

The East African Community (EAC) member states have agreed to collectively invest resources in establishing a jointly-operated satellite to boost internet services across the region.

This decision was reached during the Joint Ministerial meeting of the ICT Infrastructure Development cluster under the Northern Corridor Integration Projects (NCIPs), convened last week in Nairobi, Kenya.

The members agreed to collectively invest resources in establishing a jointly-operated satellite to deliver internet services across the region.

This decision was reached during the Joint Ministerial meeting of the ICT Infrastructure Development cluster under the Northern Corridor Integration Projects (NCIPs), convened on Thursday, November 9, in Nairobi, Kenya.

The meeting, chaired by Uganda's ICT Minister, Dr. Chris Baryomunsi, served as a platform for Information and Communication Technology regional ministers from East Africa to evaluate the advancement of various infrastructural projects to substantially enhance the region's socioeconomic development.

A key takeaway from the event was the ministers' commitment to expediting the procedures for setting up a regional satellite dedicated to communication to provide reliable broadband internet services and broadcasting capabilities, as outlined in the joint communique issued after the meeting.

Amb Richard Kabonero, the Coordinator of Northern Corridor Projects, is quoted to have said that launching such a satellite is estimated to be around USD 300 million, which is deemed expensive for individual countries. However, regional collaboration could make this endeavour more feasible.

Uganda launched a satellite last year, Kenya has also launched a satellite in , Rwanda has done the same, South Sudan is also building capacity.

The bloc, with a population of about 174 million, is poised to facilitate collaboration with international tech companies.

According to a communique, each partner state has submitted two technical experts to the regional committee to guide on the road map. They have also been tasked with developing a joint consensual concept note for the regional satellite system.

The region is actively implementing e-services, including a data-sharing framework, full integration of mobile financial services, and mutual access to secure and reliable information.

Despite these efforts, a recognized need for accelerated implementation persists. The ministers advocate for a harmonized approach to policies supporting data storage and management.

They expect to have made significant strides in the project implementation by the next joint ministerial meeting of the ICT Infrastructure Development Cluster in the Republic of South Sudan.