MALAWI REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE PROMOTION AND USE OF MULTILINGUALISM AND UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO CYBER SPACE

1. Development of Multilingualism content and systems

Malawi government in 1996, issued a policy which stated that the language that is commonly used in an area, and is familiar to most pupils, should be used as the medium of instruction for primary schools from standard 1 to 4. The policy triggered a huge debate among parents, teachers, scholars, policy makers and other intellectual groups. Some of the observations made on the new policy include the fact that it is difficult to implement the policy in practice especially; where the common language is not familiar to the teacher and, and where pupils with different mother tongue languages study together. The policy has however, not been fully implemented as researchers continue to standardize the common languages in some pilot areas.

Since 1996 there has been a consultation process for the adoption of a Language Policy for Education that will formalize the government policy directive above. The latest draft policy document was produced in February, 2005.

2. Facilitation access to Networks and services

Malawi has neither a national ICT policy nor ICT legislation. Where need arises such as internet service connectivity and utilization of voice or GWAN needs, reference is made to the Malawi Communications Sector Policy.

However, Government established a Department of Information Systems and Technology Management Services whose objectives are:

- To promote and facilitate effective utilization of ICTs in all sectors of development in order to improve productivity, efficient delivery of services and accelerate development through use of ICTs by:

  - developing computer software for both government and the private sector
  - providing information technology (IT) skills training
  - providing IT consultancy services
  - providing the latest state of art in records management
  - ensuring that IT utilization is well coordinated; and
  - ensuring proper IT utilization.

The Department is guided by the Malawi Civil Service ICT Policy, Information Security Policy and Strategic Plan.

3.   Development of Public Domain Content

The Communications Sector Policy in section 2.1.6.4 **Non Basic Telecommunications Service Providers (Data, Internet and other Value Added Services, service providers**) states that: *Licenses for data communication, internet and other value added services will be made available without restriction as to number. Providers of these services or their customers will normally lease the transmission capacity they require from national and local operators. In exceptional circumstances where the transmission capacity required is not available from an operator, they will be permitted to provide the capacity themselves under the guidance of MACRA.*

In **2.1.6.6 Private Networks,** the policy also states that *operators of private networks to which the public does not have access will not need to have a telecommunication, licence, although a radio licence may be necessary.*

In **2.1.6.7 VSAT Networks**, the policy further states that *private communication links by satellite (often called VSAT networks where VSAT means very Small Aperture Terminal) will not require a telecommunications licence if they are not connected to the public switched telephone network. This exception will apply, for example, to television receive only terminals (TVROS) of course, all VSATs that transmit radio signals will require a radio license.*

The Government has a website for all its departments where public documents can be accessed by all without restriction.

4.   Reaffirming the Equitable Balance between the interest of Rights Holders and the Public Interest

The Copyright Society of Malawi is currently in the process of reviewing the Copyright Act of 1989.   The reason for the review is to adapt the Act to international frameworks on copyright and the information society.

5.   Final Comments

The establishment of the Department of Information Systems and Technology Management Services was a follow-up to the World Summit. However currently there is no time related goals and benchmarks set by the Government.