

Call to train African teachers in ICT skills

BY SAMUEL OTIENO

FIFTEEN million teachers need to be retrained if Africa is to achieve universal primary education by 2015.

Education ministers from the continent resolved that another hundreds of thousands of teachers require Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills to help achieve this goal.

The first African ministerial round table on ICT for education, training and development also identified the need to involve corporate organisations.

The conference, which came to a close on Wednesday, held 68 sessions and 17 workshops, with 308 exhibitors.

"ICTs are seen as one key solution that will allow African countries to meet the needs in rural and under-served areas and bring education to their citizens rapidly and cost efficiently," ministers said in a joint communiqué.

Prof George Saitoti, who read the statement, said the priority areas to be attended to include development of

national digital curricular and expansion of the national connectivity network.

Other areas are diversifying and expanding alternative sources of power and pursuing sustainability in ICT, particularly e-learning.

Other ministers present included Prof Geoffrey Lungwangwa of Zambia, Mr Themba Msibi of Swaziland, Uganda's Ms Bitamazire and Ghana deputy minister, Mr Kwame Thumasi.

Also in attendance were representatives from Huawei, Kesa, Microsoft, Safaricom and Smart Technologies Inc, who shared their experiences.

Saitoti said lack of relevant digital content, high cost of software and uncoordinated initiatives remain a challenge.

Companies also presented strategies that the private sector can offer in a bid to support national programmes in ICT education.

The ministers cited ICT fund in Kenya and the digital pipeline in Namibia as mechanisms to strengthen e-learning.