IGF24

West Africa Internet Governance Forum (WAIGF) 2024

FULL REPORT

DISꓤUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

HOW FAR, THUS FAR?

Table of Contents 1

Table of Contents 1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

DISЯUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

HOW FAR, THUS FAR?

Initiated as the outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and guided by the Tunis Agenda, the West Africa Internet Governance Forum (WAIGF) is committed to advancing Internet governance across the West African region. This initiative operates under the endorsement of the United Nations and is supported by the ECOWAS Commission. WAIGF serves as a regional dialogue facilitating multistakeholder discussions on public policy issues related to the key elements of Internet governance. The forum's secretariat, based within the ECOWAS Commission, operates in unison with the IGF multistakeholder Advisory Group (IGF-MAG), ensuring that representatives from member states and stakeholders across West Africa are actively engaged in shaping the digital landscape.

Since its inception in 2008, WAIGF has provided a platform for governments, civil society organizations, academia, private sector representatives, and technical communities. The forum aims to advance awareness, capacity-building, digital transformation, content development, and socio-economic growth through inclusive, multistakeholder dialogue.

WAIGF supports and collaborates with national and regional IGF initiatives, encouraging dialogue at local levels to ensure a broader impact. A core objective of WAIGF is to facilitate multistakeholder engagement, actively involving diverse groups in discussions and decision-making processes. By providing a neutral and inclusive platform, WAIGF promotes collaboration and ensures that all perspectives are heard and considered. This approach helps to create a more comprehensive and representative dialogue on Internet governance issues and contributes to policy development processes and provides evidence-based recommendations to shape the digital future of the region.

The **WAIGF 2024** was held from **July 11 to 12, 2024,** in Dakar, Senegal. This year, WAIGF explored the impact, challenges, and opportunities presented by disruptive technologies in West Africa. Under the theme Disruptive Technologies: How Far, Thus Far?

This year's event sessions and workshops were held under **four sub-themes:**

1. **Digital Connectivity, AI & Emerging Technologies for Development:** This subtheme focused on the role of digital connectivity, artificial intelligence, and emerging technologies in driving socio-economic development in West Africa. Discussions explored strategies for leveraging these technologies to address development challenges and promote inclusive growth.
2. **Advancing Digital Economy & e-Governance:** The subtheme of advancing the digital economy and e-governance examined the transformative potential of digital technologies in driving economic growth and enhancing governance mechanisms. Participants exploredopportunities to strengthen digital financial services, e-commerce, and government services to foster inclusive and transparent societies.
3. **Digital Inclusion & Innovation:** Digital inclusion and innovation were central to ensuring equitable access to digital technologies and fostering a culture of creativity and entrepreneurship in West Africa. This subtheme delved into initiatives to bridge the digital divide, promote digital literacy, and empower marginalized communities to participate in the digital economy.
4. **Digital Rights & Online Content:** Protecting digital rights and promoting responsible online content are essential for ensuring a safe and inclusive online environment. Discussions under this sub-theme focused on regulatory frameworks, content moderation, and measures to safeguard privacy, freedom of expression, and access to information in the digital age.

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

IGF 24

EVENT STRUCTURE

DISꓤUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES
HOW FAR, THUS FAR?

WAIGF 2024 featured a variety of sessions including keynote speeches, panel discussions, workshops, and interactive breakout sessions with the following tracks:

West Africa School of Internet Governance (WASIG): The online-certified Internet governance course included 50 fellows from 15 West African countries. This was followed by a physical workshop in Dakar from July 8th to 10th, which brought together 42 fellows from the same 15 countries. The primary objective of WASIG was to build the capacity of West African stakeholders on Internet Governance issues, focusing on both prevailing and emerging issues specific to the region. The exercises aimed at capacity building and awareness-raising ensured that participants were well prepared to contribute at the national, regional, continental, and global levels of the Internet Governance process.

West Africa Youth IGF: Held on July 10, 2024, this forum convened 143 youths in Senegal and 78 participants online. The event aimed to empower young people to become proactive contributors to digital transformation and development within the region. It equipped participants with the necessary knowledge, skills, and networks to actively shape West Africa's digital future. The forum promoted collaboration, innovation, and collective action towards creating a more inclusive, resilient, and equitable digital ecosystem. Participants gained a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities of the digital age, focusing on emerging technologies, digital inclusion, cybersecurity, and economic resilience.

West Africa Internet Governance Forum (WAIGF) 2024: Held from July 11th to 12th, 2024, in a hybrid format in Dakar, Senegal, WAIGF 2024 attracted 476 participants onsite and about 135 online. The forum provided a unique platform for participants to engage with industry experts, policymakers, governments, and a broad spectrum of stakeholders integral to the Internet ecosystem in West Africa. The event featured approximately 15 workshops, 1 high-level panel and 5 plenary sessions, covering a range of topics pertinent to Internet governance and digital policy. These interactive sessions facilitated deep discussions, knowledge sharing, and collaborative problem-solving. Side events complemented the main program, offering opportunities for specialized discussions, networking, and partnership development.

Parliamentary Track: Concurrently with WAIGF from July 11th to 12th, 2024, the Parliamentary Track was attended by 39 MPs from 13 West African countries. It provided a dedicated platform for parliamentarians to address issues related to the use, evolution, and governance of the Internet and digital technologies in West Africa. The track aimed to strengthen the participation of parliamentarians in discussions on disruptive technologies and their impact on society. It featured session sand workshops focused on the forum's sub-themes, policy dialogues for exchanging ideas and experiences, and partnerships with various stakeholders to enhance the track's effectiveness.

The outcomes of these discussions and workshops will serve as action-oriented outputs for the Regional AfIGF 2024 Parliamentary Track. Insights and perspectives shared during the event will be integrated into the proceedings of the annual African IGF (AfIGF) and the UN IGF Parliamentary Track, scheduled for December 2024 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

IGF 24

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

DIS⅃UPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

HOW FAR, THUS FAR?

The 2024 West Africa Internet Governance Forum (WAIGF) attracted a diverse range of participants, reflecting the importance and reach of the event. With participation from across West Africa and beyond, the forum brought together government officials, policymakers, industry experts, academia, and civil society organizations. This broad mix of stakeholders ensured a comprehensive and multifaceted discussion on the various critical issues surrounding Internet governance in the region.`

The event's diversity was particularly notable, as it fostered a holistic view of the challenges and opportunities faced by the digital landscape in West Africa and globally. A total of 476 participants attended the forum in person, representing 26 countries physically present in Dakar. Meanwhile, the online component of the forum saw participation from 540 individuals, connecting from 36 countries worldwide.

