate reporting capabilities where possible to best understand how the combined systems are affecting the effectiveness of your support operations.

Principle 6:

Educate your self-service users

You've created your KM plan, determined the critical knowledge to include, initiated a plan to garner cultural acceptance, trained your agents and pinpointed key sources of knowledge – finally you need to educate your self-service users on how to find and access support information online to ensure a satisfying experience.   There are many ways to "push" your self-service capabilities out to your end-user audience. Traditional marketing techniques should be employed to promote this valuable service, such as email, online newsletters or direct mail. Encourage users to visit your online support site by making it easy to find and access the knowledge base. Be sure to include the site URL and directions for obtaining a login, if needed, in your marketing communications.

Another method is to encourage your agents to end support calls by informing the user of the support site. "Thanks for calling today, I'm glad that I could help you solve your problem. By the way, we now have a Web self-service site if you'd like to search the knowledge base. You can find it at www.ABCSupport.com and you can obtain a login by clicking the request login button on that page."   Finally, make sure your Internet or intranet site includes an easy-to-find link to your Web selfservice site. A twist on the old saying, "If they can't find it, they won't come." So make it easy to find, easy to access and easy to use.

AUC Knowledge Management System Presentation.

During the time available we can have a tour in the AUC KMS.