14TH WEST AFRICAN INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM

THEME: "DIGITAL SUSTAINABILITY: DATA INNOVATIONS FOR POST COVID RECOVERY"

HYBRID

26 – 27 MAY 2022

COMMUNIQUE

[ORIGINAL VERSION: ENGLISH]

We, the participants of the 14th West African Internet Governance Forum (WAIGF), meeting in Ghana and online, from 26 to 27 May 2022, representing the Internet governance initiatives of the following fifteen (15) countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

With the participation and support of the following partners: ECOWAS Commission, African Union, UNDESA, AFRINIC, ICANN, IGF Secretariat, ISOC, META, PRIDA, World Wide Web Foundation and A4AI.

- Recalling the results of the previous editions of the West African Internet Governance Forum which were held respectively in Accra, Dakar, Lagos, Freetown, Abidjan, Abuja, Niamey, Cotonou, Ouagadougou, Banjul and online/virtually.
- Recognising that last mile connectivity remains a challenge in the region, and that it can be overcome by investing in community networks.
- Considering the need for affordable access and meaningful connectivity; and a need to build capacity of Internet users especially the youth, to avoid digital colonisation.
- Recognising that fake news and disinformation are especially harmful to population groups with low digital literacy.
- Recognising that cybersecurity challenges are under regulated in the West Africa region.
- Recognising the important role Parliamentarians play in the Internet Ecosystem;
- Recognising that the West Africa region has proven to be resilient in responding to the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and should leverage on gains made in digitalization.

1) Report that:
   a) The 15th Forum in 2023 shall hold in Côte d'Ivoire
   b) The WASIG and the WA Youths IGF shall be organised as a pre-event of the WAIGF
   c) A Parliamentarian Track will form part of the WAIGF 2023 process

2) Recommend:

a) On Digital sustainability

    i.   Call on Member States to bridge digital divides and to prioritise digital literacy to espouse the everyday lives of West Africans by ensuring that people are connected, informed and safe online.

   ii.   Encourage roaming initiatives between networks to help reach the last mile across the region.

  iii.   Urge Member States to expand the gender base of ICT by supporting and empowering women, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups.

   iv.   Call on Member States to create environments that foster job creation and wealth-generation using emerging technologies.

    v.   Urge Member States to encourage data innovation for post-COVID recovery and centring digital sustainability in national and regional digital transformation strategies.

   vi.   Call on Member States to increase stakeholder representation by encouraging bottom-up approaches and revitalising multistakeholder arrangements.

b) On Cybersecurity and trust

    i.   Urge Member States to adopt best practices and implement data regulatory frameworks that foster trust.

   ii.   Call on Member States to adopt a whole-of-society approach (i.e., coordinate activities across diverse ministries, agencies, civil society etc.) in addressing cyber related issues.

  iii.   Urge Member States to continue civic education and sensitization efforts to build the digital hygiene of citizens.

   iv.   Urge Member States to ensure good governance and accountability in policy strategy and implementation, from government and the private sector.

c) On Data innovation and privacy (Parliamentarian track)

    i.   Recognize a need for improving existing data legislation and harmonisation of data protection and privacy legislation across the region.

   ii.   Urge Member States to bridge the gap between existing legislation and implementation by telecom operators and enforcement agencies of the region.

  iii.   Urge Member States to promote advocacy and capacity building of national legislators on data privacy rights and responsibilities.

   iv.   Encourage the ratification and implementation of regional instruments such as the African Union convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection (Malabo Convention).

v. Call on Member States to facilitate collaboration and sharing of best practices in data innovation and protection through multistakeholder arrangements.
vi. Call on Member States to sensitise citizens on their rights and responsibilities in online spaces especially the need to understand terms and conditions of usage.
vii. Encourage collaboration between Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) in the region to promote the sharing of information.
viii. Encourage Member States to create interoperable data systems across government platforms to streamline data collection processes.

d) On digital inclusion
i. Urge Member States to address digital infrastructure gaps in our countries by inviting and licensing new players, including small community owned companies targeting remote areas.
ii. Encourage Member States to set up Universal Service Funds if not available, to optimise the use of and ensure accountability in usage.

e) On the United Nations' Global Digital Compact
i. Call on the ECOWAS region to participate in the United Nations' Global Digital Compact, to identify priority areas for West Africa. Specific areas as key during the session include digital cooperation for wealth creation and poverty alleviation; development of measures such as criteria and benchmarks for accountability to the global digital compact; and cooperation on policies around emerging digital currencies.
ii. Urge Member States to encourage multistakeholder involvement in policy making processes

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