In total, the event engaged 1,016 participants, both onsite and online, highlighting the forum's significant role in shaping Internet governance discourse at regional and global levels.

1016
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS

476
PHYSICAL PARTICIPANTS

540
ONLINE PARTICIPANTS

36
TOTAL COUNTRIES

22
SESSIONS

48
SPEAKERS

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS BY COUNTRY (ONLINE)

Number of Participants by Country (Online)
Total Participants: 540

Countries (Sorted by Participation)

- Nigeria
- Senegal
- Benin
- Ghana
- Burkina Faso
- Gambia
- Togo
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Mali
- France
- Cabo Verde
- Guinea
- Sierra Leone
- Mauritania
- Zimbabwe
- Uganda
- Niger
- Liberia
- Ethiopia
- Namibia
- Netherlands
- Mozambique
- Austria
- Mauritius
- Bangladesh
- United States
- Morocco
- India
- Belgium
- Kenya
- Germany
- China
- Switzerland
- South Africa
- Uruguay
- United Kingdom

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS BY COUNTRY ON-SITE (26 COUNTRIES), 476 PARTICIPANTS

Number of Participants per Country Onsite

Countries

- Senegal
- Mali
- Nigeria
- Ghana
- Burkina Faso
- France
- Sierra Leone
- Benin
- Gambia
- Guinea
- Mauritania
- Togo
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Niger
- Liberia
- USA
- Switzerland
- South Africa
- Belgium
- Netherlands
- Portugal
- Italy
- Cape Verde
- United Kingdom
- Guadeloupe
- Russia

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES
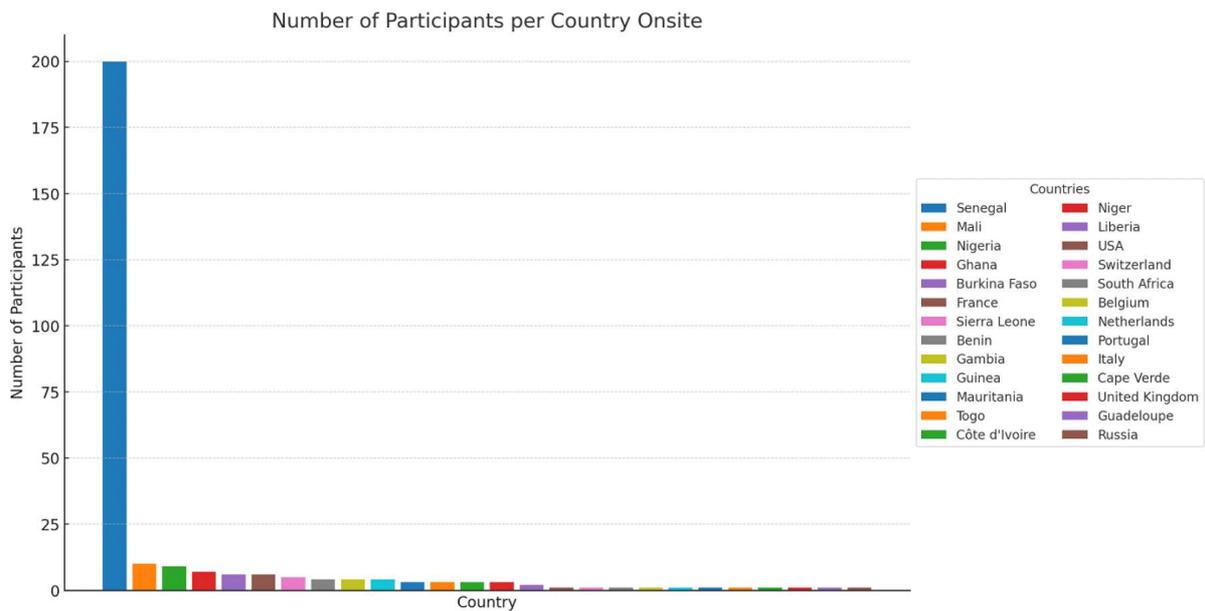
FEEDBACK FROM THE FORUM PARTICIPANTS

This year's forum was particularly engaging, offering attendees the opportunity to deepen their understanding of Internet governance, digital inclusion, and the critical intersections of AI and connectivity. The forum featured insightful discussions from leading experts and provided participants with valuable knowledge and experiences.

Many participants expressed their satisfaction with the content and structure of the sessions, describing the forum as "very informative" and a "great experience." Attendees appreciated the depth of the discussions, which offered "excellent insights" into the complexities of Internet governance in West Africa. Participants highlighted the need for increased local engagement and awareness, stressing that further efforts should be made to ensure that information and sensitization reach more grassroots communities.

Participants also frequently described the sessions as "exciting, educational, and wonderful." The interactive format of the forum allowed for a lively exchange of ideas, which many found inspiring. Attendees were particularly grateful to the speakers, panelists, and moderators for their contributions, with numerous people pointing out how these sessions were well-organized and educational. Some even noted that the event provided them with the opportunity to connect with other young people interested in Internet governance, thereby fostering valuable networking.

A significant number of online participants expressed a strong desire to attend the forum in person if financial resources could be made available to support their travel. This sentiment was echoed by multiple virtual attendees, underscoring the importance of providing travel assistance in the future to enable more comprehensive participation.

The overall feedback paints a picture of a successful and impactful event, though some logistical challenges were mentioned, such as instances where virtual participants encountered difficulties in joining sessions. Nonetheless, the forum left a great impression to its attendees, who felt both inspired and better informed about the future of Internet governance in West Africa.

