

Dot Africa campaign to brand continent

By [Carole Kimutai](#)

10 Sep 2010

DotConnectAfrica announced the launch of the 'Yes to a .africa' East Africa campaign during the 2010 AITEC East Africa ICT Summit held from 7-8 September 2010 in Nairobi, Kenya. The initiative is meant to give Africa a regional identity and global presence. Sophia Bekele, executive director, DotConnectAfrica made the announcement during the summit.



The initiative is supposed to enable the continent to take its rightful place in the global generic Top Level Domain (gTLD) space alongside .eu and .asia.

Achieving an African Information Society

The .africa TDL is a strategic internet-based initiative that is central to the achievement of an African Information Society (AIS), based on regional cooperation and integration. The .africa domain vision is to promote a policy of common vision for the use, development, and governance of the internet branding of Africa and commerce to enable African countries benefit from a unified platform.

"What we identify as Africa will be what we define as Africa on the internet," said Bekele.

There are presently 21 gTLDs in the root zone that include: .com .edu .gov .int .mil .net .org. biz .info .jobs etc.

gTLDs focus on vertical groups

"Internet users in the pan-Africa and the African region only have the option of utilising a gTLD whose registrants are dominated by American and European individuals and businesses, or country-code TLDs (ccTLDs) that are intended for local use," said Bekele.

Current gTLDs also tend to focus on a vertical group (e.g. commercial entities, network providers, organisations etc.) within the global internet. Africa will embrace a horizontal perspective with a clear brand to reach and enrich the broad global community.

Benefits of the dot Africa domain will include:

- Facilitating cross-border knowledge sharing and research partnerships with key knowledge and users;
- A horizontal perspective with a clear brand to reach and enrich the broad global community;
- users will be able to express membership in the larger Pan African and African community; and
- Reduction of cost of communication and increase personal communication.

Investing at home

"We have a regional identifier that we can dress up with an Africa dress, market our goods and services and instead of taking the money out of the continent we can invest it 'home'," said Bekele.

The initiative will also see the elevation of ccTLDs to a continental and global identity inherent in the Africa name by cross-marketing of domain names into .za.africa; .co.ke.africa; .et.africa; ug.africa ; .ng.africa; .EAC, .COMESA etc.

The initiative has been shared with regional key African organs, and governments, received endorsements by the African Union, Economic Commission for Africa and 20% of African governments. The campaign has been to eight African countries since February 2010.

Herculean task

Achieving the .africa project will be a herculean task.

"We are faced by many [political challenges] because it is a continental project and we dealing with governments, adoption from existing gTlds, branding, cost issues, access to internet, lack of good infrastructure, capacity building/training," said Bekele.

Africa accounts for 14.9% of the world population. The world has 1.8 billion internet users out of which 86.2 million are from Africa.

Already, there are African groupings that have resisted the initiatives applications and there are perceptions that the initiative is US-based, is not an ICANN establishment, and belongs to an individual.

For more info on the 2010 AITEC East Africa ICT Summit, go to www.aitecafrica.com.

ABOUT CAROLE KIMUTAI

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