

**IST Africa Conference  
Windhoek, Namibia, 7-9 May 2008  
Report**

This document reports on some of the discussions held during the conference and in more detail on the Building a Research Network Infrastructure Workshop held on 8 May 2008.

The EU-Africa IST Conference was held in Windhoek, Namibia, 7-9 May 2008. This was the third EU-Africa IST event, following events in South Africa in 2006 and Mozambique in 2007. The Namibian event was well attended. The majority of attendees came from Namibia and its neighbouring South African countries. A good number of delegates from Europe, interestingly with a majority coming from Norway and Sweden, also attended.

DG InfSo was represented by their Deputy Director, Antti Peltömaki, as well as Carmen Mena and Thierry Devars (int. relations). DG Research was represented by their Director General, Jose Manuel Silva. DG Development was not represented.

The African Union Commission (AUC) was represented by the Director of HRST (Human Resources and Science and Technology), Hakim Elwaer (Lybia).

Both Peltömaki and Silva mentioned during the opening ceremony the underlying need for network infrastructure to support IST projects and named GÉANT as a model for regional R&E networks.

The conference struggled to provide network connectivity and there were increasing power failures during the second and third day.

**Meeting UbuntuNet – DG InfSo**

As new Deputy Director of DG InfSo, Antti Peltömaki, suggested a half hour face to face meeting with representatives of the UbuntuNet Alliance. UbuntuNet was represented by their Acting CEO, Dr Francis Tsubira and member NRENs from Malawi, Zambia, Uganda, Lesotho, Namibia, Tanzania and Cameroon. In addition the meeting was attended by Boubakar Barry from the AAU, Björn Pehrson from KTH and Cathrin Stöver, DANTE.

The UbuntuNet Alliance used the opportunity to introduce their organisation and discuss their achievements to date. Specific focus was given to the existing connection to GÉANT2 via the UbuntuNet router in the GÉANT PoP in London. The UbuntuNet Alliance expressed their commitment to work towards an African R&E network with or without external support, but underscored the fact that external support would make the job that much easier.

The AAU again underlined the full support the AAU gives to UbuntuNet and that AAU and UbuntuNet see each other as strategic partners in the creation of a regional NREN in Africa.

Peltömaki stated that the EC had received a good response to the request for Eols for the Africa feasibility study and that the EC and AUC were in discussion on how best to handle funding and management of the AfricaConnect project.

**WS: Building a Research Network Infrastructure**  
**8 May 2008**  
**Final Agenda**

*African Co-chairs: Boubakar Barry, Director, AAU NREN unit; Tusu Tusubira, Interim CEO, UbuntuNet Alliance*

*European Co-chairs: Bjorn Pehrson, professor, KTH, Cathrin Stöver, Int. Relations Manager, DANTE*

**Block I: 9:00 to 10:30 Policy and Infrastructure (90min)**

**Introduction**

*Chair: Björn Pehrson*

**Welcome, Boubakar Barry (5 min)**

- EC, **Thierry Devars** (15 min)
- GEANT2 and European Global research networking activities, **Cathrin Stöver** (10min presentation +5min discussion)
- UbuntuNet Alliance
  - Origins, **Margaret Ngwira**, 5 min
  - Progress and plans, including updates from the region, **F.F Tusubira** (10 min)
  - Discussion (5 min)
- AUC, **Hakim Elwaer**, HRST (15min)
- Questions and Discussion (20min)

**Block II: 11:00 – 12:30 State of the Art of Research Networking in Africa (90min)**

*Chair: Boubakar Barry*

**Infrastructure (35 min):**

- Brief on the status of the emerging African optical fibre infrastructure; prospects for growth; and policy and regulatory challenges therein; strategy advice about how NRENs and RRENs can exploit the opportunities, **F.F Tusubira** (15min presentation and 5 min discussion)
- AAU NREN Unit, **Boubakar Barry**, including updates from the region, (15min +5min discussion)
- Research Networking in Western Africa, **Emmanuel Tonye**, West Africa Task Force, (15 min + 5min discussion)
- Discussion – 30 minutes (can include supplementary input from NREN representatives)