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

The opening ceremony of the West Africa Internet Governance Forum (WAIGF) 2024 took place on July 11. It featured distinguished panelists, including Mary Uduma, Coordinator of WAIGF; Wisdom Donkor, Representative of the IGF Support Association; Mme. Marie Ndé SENE AHOUANTCHEDE, Program Officer for E-Government and E-Application at the ECOWAS Commission, representing Mr. Sédiko Douka, the ECOWAS Commissioner for Infrastructure, Energy, and Digitalization; Mr. Chengetai Masango, Head of the United Nations Secretariat for the Internet Governance Forum; Dr. Matar Seck, Chief of Innovation and Technology Section at UNECA; Mr. Alioune Sall, Minister of Communication, Telecommunications, and Digital Economy of Senegal; and Mr. Dahirou Thiam, Director General of ARTP Senegal

The panelists began by expressing their gratitude to the host country, Senegal, the attending parliamentarians, partners, organizers, and participants of the forum. Mary Uduma, the Coordinator of WAIGF, provided an overview of the 16th edition of the forum, highlighting that it was being held in Dakar following previous forums in Accra and Abidjan. She emphasized that WAIGF is a regional initiative of the UN in West Africa and outlined the various themes to be discussed by invited experts, including e-governance, digital connectivity, digital inclusion and innovation, and digital rights. Uduma also mentioned the forum's objective of creating a platform for dialogue among key stakeholders, including parliamentarians, on policy and governance frameworks. She stressed the importance of public policy change in the region, the need for legal and harmonized actions across West Africa, and the involvement of youth.

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

Wisdom Donkor, representing the IGF Support Association, delivered his remarks online. He provided a brief history of his organization and emphasized its strong ties with the IGF. Donkor highlighted the importance of support, particularly for the youth, and noted the significant growth of the National Regional Initiative Network (NRIs), which expanded from 37 members in 2011 to 117 in 2024. He underscored the need to develop and strengthen the ecosystem and to support community programs and engagement activities

Mme. Marie Ndé SENE AHOUANTCHEDE, representing Mr. Sédiko Douka, spoke on behalf of the ECOWAS Commissioner for Infrastructure, Energy, and Digitalization. She highlighted the pivotal role of the IGF and described the digital revolution as a powerful force of our time. Mme. Marie Ndé emphasized that disruptive technologies like AI should contribute to economic growth and improve citizens' quality of life in sectors such as agriculture and administration. She also discussed the importance of fostering local champions, assessing the readiness to adopt emerging technologies, and developing significant programs that address digital connectivity, AI, emerging technologies for development, the advancement of the digital economy and e-governance, digital inclusion and innovation, digital rights, and online content. Mme. Marie Ndé concluded by stating that ECOWAS relies on this forum to enhance its roadmap for coordinating the region's digital transformation. Dr. Matar Seck, Chief of the Innovation and Technology Section at UNECA, thanked the officials, speakers, participants, and organizers. He underscored the significance of Internet governance in West Africa and the importance of organizing such forums. Dr. Seck discussed the economic stakes for Africa and the necessity of developing and implementing Internet infrastructure. He pointed out the critical role of the private sector, given that governments alone do not have the resources.

Additionally, he highlighted West Africa's leadership in mobile money and noted that the region's high birth rate (demographic dividend) could be an advantage if education is prioritized. Dr. Seck also identified challenges such as infrastructure, digital identity, and AI training based on innovation, which requires regulatory adjustments. He posed the question of how governments, civil society, and the private sector can collaborate effectively. Dr. Seck argued that the government should establish a framework to regulate and facilitate access to the local market, prepare young people for future careers, and invest in startup development. He acknowledged the contributions of parliamentarians and the WAIGF coordinator and mentioned that the pioneers of Internet governance in the sub-region came from Mali and Senegal. He concluded with thanks to the entire Internet community.

The session also featured a significant contribution from Mr. Dahirou Thiam, Director General of ARTP Senegal. In his address, Mr. Thiam raised the crucial issue of 'technological disruption' in the face of the Internet increasingly impacted by emerging technologies. He noted that in recent years, a narrative has developed around digital technology as a vital lever for transformation and economic development. However, he stressed that to realize this vision, it is imperative to address the fundamental issues related to the Internet. Mr. Thiam also revisited the topic of Internet governance, highlighting it as an exceptional framework for addressing major issues. By bringing together all actors and experts within the ecosystem, the forum provides an excellent platform for discussing emerging challenges and opportunities related to digital governance.ca region.

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Closing the session, Mr. Alioune Sall, Minister of Communication, Telecommunications, and Digital Economy of Senegal, delivered a powerful speech on artificial intelligence and the challenges Senegal faces with this transformative technology. He emphasized that AI is undoubtedly one of the most disruptive technologies of our time and is the cornerstone of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. To harness its full potential, Senegal has established a National Strategy that reflects the country's collective aspirations for a more competitive, inclusive, and just Senegal. Sall highlighted that this strategy is particularly focused on the youth, who are expected to benefit from future training opportunities, entrepreneurial ventures, and employment in major international digital companies. He reaffirmed that Senegal's approach to AI is deeply rooted in African, specifically Senegalese, values, emphasizing inclusivity, national solidarity, trust, ethics, and data protection. Sall asserted that Senegal must not merely endure AI but must preserve its digital sovereignty, a stance that carries significant legal and regulatory implications, which will be addressed in the forthcoming data orientation law as directed by President Bassirou Diomaye Faye.

The key takeaways from the session included the importance of Internet governance, digital connectivity, AI, emerging technologies for development, the advancement of the digital economy and e-governance, digital inclusiinnovation, digital rights, online content, and training. The recommended actions highlighted the need for genuine involvement of all stakeholders, the development of local resources, the establishment of regulations for good Internet governance, the use of AI for the well-being of the population, the creation of necessary infrastructure, and ensuring that data is accessible and secure in the West Afri

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

IGF 24

THE KEYNOTE SPEECH

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

HOW FAR, THUS FAR?

In his presentation, Mr. Ndiaye emphasized the importance of understanding the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the context of its predecessors, particularly the Third Industrial Revolution, which was fueled by digital advancements and laid the foundation for today's technological era. He highlighted that the Fourth Industrial Revolution is supported by a range of technologies, including intelligent systems (big data), the Internet, the Internet of Things (IoT), biotechnology, trust frameworks, and blockchain. These technologies, according to Ndiaye, are crucial for the development of the region. Mr. Ndiaye went on to discuss the maturity levels of various emerging technologies, noting significant advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI. He pointed out the vast potential of generative AI across multiple sectors, such as art, healthcare, business, and education, and stressed its role in enhancing the overall quality of life through the integration of autonomous systems. Tracing the evolution of AI, Mr. Ndiaye noted its origins in the 1940s and highlighted key developments, including the rise of machine learning in Silicon Valley in 2013, driven by major corporations like Google and Amazon.

