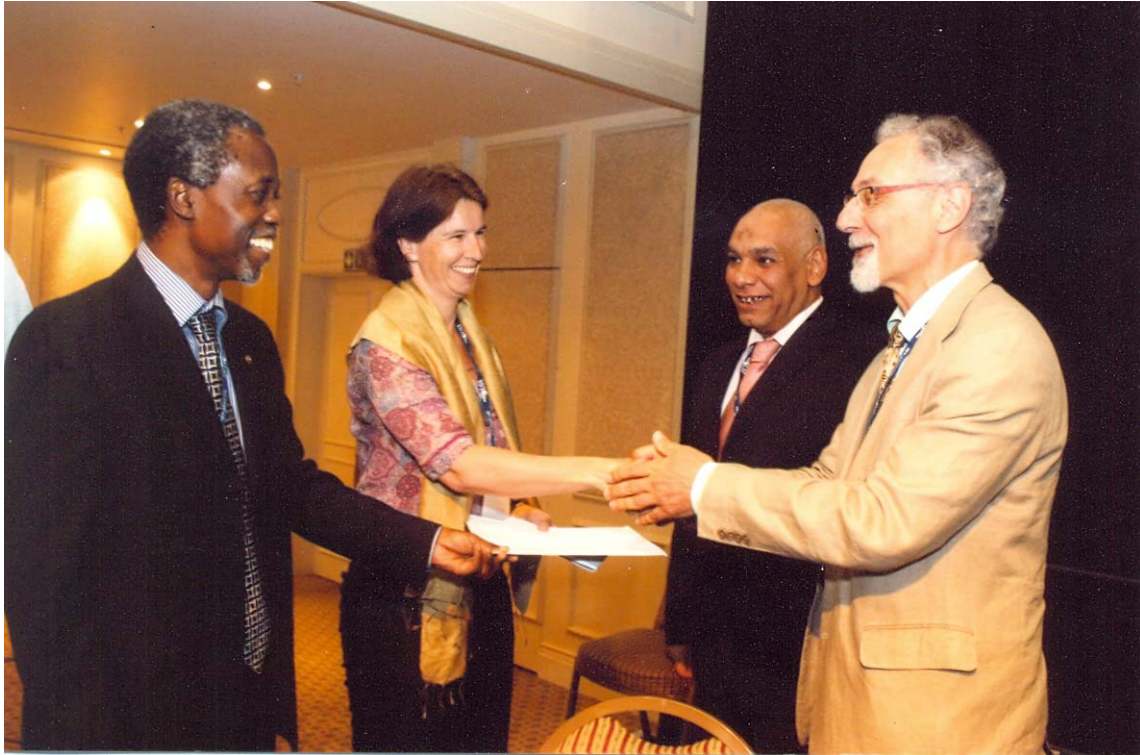


AfricaConnect Project Kicks off at IST Africa 2011

*EC signs 14.5M Euro contract for AfricaConnect project*



(Caption) A major milestone for AfricaConnect: Dr F F Tusubira, UbuntuNet Alliance, Cathrin Stöver, DANTE, Dr Ahmed Hamdy of the African Union Commission and Dr Kostas Glinos, EU DG INFSO, in Botswana.

The research and education community in sub Saharan Africa is set to benefit from high speed regional connectivity following the ceremony on the occasion of the signature of the AfricaConnect project on 11<sup>th</sup> May 2011 at the IST-Africa Conference & Exhibition in Gaborone Botswana. The Euro 14.75M contract, signed by Mr Denis Salord for the European Commission's EuropeAid Cooperation Office was handed over to Ms Cathrin Stöver of DANTE and Dr Francis Tusubira of UbuntuNet Alliance by Dr Kostas Glinos, Head of Unit, GEANT and e-Infrastructures at the European Commission - DG Information Society and Media, in the presence of Dr Ahmed Hamdy Deputy Director of Human Resources, Science and Technology of the African Union Commission and in front of conference delegates.

Speaking after receiving the contract, Ms Cathrin Stöver and Dr Francis Tusubira thanked the European Commission for the project which they said would enable African researchers

to participate effectively in global research collaborations. AfricaConnect will establish a high-capacity Internet network for research and education in Southern and Eastern Africa to provide the region with a gateway to global research collaboration. The initiative will dramatically accelerate the development of the Information Society in Africa, providing advanced data communications infrastructure and enabling African researchers to collaborate more easily in advanced international research projects.

The launch of the 4-year AfricaConnect project is a concrete success of the implementation of the EU-Africa 8<sup>th</sup> Partnership on "Science, Information Society and Space". The initiative is funded in the framework of the "ACP Connect" programme of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP).