

**African Union Open Forum
Internet Governance Forum (IGF-11)
7 December, 2016**

Palace of Culture and Communication (PALCCO) - Zapopan, Jalisco, Mexico

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Moderator: Palesa Logeze, South Africa

Introduction

The hour long meeting was held during the sidelines of the 11th edition of the Internet Governance Forum in Workshop room 4. The meeting was attended by 30 African stakeholders attending the IGF drawn from civil society, government, the academia and internet rights activists.

The meeting was convened to give feedback from the 5th African Internet Governance Forum (AfIGF) held 16-18 October 2016 in eThekweni, Kwazulu Natal, Durban. The moderator noted that the 5th AfIGF was of significance as it was attended by four African Information Communication Technologies (ICT) ministers and that this presented an opportunity for other stakeholders to engage their governments to attend future AfIGFs so as to have true multi-stakeholder representation during the proceedings of the gathering.

Presentations focussed on the composition of the three days that included the outline and outcomes of the African School of Internet Governance (AfriSIG), recommendations of the Ministerial Round Table- High level meeting and the recommendations of the AfIGF whose focus was on:

- Inclusive development and the Digital transformation of Africa, and
- Internet Governance in Africa: Building a gender balanced and truly inclusive multi-stakeholder model.

Challenges facing Africa in ICT sector

Adil Sulieman - Senior Policy Officer, AUC

The presentation outlined the social, political, structural and economic challenges faced on the continent in ensuring that ICTs fully become an enabler of the Sustainable Development Goals on the continent.

On the key achievement, the following was presented:

- The draft African Union Declaration on Internet Governance was presented at the AfIGF-2015 for input by stakeholders. After that the final draft of the document was presented to the Ministers of ICT during the Extra-ordinary meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Internet Governance and Cyber-security that was held meeting in Bamako, Mali in September, 2016 in a bid to ensure government input on the actual document. The ministers endorsed the documents with some minor amendments and requested that the document be forwarded to AU organs for consideration and adoption. This goes to show that the multi-stakeholder model worked in the process.

With Regards to the main challenge facing Africa's ICT sector the following was outlined:

- It was noted that the challenge remains that of lack of political will by governments to actually endorse ICTs as an enabler such that Africa can leapfrog in the 21st century and indeed realize the SDGs. Towards this goal, the host country in collaboration with the AfIGF secretariat invited African ICT ministers to the meeting. It is hoped that other stakeholders, such as African private sector actors will also be invited in the future to address the issue of low participation in the forum.
- A number of speakers at the AfIGF-2016 spoke to the lack of trust and confidence in the use of ICTs. This, it was concluded, has a negative impact on the overall adoption of effective policies to enhance access and use of ICTs on the continent. There is need to facilitate processes to increase trust in cyberspace to accelerate the adoption of ICTs at national, regional and continental level in order to stimulate socio-economic development that will create real impact on the lives of ordinary citizens.
- There has been little reflection of the streamlining the recommendations made at the past AfIGFs. This has raised questions on the how realistic and achievable positions and recommendations that have been made are. Pointers have been that representation of IG stakeholders at AfIGFs is, in actual fact be inadequate presenting a challenge on the quality and legitimacy of the process. Stakeholders present were urged to carry out a stakeholder engagement to enable awareness raising and full participation of all stakeholders at country level. This would ensure that by the time the AfIGF is convened, there are clearer positions and the willingness to participate in the formulation of regional/continental strategies to better uptake on ICTs.

African School of Internet Governance (AfriSIG) outline

Dr. Mawaki Chango –Assistant Professor Togo, CEO DIGILEXIS

This presentation by a Faculty member of the school gave an outline of the fourth AfriSIG, which was held 11-15 October 2016. AfriSIG was strategically planned to precede the AfIGF to enhance the learning experience of the 44 graduates on the regional internet governance trends and processes. This was reflected in the confidence of the participants to be a part of AfIGF through rapporteuring, chairing of sessions and participation as panellists during the programme.

The following issues were highlighted:

- AfriSIG, although a simulation of similar schools in Europe , Latin America and Asia, has a regional focus and is aimed at capacity building to improve policy and specialised intervention on Internet Governance on the continent.
- This years school brought in a diverse group drawn from over 400 applicants. These included members from government, civil society, PHD

students and support staff from International agencies supporting IG initiatives on the continent.

- The 2016 AfriSIG group has remained in touch through the use of a social media Whatsapp group where they have continued to engage and share experiences, opportunities and broaden their networks based on in their specific regions and their respective interests in the IG ecosystem.
- This years practicum focussed on internet shutdowns and resulted in the production of a statement with an official position and recommendations on internet shutdowns on the continent. It was delivered at the AfIGF.
- The hosting of the two meeting back to back is that the practicality of what is learnt is reflected in the IGF and that is a positive

Key outcomes of High level Session and possible future engagement of stakeholders

Olusegun H. Olugbile - Managing Partner/ CEO – Nigeria

This presentation the key issues highlighted in the High-level session as follows:

The meeting agreed that because African countries share similar issues and concerns on IG there was need to utilise national and subregional levels meetings and the AfIGF for meetings to convene for sharing and strategising on IG concerns.

It was agreed that agreement that African countries should endorse the African Union Declaration on Internet Governance for its onward submission to the African Head of States Summit for consideration and adoption.

Other key issues raised in the presentation with regard to the way forward included:

- The need for Africans to agree on continental IG priorities and positions so that there is realisation of progress and impact on policy and overall uptake on ICTs.
- Currently, very few countries have achieved the multistakeholder approach in their respective IG processes. States were urged to make deliberate effort to expand the multistakeholder frontier by especially focussing on increasing involvement of the youth and private sector. The AfIGF reflected the importance and possibility of meaningful participation of the youth in IG as they were visible and constitute the majority of users on the continent.
- African IGF processes need to formulate specific initiatives that focus on the building trust between the stakeholders as this is a progress deterrent.

Recommendations of the AfIGF 2016 and how they can adequately respond to the issues of inclusiveness and the digital transformation of Africa

Mandiaye Ndiaye - Senior Librarian

The main recommendations of the AfIGF were outlined as follows:

1. Internet Governance and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Governments should partner with libraries to formulate national IG development plans in tandem with the SDGs and AU Agenda 2063.

2. Bridging the gender divide in the digital transformation

Civil society should assist in campaigns to sensitize on the importance of the utilisation of the internet by women and the promotion and protection of their rights.

3. Digital Economy & Human Rights on the Internet

Education ministries and civil society should initiate educational programs and incorporate internet studies in their school curriculum that with an emphasis on local languages.

National Internet Governance forums should strengthen multistakeholder participation to deal with emerging human rights issues such as Internet shutdowns

4. Security and Privacy issues in the Internet

African member states should be encouraged to sign and ratify the AU Convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection and enact laws that ensure access to Information, data protection, privacy and cybercrime, guided by it.

5. Youth Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Governments should increase the involvement of the youth in policy formulation and integrate innovation and entrepreneurship as a means of also promoting the production local content.

6. Inclusive development & Digital Transformation in Africa

Encourage organizations and governments to migrate from IPV4 to IP6 and host local IXP and content to reduce the cost of access to the internet. This would also involve the reviewing existing regulation that may pose challenges in the migration.

Building up on Durban's outcomes and way forward for Inclusive development and the digital transformation

Mary Uduma - Coordinator National Nigerian IGF

This presentation emphasised on the need for stakeholders within the national IGFs to follow up on incorporate the recommendations into their plan of actions.

Emphasis was laid on the following:

- Buy in from all stakeholders, and in particular, the governments was critical for the realisation of all the recommendations. It is important that the African Union take up the facilitatory role of ensuring that the multistakeholder model is adopted in their interaction with the NIGFs. Recommendations must be tracked for analysis in the next year.
- Strategic plans should be put in place to strengthen a link between the work at NIGF level with that of the Regional IGFs to ensure that progress is reflected at regional level, that way continental challenges and progress will be easier to track.
- Ensure the participation of the private sector as their participation has been lacking. Beyond involvement in economic issues, their role in social investments and increasing in digital literacy, programmes is also critical.
- A mapping of potential collaboration and sponsorship for regional processes so that there is a shift of dependence on traditional funders.
- Promotion and support of universities to identify and carry out research at continental level on critical IG issues.

Plenary Session/Question & Answer

Questions raised by the participants during the last part of the meeting were as posed and responded to as follows by the AU Secretariat:

Why has there been lower participation at the AfIGF in the recent years? What are the main challenges?

There has been a cut in the allocation of the budget that has affected the organising of the AfIGF. The first three IGF offered full sponsorship of participants, but there is a possibility that participants may be required to self sponsor as early as next year.

Why has there been a low uptake on the Cyber security convention and what role can the AU play?

The lack of political will needs to be addressed and it remains unclear what the challenges are given that some countries such as Senegal have ratified and signed onto most conventions. The AU pushes a programmatic and not political agenda, it is therefore necessary that states are self motivated to own and localise regionally agreed positions at country level.

Why has the African Union not given an official statement on the internet shutdowns on the continent?

The AU is made up member states, who bear the responsibility of drawing up and agreeing on the official position. The AU Chairperson had issued a statement on the matter but AU will endeavour to push for action.

With the increase on the number of Internet shutdown based on cyber security concerns by government there is need to have a regional focus and strategy

around them. More work is being done at international level than at continental level. It is important that there is an African position of internet shutdowns.

To what extent does the AU support NIGFs?

The AU offers technical support to and sponsorship of and technical support of NIGFs. It is, however, critical that NIGFs think about their independence and long term sustainability. Additionally, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) were given the mandate to coordinate and facilitate NIGFs.

Conclusions and closing statements

The following were noted in the conclusion of the meeting:

1. Fundraising for research should be a priority within the IG agenda so that it informs priorities.
2. Setting of an African IG agenda that suits the needs of the African populace as opposed to copying and pasting the global agenda.
3. Organising for official African positions on the global IG agenda and wider representation voice at the IGF so that there is a shift in the narrative of African IG trends.
4. Strategy formulation for the participation of the private sector in IG issues so that they find value in the processes.
5. Increase the number of platforms for discussions on IG issues at different levels of the stakeholders in Africa .