Addressing Africa's unique challenges, Mr. Ndiaye underscored the continent's urgent need for AI, given the numerous issues it faces, such as the necessity of digitalizing processes, managing demographic shifts, and improving life expectancy. He outlined the prerequisites for Africa to successfully transition from theory to practice in AI, which includes the need for technical expertise, industry-specific knowledge, scientific research, and robust data management strategies. Furthermore, he recommended that African nations focus on developing and managing their data effectively, digitizing administrative processes, implementing strong regulations to prevent the misuse of AI technologies, and shifting from being mere consumers to producers of technological solutions.

Mr. Ndiaye also provided examples of successful initiatives that have advanced AI capabilities, such as South Africa's leadership in supercomputing and the publication of AI-related works by Smart Africa. He highlighted the importance of international cooperation and multistakeholder collaboration in mastering AI technologies, recommending that African nations engage more actively in global AI cooperation to leverage its advancements for local benefits.

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

In concluding his address, Mr. Ndiaye offered several strategic recommendations. He urged African states to support the establishment of AI ecosystems and the development of well-structured AI strategies with a clear vision, like South Africa's comprehensive approach to emerging technologies. He emphasized that proposed strategies should address both African and global issues, such as governance, data management, infrastructure, and the broader ecosystem. Additionally, he stressed the critical need for talent development to ensure that Africa has experts capable of leveraging AI to address local challenges. Mr. Ndiaye encouraged Africans to use AI pragmatically to solve their own problems, rather than merely viewing it as a race to technological supremacy. He also advocated for simultaneous adoption of AI and effective data management by African governments.

In other discussion points, Mr. Ndiaye addressed concerns about AI potentially replacing human roles, suggesting that while this possibility is often discussed, it remains far from reality. He encouraged African nations to master

AI technology, given its significance in solving human problems. While acknowledging that Africa might not achieve the same levels of computing power as other regions, Mr. Ndiaye emphasized that the continent must focus on solving its problems with its own computing capabilities, thereby avoiding the trap of competing in a global technological race.

**DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES**

IGF 24

HIGH-LEVEL PANEL: DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES IN WEST AFRICA: HOW FAR THUS FAR?

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

HOW FAR, THUS FAR?

The High-Level Panel on 'Disruptive Technologies in West Africa: How Far Thus Far?' took place on Thursday, July 11. The session was moderated by Nnena Nkawakanma, Founding Board Member of Health AI and Technical Advisor on Digital Cooperation, with Fatou Bintou Niang serving as the rapporteur.

The panel featured a distinguished lineup of speakers, including Aissatou Jeanne Ndiaye, Director of Information and Communication Technologies at the Ministry of Digital Economy, representing Alioune Sall, Minister of Communication, Telecommunications, and Digital Economy of Senegal; Hon. Senator Shuaib Afolabi Salisu, Chairman of the Senate Committee on

Cybersecurity, Nigeria; Pierre Danjinou, Vice President of Stakeholder Engagement for Africa at ICANN; Mrs. Marie Ahouantchede, Digital Transformation Coordinator at the ECOWAS Commission; and Kadotien Alassane Soro, Regional Manager of Yango, a tech services company offering ride-hailing, delivery, and e-grocery services in West Africa.

Nnena Nkawakanma opened the session by expressing gratitude to the Minister for his speech and posed the first question to Mr. Soro, inquiring about how Yango uses AI and their future projects. She then addressed Senator Salisu, referencing Nigeria's recent publication on the digital economy and e-governance, and asked about future perspectives. Nkawakanma then invited Mr. Danjinou to present before opening the floor for responses.

Senator Salisu explained that the digital economy and e-governance review aimed to include stakeholders, highlighting three pillars for technological policies. Mr. Danjinou, after thanking the audience, discussed ICANN's role in managing and securing digital resources for sovereignty. He emphasized the significant impact of disruptive technologies on the future of the Internet and stressed the importance of how these technologies are used. Danjinou noted the critical governance of domain names and IP addresses for Africa's Internet accessibility. He mentioned a recent report on the mapping of domain names in Africa and highlighted the importance of data production and control for transforming the lives of African people. Danjinou emphasized the need to address security concerns that were not considered when the Internet was first created, stating that the future is within reach if strategies are developed to address these issues.

Mr. Soro discussed Yango's use of various AI models, including those for security, photo memory, and calculating fares and distances. He mentioned Yango's efforts in AI education and research for students. Mme. Ndiaye, representing the

Minister of Communication, Telecommunications, and Digital Economy, outlined Senegal's priorities for youth, agriculture, natural resource management, user-centered public policies, and youth education from childhood to old age.

Mrs. Ahouantchede from the ECOWAS Commission discussed the portfolio on disruptive technologies and their potential for Africa's future. She highlighted the importance of digital coordination and training as priorities for ECOWAS. Ahouantchede detailed initiatives for access to high-speed infrastructure in partnership with the World Bank and the creation of a dynamic ecosystem in collaboration with the African Development Bank. She also mentioned activities for identifying, training, and connecting entrepreneurial champions with financing partners. She concluded by emphasizing the importance of regulation as a priority.

During the discussion session, participants raised five key questions: the role of AI in healthcare in rural areas, data availability for developing business models, data protection guarantees, implementation and authenticity of regulations, and data protection by Yango. Mr. Soro responded by explaining that Yango's data protection policies comply with local regulations, such as in Côte d'Ivoire. Senator Salisu highlighted the employment opportunities created by AI for young people, countering the belief that AI is a barrier to job creation. Mme. Ndiaye explained how AI improves healthcare access in rural areas. Mrs. Ahouantchede informed the audience about ongoing regulatory efforts and data openness within the ECOWAS region, facilitated by consultancy services.

Following the Q&A session, Nnena Nkawakanma thanked the participants and panelists for their contributions and concluded the session. The discussion underscored the importance of education and awareness among all AI stakeholders, including civil society, governments, parliamentarians, and the general population. Developing laws that can regulate technologies and anticipate their rapid evolution is crucial. Additionally, there was a strong emphasis on research to enhance the policymaking process concerning technologies.

The panel highlighted the necessity for robust policy frameworks and strategic initiatives to harness the potential of disruptive technologies effectively. Insights were shared on how governments, private sector entities, and civil society can collaborate to create an enabling environment that fosters technological advancements while addressing concerns such as cybersecurity, privacy, and digital inequality. The conversation drew on regional case studies and best practices to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state and future direction of technology-driven development in West Africa.