**Block III: 14:00 to 15:30 : Applications (90min)**

*Chair: Cathrin Stöver*

- Digital libraries, **Margaret Ngwira**, Kamuzu College of Nursing University of Malawi (15+10 min discussion)
- E-learning Applications in X-WiN, **Gerti Foest**, DFN (15+10 min discussion)
- Dissemination of evidence-based drug information, **Elisabeth Törnqvist**, Karolinska Institute (15 +5 min discussion)
- Experiences from using open source networking components in production networks, **Bjorn Pehrson**, KTH (15 +5 min discussion)

**Block IV: 16:00 to 17:30 Round table (90min)**

*Chair: F.F Tusubira*

Applications intros

- Wireless links, **Marco Zennaro**, ICTP (15 min)
- NRENs in construction - successes and plans, MAREN, RENU, TERNET, ZAMREN, **Anthony Muyepa**, **Ali Ndiwalana**, **John Kondoro**, **Jameson Mbale** (5 min each)

Round Table discussion (55 min)

## List of Participants

Name	Organisation	Email	Country
Jane Bam Hutchinson	Museum of London Group	<a href="mailto:jbam-hutchinson@museumoflondon.org.uk">jbam-hutchinson@museumoflondon.org.uk</a>	United Kingdom
Emmanuel Tonye	Ocole Nationale Superiore Polytechnique	<a href="mailto:tonye@hotmail.com">tonye@hotmail.com</a>	Cameroon
John W.A. Kondoro	Dar es Salaam Institute of Technology	<a href="mailto:principal@dit.ac.tz">principal@dit.ac.tz</a>	Tanzania
Boubakar Barry	Association of African Universities	<a href="mailto:barry@aau.org">barry@aau.org</a>	Ghana
Marco Zennaro	ICTP	<a href="mailto:mzennaro@ictp.it">mzennaro@ictp.it</a>	Italy
Anthony Muyepa	University of Malawi/MAREN	<a href="mailto:muyepaa@medcol.mw">muyepaa@medcol.mw</a>	Malawi
David Cook	Polytechnic of Namibia	<a href="mailto:dcook@polytechnic.edu.na">dcook@polytechnic.edu.na</a>	Namibia
Gerti Foest	DFN-Verein	<a href="mailto:foest@dfn.de">foest@dfn.de</a>	Germany
Alem Mebrahtu	Mekelle University/EGY-Africa	<a href="mailto:elemmeb@yahoo.com">elemmeb@yahoo.com</a>	Ethiopia
Roseline Fauresse		<a href="mailto:roseline.fauresse@orionis.com">roseline.fauresse@orionis.com</a>	France
Francois Stepman	Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa	<a href="mailto:fstepman@fara-africa.org">fstepman@fara-africa.org</a>	Ghana
Magoa Berhe	SPIDER	<a href="mailto:magda@spidercenter.org">magda@spidercenter.org</a>	
Andrew Cherry	ACU	<a href="mailto:a.cherry@acu.ac.uk">a.cherry@acu.ac.uk</a>	United Kingdom
Nadia Meyer	International Bureau of BMBF at DLR	<a href="mailto:nadia.meyer@dlr.de">nadia.meyer@dlr.de</a>	Germany
Nangula Hamutenya	Office of the Prime Minister, Namibia	<a href="mailto:nangulah@opm.gov.na">nangulah@opm.gov.na</a>	Namibia
Shamila Nair-Bedouelle	UNESCO	<a href="mailto:s.nair-bedouelle@unesco.org">s.nair-bedouelle@unesco.org</a>	France
Turbo Vala	Deptment of Economic Affairs, SA	<a href="mailto:chala@perm.ncapc.gov.za">chala@perm.ncapc.gov.za</a>	South Africa
Bjorn Pehrson	KTH	<a href="mailto:bpehrson@kth.se">bpehrson@kth.se</a>	Sweden
Benson Naidi	Office of the Polokwane, S.A.	<a href="mailto:benson@tsepo.com">benson@tsepo.com</a>	South Africa
Guy Weets		<a href="mailto:guy.weets@skynet.be">guy.weets@skynet.be</a>	Belgium
Hakim Elwaer	AUC - HRST		Ethiopia
Thierry Devars	EC-INFISO		Belgium
Carmen Mena-Abela	EC-INFISO/GEANT	<a href="mailto:carmen.mena-abela@ec.europa.eu">carmen.mena-abela@ec.europa.eu</a>	Belgium
F.F. Tsubira	UbuntuNet Alliance	<a href="mailto:fftusu@gmail.com">fftusu@gmail.com</a>	Uganda
Cathrin Stover	DANTE	<a href="mailto:cathrin@dante.org.uk">cathrin@dante.org.uk</a>	United Kingdom
Elizabeth Tornqvist	Karolinska Institutet		Sweden
Tiwonge M. Banda	UbuntuNet Alliance	<a href="mailto:tiwonge@kcn.unima.mw">tiwonge@kcn.unima.mw</a>	Malawi
Margaret Ngwira	University of Malawi/UbuntuNet Alliance	<a href="mailto:mengwira@kcn.unima.mw">mengwira@kcn.unima.mw</a>	Malawi
Bernard Marechal	CIEMAT		Spain
Jameson Mbale	University of Zambia/University of Zambia	<a href="mailto:mbalej@yahoo.com">mbalej@yahoo.com</a>	Zambia

