

Africa's Creative Future: Unity, Conflict, and the Push for Digital Integration

A report on the Specialised Technical Committee on Youth, Culture and Sports session on strengthening Africa's creative and cultural industries through digital integration

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The Specialised Technical Committee on Youth, Culture and Sports convened to deliberate on the topic of “Strengthening Africa’s Creative and Cultural Industries Through Digital Integration to Achieve Continental Growth.” Delegates engaged in thoughtful and, at times, intense debate, revealing both a shared continental vision and a range of diverging national perspectives on how best to achieve it.

The session opened with addresses from the represented delegations. Chad set an optimistic tone, emphasising the power of Africa’s rich cultural heritage and its potential to connect and empower the continent. The Democratic Republic of the Congo struck a more cautionary note, asserting that freedom of expression must be central to any digital integration effort and warning that creativity cannot flourish where artists work under threat.

As discussions progressed, Egypt declared that “connectivity is the lifeline of creativity,” arguing that digital access is essential if Africa’s cultural industries are to remain connected to the global economy. Kenya, meanwhile, criticised existing continent-wide policies as ineffective, calling for the development of a unified continental policy framework as a necessary first step. Both Egypt and South Africa emerged as advocates for a Digital Pan-African space, a platform that would enable African creators to express themselves, collaborate, and monetise their work. Ethiopia built on this idea by proposing a digital marketplace for streaming and trading copyrighted digital content. South Sudan cautioned that without robust copyright legislation, the exploitation of creators would be inevitable. Morocco urged the committee not to overlook the digital literacy gaps and limited internet access in rural areas before embarking on the development of large-scale digital platforms.

Following these exchanges, delegates moved into an unmoderated caucus, during which two blocs formed and each produced a draft resolution paper. The first bloc, sponsored by South Africa and Kenya, counted the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Egypt among its signatories. The second bloc, led by Tanzania and Morocco, drew in Chad, the DRC, Ethiopia, Egypt, Nigeria, and South Sudan. Both papers were submitted for a roll call vote. Resolution 001 passed with a strong majority, opposed only by Morocco, South Sudan, and Tanzania. Resolution 002 likewise passed, with Ethiopia casting the sole opposing vote.

By the close of the session, it was evident that while delegates shared a common vision of a digitally empowered African creative economy, the debates had brought important differences in priority and approach to the surface. The resilience and adaptability of the delegates throughout stood out. Regardless of bloc affiliations or voting outcomes, the session reflected a collective determination to shape Africa's digital cultural future, and a willingness to engage seriously with the complexities that lie ahead.