The panel emphasized the importance of stakeholder engagement in shaping the digital future of the region. It discussed the role of various actors, including policymakers, technology experts, entrepreneurs, and the youth, in driving forward an inclusive and sustainable digital transformation. Dialogue and collaboration among diverse stakeholders aimed to generate actionable recommendations that will inform regional and international digital policy frameworks, ensuring that West Africa remains a key player in the global digital economy.

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

PLENARY SESSIONS

IGF 24

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

HOW FAR, THUS FAR?

PLENARY SESSION: GLOBAL COORDINATION AND REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR THE GLOBAL DIGITAL COMPACT AND THE SUMMIT OF THE FUTURE

The plenary session titled 'Global Coordination and Regional Cooperation for the Global Digital Compact and The Summit of the Future' took place on July 11, 2024, from 4 p.m. to 5:20 p.m. Moderated by Dr. Mactar Seck, UNECA Chief of Section Innovation and Technology, with Alasana Cham as the rapporteur, the session featured a distinguished panel of speakers: Zanyiwe Asare, Vice President and Head of Public Policy, Africa Region, YANGO; Mr. Poncelet Ileledji, CEO, JOKO Labs; Hon. Alhajie Mbow, Member of the Gambia National Parliament; Dr. Ololade Shyllon, Head of Privacy Policy, Africa, Middle East, and Turkey, Meta; and Gbenga Sesan, Executive Director, Paradigm Initiative.

Dr. Mactar Seck commenced the session by highlighting the transformative potential of digita

l technologies and the necessity for global collaboration to leverage their benefits while mitigating risks. He emphasized the significance of the United Nations' efforts in promoting digital cooperation, particularly through the proposed Global Digital Compact (GDC) to be agreed upon at the Summit of the Future in September 2024. The GDC aims to establish shared principles, objectives, and actions for achieving an open, free, secure, and human-centered digital future, thereby expediting the attainment of the UN Vision 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Dr. Seck noted the importance of including African voices and priorities in the GDC negotiations, citing the outcomes of a regional review workshop held in Cape Town in July 2023. This workshop, organized by UNECA in collaboration with the Government of South Africa, aimed to integrate Africa's perspective into the GDC. The resulting African Policy Declaration was crafted with input from over 70 delegates representing 32 member states. He underscored the necessity for a cohesive African position on the GDC negotiations, achieved through extensive regional multistakeholder consultations.

The session's objective was to facilitate discussions on the GDC drafts, negotiation successes, and challenges, addressing critical questions such as whether the current draft adequately addresses Africa's needs and priorities, what is required to implement the GDC in African contexts post-Summit, and how the draft aligns with Africa's call to action outlined in UNECA's policy declaration.sector, and civil society organizations.

Hon. Alhajie Mbow was assigned the first question, with Dr. Seck noting his role as a parliamentarian in The Gambia and ECOWAS, where he has promoted IGF principles. Hon. Mbow greeted everyone and reintroduced himself. In response to the question, he focused on connectivity and capacity building, emphasizing the need for meaningful connectivity and collaboration between the government and private entities to connect the unconnected. He stressed that the government should provide platforms for private companies to invest, such as ensuring the availability of basic facilities like electricity. Mbow also highlighted the importance of capacity building, calling for a review of the school system and curriculum to reduce technology illiteracy and ensure it reflects the aspirations of the African people. He concluded by calling for more collaboration between the government, private sector, and civil society organizations. The plenary session titled 'Global Coordination and Regional Cooperation for the Global Digital Compact and The Summit of the Future' took place on July 11, 2024, from 4 p.m. to 5:20 p.m. Moderated by Dr. Mactar Seck, UNECA Chief of Section Innovation and Technology, with Alasana Cham as the rapporteur, the session featured a distinguished panel of speakers: Zanyiwe Asare, Vice President and Head of Public Policy, Africa Region, YANGO; Mr. Poncelet Ileledji, CEO, JOKO Labs; Hon. Alhajie Mbow, Member of the Gambia National Parliament; Dr. Ololade Shyllon, Head of Privacy Policy, Africa, Middle East, and Turkey, Meta; and Gbenga Sesan, Executive Director, Paradigm Initiative.

Dr. Mactar Seck commenced the session by highlighting the transformative potential of digital technologies and the necessity for global collaboration to leverage their benefits while mitigating risks. He emphasized the significance of the United Nations' efforts in promoting digital cooperation, particularly through the proposed Global Digital Compact (GDC) to be agreed upon at the Summit of the Future in September 2024. The GDC aims to establish shared principles, objectives, and actions for achieving an open, free, secure, and human-centered digital future, thereby expediting the attainment of the UN Vision 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Dr. Seck noted the importance of including African voices and priorities in the GDC negotiations, citing the outcomes of a regional review workshop held in Cape Town in July 2023. This workshop, organized by UNECA in collaboration with the Government of South Africa, aimed to integrate Africa's perspective into the GDC. The resulting African Policy Declaration was crafted with input from over 70 delegates representing 32 member states. He underscored the necessity for a cohesive African position on the GDC negotiations, achieved through extensive regional multistakeholder consultations.

The session's objective was to facilitate discussions on the GDC drafts, negotiation successes, and challenges, addressing critical questions such as whether the current draft adequately addresses Africa's needs and priorities, what is required to implement the GDC in African contexts post-Summit, and how the draft aligns with Africa's call to action outlined in UNECA's policy declaration.

Hon. Alhajie Mbow was assigned the first question, with Dr. Seck noting his role as a parliamentarian in The Gambia and ECOWAS, where he has promoted IGF principles. Hon. Mbow greeted everyone and reintroduced himself. In response

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

to the question, he focused on connectivity and capacity building, emphasizing the need for meaningful connectivity and collaboration between the government and private entities to connect the unconnected. He stressed that the government should provide platforms for private companies to invest, such as ensuring the availability of basic facilities like electricity. Mbow also highlighted the importance of capacity building, calling for a review of the school system and curriculum to reduce technology illiteracy and ensure it reflects the aspirations of the African people. He concluded by calling for more collaboration between the government, private Dr. Seck added to Hon. Mbow's points, highlighting the issue of people lacking electricity or energy, which is crucial for any digital advancements. The discussion underscored the importance of addressing infrastructural deficiencies to ensure a robust digital ecosystem.

