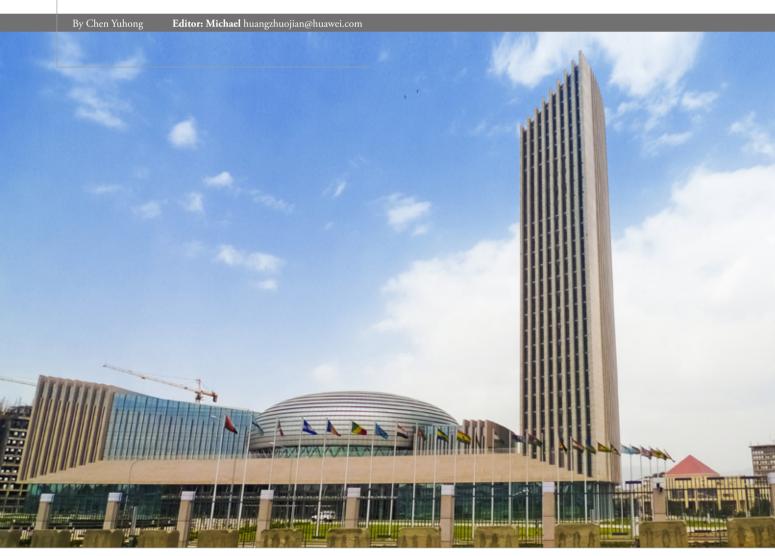# Desktop Cloud
draws praise in Africa

The African Union Commission has joined hands with Huawei to craft and implement a desktop cloud solution that enhances the governing body's IT capabilities in coordinating pan-African political and economic affairs.

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> "With desktop cloud, terminals do not store information, as all information-related computing, storage, and management are done in the AUC data centers, making for greatly enhanced security.

Reaching a height of 99.9 meters, the African Union (AU) Conference Center stands as a landmark in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa. Consisting of offices, conference halls and support facilities, the center has a large conference hall (2500 seats), a medium-sized hall (650 seats), and digital libraries, training centers, a media center, and other ancillary facilities to round out its attendee services. Connected by fiber and serviced by Wi-Fi, the center features video monitoring, video conferencing, and desktop cloud or virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI).

On January 29, 2012, leaders from 55 AU member states attended the 18th AU Summit at the center and enjoyed an eye-opening desktop cloud service experience.

Legacy headaches

As a top organization coordinating pan-African political, economic, and military issues, the African Union Commission (AUC) needed a robust information system to support a large number of conferences and the larger amounts of data that they entail. As most of this information is of a confidential nature, legacy PCs were proving too vulnerable to hackers, phishing, viruses, and other forms of compromise.

The AUC holds nearly 600 conferences each year; most require printed materials in its four official languages – English, French, Arabic, and Portuguese. This amounts to a profound waste of time, money, and paper, and is sometimes ineffective. If last-minute changes are needed, reprinting may not prove viable. The AUC needed an IT system that could support electronic versions of these materials.

The legacy IT system also consumed a lot of power (200 Watts per PC) and its upgrade was a constant headache. Its wiring was also a complex issue and did not fit in with the clean and orderly aesthetics desired for a conference center. O&M costs were also a major burden; engineers needed to constantly resolve the hardware, software, and operating system issues. The AUC staff members, who hail from 55 member nations, must also travel a lot, so mobile access to internal documents is a must.

In December 2011, the construction of the AU Conference Center was completed, with the 18th AU Summit set to be held there. The AUC expected a modern IT solution to bring their operations into a new era.

A highly-recognized desktop cloud

Part of this solution involved Huawei's desktop cloud solution, which offers computing, storage sharing, and unified resource allocation services through cloud data centers which enable enhanced information security, conference efficiency, and reduced O&M complexity.

The AUC can now enjoy having all computing and storage resources integrated through its data centers, with smooth legacy interoperability. In addition, end users can now access legacy IT applications through any connected device or Wi-Fi-enabled thin client (a low-cost fixed

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terminal with a monitor, keyboard, and mouse, thus eliminating the need for a PC cabinet). This new arrangement contributed to a clean, orderly, and quiet (about 10dB of sound are generated by thin clients) office environment, while reducing terminal power consumption by 70 percent.

Traditionally, each PC is equipped with an operating system and other software, with locally-stored information vulnerable to virus attacks and transmission interceptions. With desktop cloud, terminals do not store information, as all information-related computing, storage, and management are done in the AUC data centers, making for greatly enhanced security. Huawei's desktop cloud also delivers mobile office functionality; AUC personnel can remotely access documents through certified smartphones and tablets at any time and any place with a network connection.

As the data center stores all data and applications, the AUC can flexibly manage and allocate IT resources. Unified O&M has also become feasible. With desktop cloud, it takes only three minutes to ready a virtual PC, while software and operating system patches can be installed in a one-stop manner. As a result, the AUC can efficiently allocate IT resources for various conferences, including impromptu events.

Successful applications

On January 4, 2012, the AUC inked its desktop cloud deployment contract with Huawei, leaving both parties only three weeks for project delivery. However, in less than 20 days, the joint project team managed to put all equipment in place and finish commissioning.

On January 25, 2012, the system's Wi-Fi-enabled thin clients were fully tested and deployed. Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the AUC, was invited to test them in person. He came away impressed, and asked engineers to install the thin client software on his iPad for easy access.

On January 29, 2012, the Huawei desktop cloud was officially launched and ran smoothly during the three days of the AU Summit. Ten days later, the AUC sent a letter of appreciation to Huawei, stating that "the Commission notes with appreciation the outstanding daily cooperation between Huawei and the MIS Division of the Commission, as well as the high efficiency in execution, hard work and support by the Huawei team, thereby ensuring the deployment of the VDI system successfully in three weeks. This system has been working very well and will really help improve efficiency in conducting meetings and working method in general in the future."

Huawei's desktop cloud has also been highly recognized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) during its visit to the AU Conference Center.

The AUC has been using desktop cloud for conferences, offices and daily training ever since, and is expected to expand throughout the compound. The commission is also planning to introduce cloud applications to its data centers. The AU Summit has also highly recognized the importance of ICT industry in promoting African socioeconomic development. As a key ICT partner of the AUC, Huawei will continue its support and effort to help the AUC promote its ICT infrastructure. ■