## Workshop report

The **two morning sessions** of the workshop were scheduled around short and introductory presentations, followed by a reasonable amount of discussion time. Introductions were delivered by Thierry Devars on behalf of the EC and Hakim Elwaer on behalf of the African Union Commission (AUC). This was followed by a presentation on GEANT2 achievements and European regional networking activities. The UbuntuNet Alliance presented its origins, current status and future plans. The AAU gave an overview of NREN developments in Africa and the key challenges encountered. This was followed by a more detailed overview of developments in Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and Cameroon.

In his initial statement Hakim Elwaer told the participants that the AUC did not seem to be aware of the efforts by UbuntuNet, and that there were ongoing initiatives, for example the support by the Indian government, that were already bringing connectivity to African research and education institutions via a planned fibre landing and distribution via VSAT. It was however pointed out by UbuntuNet that:

- Formal contact had been made to AUC and NEPAD through letters and documents sent to them for briefing purposes.
- UbuntuNet was also working through and with the Association of African Universities, the body mandated by the African governments to handle matters relating to universities and research institutions.
- The members of UbuntuNet are national networks that have the recognition and active support of the government in their countries.

It was further underscored by the African academics present that VSAT connectivity would be far from sufficient for their needs. To move the REN agenda forward, it was agreed that UbuntuNet should follow up the contacts with AUC and NEPAD until a level was reached where progress was one of the reporting requirements at continental ministerial and heads of government levels. Hakim stated that he would support any such approaches, if possible starting with the upcoming Ministers of ICT meeting in Cairo during Africa Telecomm 2008.

During the first **afternoon session** presentations were given on applications in the area of digital libraries, e-learning and evidence-based drug information. In addition a presentation was given on experiences from using open source networking components in production networks. This was followed in the second afternoon session by a presentation on experiments with low cost wireless technology.

The workshop ended in a session during which participants were asked to answer the following two questions with brief written statements:

“What should Africa (UbuntuNet Alliance/AUU) do to further R&E networking in Africa?” and

“What should Europe (EC) do to support African R&E networking?”

The answers of the 30 participants were collected, discussed and the following points were taken:

- 1) It is essential for the UbuntuNet Alliance and the AAU to increase advocacy and lobbying activities to increase the momentum already created
- 2) African R&E networking activities must study the lessons learnt in some parts of Africa and world-wide
- 3) There is a need for a creation of a strong R&E networks engineering base. The UbuntuNet Alliance should consider the creation of an engineering task force
- 4) The UbuntuNet Alliance should strive to interconnect at least two African NRENs to showcase to those R&E initiatives that are still hesitant
- 5) There is a need for the production of a bankable proposal for regional connectivity within Africa and towards the world
- 6) The EC/Europe should give Africa/UbuntuNet Alliance the same level of support as CLARA received in Latin America
- 7) The EC/Europe is needed for capacity building activities in the African R&E networking community