The second question was directed to Mr. Poncelet, focusing on collaboration between the private sector, government, and civil society. Mr. Poncelet stated that while building the Digital Global Compact, many aspects must be considered in the African context. He noted that the private sector can play a significant role in the Digital Global Compact but highlighted the challenges like the digital divide due to a lack of will and incentives from the government. Poncelet emphasized the need for the government to provide incentives and measures for the private sector to invest. He pointed out that without adequate incentives, private sector engagement remains limited. Mr. Poncelet also mentioned the importance of data for AI models and highlighted the need for local data hosting. He called for parliamentarians to understand how to engage the private sector effectively and concluded by stressing the importance of inclusive, sustainable, and beneficial development of AI in line with the UN 2030 Agenda.

Dr. Seck responded to Mr. Poncelet's points by addressing the issue of data hosting, noting that most African data is hosted outside the continent. He emphasized the importance of developing local data centers to enhance data sovereignty and reduce dependency on external data hosts. This would not only improve data security but also foster local technological innovation.

Dr. Seck then asked for a perspective on the Digital Global Compact in connection to gender, directing the question to Zanyiwe Asare. Director Asare emphasized the importance of not leaving anyone behind in the private sector economy. She highlighted Yango's services, which provide opportunities for women in a traditionally male-dominated environment. Digital tools and ecosystems mitigate risks and challenges for women, with AI features enhancing safety and security for female drivers. Asare elaborated on how Yango's initiatives have created a more inclusive environment, empowering women to participate actively in the digital economy. She stressed that digital inclusion must be a priority to ensure equitable growth and development.

Dr. Seck thanked the panelists and moved on to Dr. Ololade Shyllon, asking about privacy policies and digital security in relation to the GDC's policies. Dr. Shyllon highlighted the disparities in regulations and frameworks across the region, stressing the need for harmonization. She mentioned the outdated Malabo Convention and called for technology-neutral policies that do not stifle innovation. Dr. Shyllon emphasized focusing on existing frameworks and filling gaps rather than reinventing the wheel. She pointed out that harmonizing privacy laws and digital security policies is essential for creating a secure and trusted digital environment. Dr. Shyllon also discussed the challenges

DISЯUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

of implementing consistent regulations across different jurisdictions and the need for collaborative efforts to address these challenges.Finally, Dr. Seck asked Gbenga Sesan, Executive Director of the Paradigm Initiative, about aligning the GDC with existing frameworks. Mr. Sesan noted that initial concerns about the GDC have been addressed, and the second draft now includes a multidisciplinary and multilateral approach. He stressed the need for Africa to have a unified voice representing the government, private sector, civil society, and academia. Mr. Sesan highlighted the importance of local discussions before global forums and emphasized the need for effective capacity building. He also stressed that the issue of Internet shutdowns should be an issue of the past. Sesan elaborated on the importance of ensuring that African stakeholders are well prepared and coordinated to present a cohesive position in international negotiations. He called for increased investment in digital literacy and capacity-building programs to empower African communities.

Dr. Seck concluded by calling for digital connectivity to be recognized as a human right, addressing affordability and infrastructural issues. He then opened the floor for questions. A participant from Ghana asked how parliamentarians are pushing for laws to meet the demands of the people and how they can be held accountable. Another participant asked in French, raising concerns about local data utilization and regulatory harmonization.

The session underscored several key points, including the need for a data management strategy on the continent, addressing the digital divide through meaningful connectivity and collaboration between the government and private sector, and the necessity for educational reforms and capacity building to reduce technological illiteracy. The role of the government in providing platforms for private sector investment, such as ensuring electricity availability, was emphasized, along with the importance of data utilization through local hosting. The need for inclusive development, gender inclusion, and harmonization of privacy and security laws was also highlighted.

Recommended actions including enhancing awareness of the Digital Global Compact, prioritizing digital public infrastructure, improving digital services and connectivity, investing in capacity building, fostering collaboration between the government and private sector, leveraging emerging technologies and cybersecurity, developing and harmonizing regulations, ensuring inclusivity and gender equality, facilitating local data utilization, aligning the GDC with existing frameworks, promoting multistakeholder engagement, advocating for digital rights, and holding parliamentarians accountable for legislative progress.

The session concluded with a collective call to action, emphasizing the importance of unified African representation in the GDC negotiations. Participants were urged to continue their collaborative efforts to shape a secure and advantageous digital future for Africa, aligning with the objectives of the Global Digital Compact. This collaborative spirit was deemed essential for advancing the continent's digital transformation and ensuring that Africa's digital future is inclusive, secure, and beneficial for all.

PLENARY SESSION: ADVANCING DIGITAL ECONOMY AND E-GOVERNANCE

The plenary session titled 'Advancing Digital Economy and E-Governance' took place on July 12. Moderated by Mr. Salieu Mansaray, Chief Information Security Officer for a data analytics company and former technical advisor to the Vice President of Sierra Leone, the session featured an engaging discussion with panelists from various West African countries.

The panel included representatives from the Association of ICT Engineers in Senegal,

Hon. Almameh Gibba, a National Assembly member from The Gambia specializing in education and ICT, and Hon. Lydia Lamisi Akanvariba, a Member of Parliament from Ghana who is also part of the Communication and Information Committee and the Poverty Reduction Strategy team. Mr. Salieu Mansaray opened the session by emphasizing the critical importance of the digital economy and e-governance in West Africa. He highlighted the region's current lag in digital development compared to other global regions and stressed the urgent need for concerted efforts to improve their standing. Drawing from his extensive experience in government and data analytics, Mr. Mansaray set the stage for a comprehensive discussion on these crucial topics. The session was designed to address the pivotal role that the digital economy and e-governance play in accelerating the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in West Africa. The digital economy, as Mr. Mansaray pointed out, is a major driver of GDP growth in the region. According to the World Bank, digital technologies could contribute up to 6% to the region's GDP by 2025. Nigeria's ICT sector, for instance, accounted for 15.5% of its GDP in Q2 2021, underscoring the sector's importance to the national economy.

The discussion began with a focus on data localization and sovereignty. Mr. Mansaray highlighted the issue of African data being stored and managed outside the continent. He proposed that African nations should host their data within the continent to create jobs and ensure data sovereignty. The audience strongly supported this idea, urging representatives to advocate for policies requiring international tech companies to host data locally. The panelists also discussed the gap between policy formulation and implementation. Despite existing policies and regulations, there is a significant gap in their enforcement and practical application. Hon. Lydia Lamisi Akanvariba emphasized the need for a robust partnership between the public and private sectors to drive policy implementation effectively.

