Draft Terms of Reference

Workshop on African Languages and the Cyberspace

Theme: Bridging the Last Six Inches of the Digital Divide in Africa

Date: 20-22, Dec. 2012

Venue: Lagos Nigeria.

Background:

Access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), is an essential means to support and to achieve durable and sustainable development in any society. In order to safeguard, preserve, develop and promote African languages it is necessary to equip them m with appropriate terminology and technology that will allow them to respond to the demands imposed by ICT, which is the cornerstone of a knowledge-based society. ACALAN, as a specialized institution of the African Union mandated to develop and promote African Languages has made a continuous efforts to equip African languages with the appropriate terminology and technology that will allow them to respond to this demands imposed by ICT.

It is in this context that ACALAN is organizing a three day workshop to develop and adopt strategies of applying Human Language Technologies to African languages as a way of bridging the digital divide. This workshop which is a follow-up of the Niamey workshop on the African Languages and the cyberspace which took place in December 2011 is to serve as a way forward.

The workshop will bring together experts in African languages and ICT to among other things review the various efforts of NGOS, educational institutions and to draw a road map as a way forward.

Objectives:

The workshop aims at:

- Identifying practical steps of promoting African languages in the cyberspace and applying Human Language Technologies to them.

- Identification of the six inches gap between the computer and the user especially as it relates to African Languages usage on the computer system and how to bridge them.

- Set priority areas pertaining to the presence of African languages on the cyber space.

- Consolidate the network of ICT experts and create strategies of integrating the result of the workshop into the Education system at all levels in Africa.

- Creation of symbols for African languages on the computer keyboard for usage in the Education sector and for general purposes

Methodology:

The workshop will be in plenary and presentation forms. Participants would be required to discuss how best to promote African Languages on the cyber space and apply HLT to them. Presentation of works already done and the ones in progress relating to this domain will be made. Discussions and recommendations would be made based on the presentations by participants.

Outcomes:

The following outcomes are expected from the workshop:

- Identification of the gaps and priority areas pertaining to the presence of African languages on the cyber space to be addressed as part and parcel of the efforts to develop African languages.
- Identification of priority areas and strategies of promoting African languages in the cyberspace.
- Identification of practical steps in applying HLT to African languages
- Creation of symbols for African languages on the computer keyboard.

Participants:

The workshop will bring together the following experts, resource persons and staff of ACALAN's Executive Secretariat:

- Ayo Bamgbose (President, Assembly of Academician)
- Tunde Adegbola- (Nigeria)
- Lawrence Muchemi- (Kenya)
- Charles Marfo- (Ghana)
- Thapelo J. Otlogetswe (Botswana)
- Seleman Sewangi (Tanzania)
- Nimaan Abdilahi (Djibouti)
- Prof. Remi Raji-Oyeladet –(Nigeria)
- Dr Akinjobi Adeniket – (Nigeria)