

# The Malawi National Youth Declaration on the Information Society

## *'The kalikuti Declaration'*

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Kalikuti, Malawi, 29, 30 September 2005

### **Preamble**

We, the youth of Malawi, drawn from all the districts of Malawi and gathered at Kalikuti Hotel from 29 – 30 September 2005, for the Role of the Youth in the Information Society (RYIS) National Conference;

**Noting** that we constitute the majority of the population of our country, and that we are the leading creators and earliest adopters of ICT;

**Inspired** by the vision of integrating Malawian youth into the global Information Society;

**United** in our belief of the need for the youth of Malawi to play a leading role in the growth and social development of Malawi as a whole, and to influence positively the global ICT agenda for development through the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS);

**Concerned** by the disparities and asymmetrical distribution of ICT resources that exist between countries and within countries and the resultant gap;

**Recognising** that today, more than ever before in history, our participation in the knowledge based global digital economy given that we are leaders in the global information society is fundamental to the socio-economic well being of Malawi;

**Accepting** that the renaissance of the continent of Africa has highlighted new terrains of struggle in which we should engage vigorously;

**Recalling** the Millennium Declaration in New York in September 2000 that “in order to reduce global poverty by half in 2015 ”ICTs are central, enablers, cross cutting, and crucial tools for sustainable social and economic development”;

**Determined** to be active participants in building of the information society at local, national, regional, continental and global level;

**Re-affirm** that access to information that enables people to acquire knowledge resources as well as to communicate is a fundamental human right;

**ADOPT** this Declaration as a foundation for youth participation in the programmes that shall follow it, as it will be amended from time to time, and resolve to uphold the following principles:

## **Principles**

- Malawi should realize that the youth are the major agents of change in the information society development due to their swift adoption of ICTs and technology in general.
- The principle of universal and equal access to ICT initiatives regardless of race, disability, gender, location, and association, is paramount.
- It is essential that youth play a central role in the creation of the Malawian Information Society.
- Youth should be afforded the opportunity to inform decision-making about the Information Society at **all** levels.
- Cognizance should be taken of the promotion of local culture and language, and of the fostering of cultural diversity.
- It is essential that we cultivate and promote a culture of self reliance by solving our own problems first before we look elsewhere.
- Malawians especially the Malawian youth should not only be consumers of content, but creators and exporters of content, including ideas and solutions.
- The problems in the development of the Malawian information society should be solved by solutions that are informed by the needs of communities.
- The importance of ICTs as a tool for development should be reflected in national spending plans as well as those of donors and the private sector firms.
- Networking the youth should be recognized as a powerful means of solving Malawi's problems.

## **Outcomes**

The conference led to the creation of a Malawi ICT Youth Network which would be facilitated by the Young Advocates for the Advancement of ICT-related Development (Y.A.A.ICT-D). The network is hoped to be the platform for all youth organizations dealing with ICTs in Malawi. An interim executive committee was ushered in at the end of the conference.

The conference also came up with recommendations on concerns about the challenges facing the development of the Information Society in Malawi, and our suggestions and our role in resolving these challenges. The recommendations include but are not limited to the following:

- Creation of an ICT revolving fund to finance ICT projects as soon as possible.
- Government should put in place safeguard mechanisms against ICT abuse and misuse without stifling the freedom of expression and the right to privacy.
- Encourage programmes in local languages in order to reach out to the majority of Malawians
- ICTs should be used to promote our cultural values.
- ICT centres should be introduced in remote areas as one way of bridging the intra-country digital divide.
- Strengthen our laws to curb the growing shadow of cyber crimes.
- Put stiff penalties for those found vandalizing or stealing ICT infrastructure.
- Corporate organizations should be encouraged to donate boarded off computers to youth ICT-led initiatives.
- Encourage people to find other ways of generating energy.
- The youth should be engaged in raising awareness about the importance of ICTs in their communities.
- Encourage networking for various stakeholders in the information society including the youth.
- Involve Malawians living in Diaspora in financing ICTs for development.
- The ICT service providers should support youth-led ICT projects considering that the youth are the largest consumers of their services.
- ICT should be incorporated in the education curriculum at **all** levels.
- Open up the existing ICT training opportunities to the disadvantaged e.g. the disabled, women and rural youth.
- Compulsory primary education.
- Hasten the rural electrification program (s).
- Remove completely duty on assembled and unassembled ICT equipment.
- There is need for ICT championship to take a top-bottom approach where the President should take the leading role, as is the case in other countries.

## **Moving forward**

The conference resolved that the youth of Malawi should become pro-active in awareness raising about the importance of ICTs in the development of Malawi. It was generally noted that ICTs hold the key to improving the quality of education, delivery of health services, exchange of information and most importantly the creation of unprecedented employment opportunities, and should be integrated in the activities of the youth groups. It was further resolved that the Young Advocates for the Advancement of ICT-related Development (Y.A.A.ICT-D) facilitate the activities of the Malawi ICT Youth Network including the fundraising for the network members to attend the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis, Tunisia. The other resolutions are:

- A group e-mail for the participants to the conference is going to be created in order to encourage dialogue after the conference.
- A web site will be created to allow the youth of Malawi to interact on issues concerning the information society development.
- Create an online community for Malawian youth to share resources for action including e-learning workshops on various topics.

**Kalikuti, Lilongwe, 30<sup>th</sup> September 2005**