Advancing digital literacy and education was another major focus. There was a consensus on the need to integrate ICT education from the primary level. Panelists and participants agreed that ICT should be a core subject, just like English or Mathematics, to ensure that every child is digitally literate. Hon. Lydia Lamisi Akanvariba outlined the importance of starting ICT education early to build a foundation for future digital skills development. The discussion also addressed the critical need for infrastructure development to support digital education. This includes providing affordable Internet access and necessary hardware. The role of private sector partnerships was highlighted, with suggestions to encourage companies to invest in local ICT infrastructure. Panelists shared examples of successful e-governance initiatives, such as the digital governance systems in Senegal, which have improved transparency and efficiency in public services. The representative from the ICT Engineers Association of Senegal discussed ongoing efforts to enhance digital government services and the importance of continuous improvement. In Ghana, the implementation of the Ghana Integrated Financial Management Information System (GIFMIS) has enhanced budget execution and financial reporting, reducing the time needed for budget preparation by 30%. In Nigeria, the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) implemented an electronic tax filing system that increased tax compliance and revenue collection by 20% in its first year. Senegal's Government e-Procurement Platform (GEP) has improved transparency in public procurement processes, cutting procurement processing time by 50% and saving approximately $50 million annually.

Effective e-governance requires strong policy and regulatory frameworks. The discussion emphasized the need for clear guidelines and standards to ensure the successful implementation of e-governance initiatives. Hon. Almameh Gibba stressed the importance of oversight committees to ensure that these frameworks are adhered to and effectively implemented. Mr. Mansaray reiterated the importance of creating an enabling environment through effective regulatory frameworks and policies. He noted that integrating digital technologies into the economy, governance, and other sectors can stimulate innovation, generate employment, boost productivity, and improve access to and efficiency of services in West Africa.

Panelists raised several challenges that hinder the advancement of the digital economy and e-governance in West Africa. These challenges include underdeveloped digital infrastructure, the lack of accessible and affordable connectivity, limited skills for digitally enabled industries, and inadequate regulatory and policy environments. The panelists proposed that these issues must be addressed with urgency to fully realize the benefits of digital transformation in the region. They acknowledged that overcoming these obstacles would require coordinated efforts from both the public and private sectors, as well as strong commitment from governments to create supportive policies and invest in necessary infrastructure.

The panelists concluded with a commitment to advocate for the discussed policies and ensure their implementation. The session ended with a resolution to document and follow up on the recommendations made, ensuring that they reach the respective governmental bodies for action. The rapporteurs were tasked with compiling the session's outcomes and ensuring that the discussions translate into concrete policy actions.

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

The key issues raised during the session included strategies to expand and improve digital infrastructure, ensuring reliable Internet connectivity and access for all, examining existing policies and regulations, and identifying reforms needed to foster a conducive environment for the digital economy. Initiatives to promote digital literacy and bridge the digital divide, ensuring equitable access to digital tools and services, enhancing cybersecurity measures and data protection practices to safeguard against threats and ensure privacy, best practices and success stories in implementing e-governance solutions, focusing on efficiency, transparency, and citizen engagement. Exploring the role of collaborations between governments, private sector, and civil society in driving digital innovation, entrepreneurship, and governance was also emphasized.

The session aimed to develop actionable strategies for advancing the digital economy and e-governance in West Africa. The expected outcomes included developing a set of actionable recommendations for policymakers to advance digital economy and e-governance initiatives in West Africa, establishing frameworks for ongoing collaboration among stakeholders, including governments, private sector, academia, and civil society, facilitating the sharing of knowledge, experiences, and best practices in digital economy and e-governance, identifying key areas for capacity building and training to support the digital transformation agenda, and creating a roadmap for advocacy efforts to influence policy changes at the national and regional levels.

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

PLENARY SESSION: DIGITAL INCLUSION & INNOVATION IN WEST AFRICA

The session titled 'Digital Inclusion & Innovation in West Africa,' held on July 12, 2014, centered around the region's urgent need to bridge the digital divide and harness innovation for socio-economic advancement. With a population exceeding 400 million and a median age of 18.2, West Africa stands as the continent's second-largest region. Despite its youthful demographic, the region's potential is significantly hindered by challenges in digital inclusion and access – issues that were starkly exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly among the youth who constitute most of the population.

Moderated by Dr. Kossi AMESSINOU, an External Collaborating Teacher at the Institut de Formation et de Recherche en Informatique, the session gathered a diverse group of stakeholders to discuss the transformative impact of digital inclusion and innovation in West Africa. The panelists included Dr. Inoussa Traore, Special Advisor to the Presidency of Burkina Faso; Mr. Thierry ADOKO, a team member of the West Africa Unique Identification Project (WURI); Nana Kofi Asafu-Aidoo, Executive Director of the Ghana Domain Name Registry (GDNR); and Nyakeh J. B. Yormah, Acting Director of Communications at the Ministry of Communication, Technology, and Innovation in Sierra Leone. Dr. AMESSINOU set the tone by defining the key concepts of digital inclusion and innovation before introducing the panelists.

The conversation quickly highlighted the West Africa Unique Identification for Regional Integration and Inclusion (WURI) project, a significant initiative aimed at improving access to public and private services and promoting mobility within the ECOWAS region. Mr. Thierry ADOKO emphasized that WURI's primary objective is to provide universal identification, particularly to enhance access to social services for disadvantaged communities. Dr. Traore elaborated on Burkina Faso's participation in the WURI project, underlining its potential to strengthen national security through comprehensive population identification. He noted that this initiative would facilitate free movement, reduce road harassment, and support financial inclusion by identifying vulnerable individuals. From the perspective of Sierra Leone, Nyakeh J. B. Yormah underscored the broader socio-economic benefits WURI could bring, particularly in improving access to financial services, education, agriculture, and healthcare.

The session also explored efforts in Senegal to promote digital inclusion by establishing digital laboratories in rural areas, making technology more accessible to underserved populations. The panelists discussed the critical importance of enabling fintech companies to provide online services while ensuring robust data confidentiality. They stressed the need for significant investment in digital infrastructure and the necessity of public-private partnerships to address the

challenges posed by underdeveloped infrastructure, high connectivity costs, and limited digital literacy, especially in rural regions.The session titled 'Digital Inclusion & Innovation in West Africa,' held on July 12, 2014, centered around the region's urgent need to bridge the digital divide and harness innovation for socio-economic advancement. With a population exceeding 400 million and a median age of 18.2, West Africa stands as the continent's second-largest region. Despite its youthful demographic, the region's potential is significantly hindered by challenges in digital inclusion and access – issues that were starkly exposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly among the youth who constitute most of the population.

