

Workshop on the Establishment of Center for IT Research and Innovation (CITRI)

IT Doctoral Program Addis Ababa University 4-5 October 2010

ICT is emerging as the dominant factor of development and economic growth in the 21st century. It has become the source of competitive advantage. Countries in the developing world have long recognized the role of ICT and thus are working to their level best in order to put the right policy environment and avail resources for investment in order to embrace the immense opportunities created and the fruits promised to the fullest.

The Ethiopian government has already identified ICT as a distinguishing imperative in the effort to tackle the unprecedented challenge posed by an all-round transformation process underway in the country. There is now, more than ever, increased awareness and serious commitment at the political level that embracing and developing ICT will help beat poverty that kills; offer new jobs, new business opportunities, and a higher standard of living for all segments of our society; and improve our global competitiveness. Accordingly, there have been significant efforts that went into the development of ICT in Ethiopia, specifically in infrastructure development. As part of fulfilling that commitment, the government has recently established a new ministerial position for ICT under the name *Ethiopian Ministry of Communications and ICT*.

Addis Ababa University, the pioneer higher learning institution in the country, plays a pivotal role in human resource capacity building for many of the Country's higher learning institutions as well as research and government organizations. It is along this line that the IT PhD program, the first of its kind in Ethiopia, is developed and launched in collaboration with the College of Telecommunications and Information Technology in 2008. The primary objective of the IT Doctoral Program is to build the candidates' capacity to identify and solve problems related to IT development challenges in Ethiopia by applying technical and scientific methods and innovative tools independently. The program aims at preparing candidates for successful academic, research and professional careers.

IT Doctoral Program currently has 33 PhD students in four of its six specialty tracks; Software Engineering, Information Systems, Language Technology, and IP Networking and Mobile Internet Tracks. The remaining two tracks; Wireless Communications and Information Retrieval tracks have completed screening of students for admission in this semester.

Effective coordination and guidance of research activities within the IT Doctoral Program is of paramount importance for the successful implementation of the objective of the program. With

the initiatives from the French Cooperation Project and the demand from within the IT Doctoral Program, the idea of establishing a Center for IT Research and Innovation (CITRI) is coined and a draft establishment document is prepared. CITRI will serve as a focal point for the advancement of IT research, innovation, collaboration and dissemination through the provision of support to PhD candidates, instructors, national as well as international partners, and other professionals in carrying out their research and related activities.

A consultative workshop to deliberate on the establishment of CITRI was held on October 4-5, 2010 at the Ghion Hotel. The workshop has brought together some 60 of our research partners from the USA, Europe and mainly from within the country to deliberate on issues relating to how CITRI is to be organized to fulfill its objectives within the context of the existing university structure. The vision, mission, value and functions of CITRI were also among the core topics of discussion during the workshop. The workshop was successful in its deliberation and provided a solid and invaluable feedback to finalize the establishment document for the envisaged launching of the center in January 2011.