

Uganda to host COMESA telecom regulators

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The Uganda Communication Commission (UCC) is organising a one-day symposium to be attended by telecommunications regulators from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) member states. This is going to be one of the activities of the commission that would be marking its tenth anniversary on 22 May 2008. Other activities would include launching of a new corporate identity and the logo.

"We expect President Yoweri Museveni to open the symposium that will be attended by telecommunication regulators from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)," a statement issued by the commission last week says.

Essay competition

The commission has also organised an essay competition for students in the universities, institutions of higher learning and secondary schools. The topics to be written about include category one for secondary schools on the topic "It is widely believed that communication can transform the lives of people in rural areas; do you agree with this statement?"

Category two is meant for universities and tertiary institutions and is on the topic: "If you were Head of State, what would you do to facilitate the uptake and use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) by young people for socio-economic development?"; and "How can ICTs contribute to peace and stability within Uganda?"

Marked growth and innovation

The statement said that as UCC celebrates its tenth anniversary, mobile phone subscribers in Uganda have hit a total of 4.7 million.

"The number of subscribers has reached 4.7 million as of July 2007, showing an annual growth rate of 68% when compared to the figures for 2005/2006 fiscal year." The statement added that 14% of the 28 million Ugandans own phones and over 40% use public pay phones while tele-density now stands at 13.3 million, up from 8 million.

According to the statement, there has been an increase in innovative services and pricing schemes, innovative optimising of calling charges, steep reduction in connection charges, removal of subscription charges and emergence of international calling cards.

It says that the communication sector has attracted over UGX127.7bn (US\$73m) in investment and this excludes capital investment by the newly licensed service operators, which is estimated to be close to US\$70m.

The statement, however, says that although Internet use grew by 30% from 11,000 to 15,500 subscribers, users are still few compared to other countries due to the prices that are relatively high.

"Over 20 companies have been licensed to offer voice telephony and data services and soon many will join to apply for various licence categories; this means Ugandans are likely to enjoy better and pocket friendly ICT services," the statement adds.

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