The panelists identified several key obstacles to digital transformation in West Africa, such as inadequate digital infrastructure, high connectivity costs, and limited digital literacy, particularly in rural areas. They advocated for coordinated public-private partnerships and substantial investment in infrastructure as essential steps towards overcoming these barriers. Additionally, the panel recognized the importance of establishing a collaborative framework to support digital inclusion and innovation, which includes building data centers to ensure digital sovereignty and exploring future collaborations for regional data storage.

The session highlighted that fewer than one third of Africans have access to broadband Internet, with West Africa facing significant challenges due to the rural-urban digital divide. Over half of the region's population remains without Internet access, a situation exacerbated by high connectivity costs and low digital literacy. The discussions aligned with the broader objectives of the West Africa Internet Governance Forum (WAIGF), which include adopting the African Union Commission's Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa, implementing the ECOWAS regulation on roaming, and leveraging disruptive technologies like artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the Internet of Things to address regional challenges. The session also underscored the importance of promoting digital financial inclusion, enhancing digital literacy and skills, and fostering public-private partnerships to expand digital infrastructure and services.

In conclusion, the session called for a unified effort to bridge the digital divide and foster innovation across West Africa. The discussions emphasized the need for capacity building in digital skills and entrepreneurship, strengthening regulatory frameworks, and promoting digital financial services, especially in underserved communities. The expected outcomes from the session included actionable policy recommendations, the establishment of strategic partnerships, the identification of capacity-building initiatives, and the enhancement of regulatory frameworks to support digital innovation while ensuring cybersecurity and privacy. These outcomes are intended to guide West Africa towards a more inclusive and innovative digital future, ensuring the region is well prepared to meet the challenges of the digital age.

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

PLENARY SESSION: DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY, AI, AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

The plenary session titled 'Digital Connectivity, AI, and Emerging Technologies for Development, held on Friday, July 12, 2024, was moderated by Samba SENE, Coordinator of the Senegal Digital Economy Acceleration Project (PAENS)

The panel featured Olaf Kolkman, Principal of Internet Technology, Policy & Advocacy at the Internet Society, Mr. Isidore DIOUF, Director General of Société Sénégal numérique S.A. (SENUM SA), Houégnon Geoffroy BONOU, Technical Advisor for

Projects and Reforms at the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Benin, Thys Kazad, Meta Public Policy Manager for Francophone Africa, Emmanuel Olu-Festus, Legal & Data Protection Officer at the Nigeria Internet Registration Association (NiRA), and Mr. Talla Ndiaye, Director of the Just Transformation Program.

During the session, the panelists addressed the significant disparities in Internet access between urban and rural areas in West Africa. According to the International Telecommunication Union, less than 40% of rural residents have Internet access, compared to nearly double that figure in urban regions. This digital divide exacerbates economic inequalities and hampers progress. Despite the recognized advantages of digital connectivity in sectors like education, healthcare, and agriculture, national policies and infrastructure to support these underserved communities remain lacking. Several challenges were discussed, including the high cost of mobile data and Internet-enabled devices, particularly in low-income areas. The session also explored opportunities for regional collaboration in renewable energy, the development of community networks, and governmental strategies to strengthen broadband and connectivity policies. The panelists emphasized the need to identify critical gaps, funding requirements, and data needs to improve Internet access in rural and under-served regions.

The discussion revealed several key takeaways. The importance of public policy in addressing the digital divide was underscored, alongside the vital role of organizations in supporting digital development. The integration of technology and policy was seen as essential to ensure that policies are not just theoretical but enable the practical implementation of technological solutions. The focus on digital development was highlighted, especially in underserved rural areas. Artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies such as blockchain and the Internet of Things (IoT) were identified as powerful tools that can significantly drive economic and social development. The session emphasized the need for community networks, essential back-haul infrastructure, and a supportive

regulatory environment that encourages local creativity and innovation. Additionally, the importance of data accessibility and digital literacy education from the early years of schooling was stressed as fundamental to ensuring that communities are equipped to effectively use digital tools and technologies.

In terms of recommended actions, the panelists outlined several initiatives to promote technological and digital development in West Africa. The first step involves the formulation of comprehensive public policies that address energy shortages in rural regions and support the creation and maintenance of community networks. Collaboration with key organizations such as ECOWAS and the African Union (AU) was seen as crucial to developing frameworks that facilitate the adoption and integration of emerging technologies. The panelists also called for the integration of policy and technology development to ensure that each supports the other. Emphasis was placed on the importance of introducing AI education in schools, particularly in rural areas, to prepare students for a tech-driven future.

Emerging technologies such as AI, blockchain, and IoT were recognized for their potential to enhance economic and social development. Community networks were highlighted as a viable solution to provide localized and affordable Internet connectivity, empowering rural communities to drive their own digital progress. The need to invest in essential backhaul infrastructure such as fiber, copper, or microwave connections was also noted as critical for extending connectivity to rural areas.

The establishment of a supportive regulatory framework was identified as essential for fostering innovation and investment, particularly in less profitable rural regions. Empowering local communities to develop their own connectivity solutions based on local knowledge and creativity was seen as another vital strategy. The session discussed the importance of making spectrum available, for example using TV white spaces, to improve connectivity options for rural areas. Providing financial incentives and other tools to support cost-effective connectivity solutions was recommended to make private and community-led initiatives viable. Open data for innovation was also encouraged, as accessible data can drive creativity and enable communities to develop tailored solutions based on local insights.

Investing in digital literacy and integrating digital education into primary schools were seen as essential to equipping communities with the skills necessary to use digital tools effectively. Policies should be adaptive to local realities and promote universal connectivity while supporting community-led initiatives for sustainable development. The session concluded that bottom-up innovation, enabled by local innovators, and collaboration with the private sector could further enhance efforts to connect rural communities. Satellite technology was also mentioned as a complementary tool to existing telecommunications infrastructure to connect remote and inaccessible areas.

Other discussion points included the importance of a flexible regulatory environment that encourages innovation while safeguarding public interests. The panelists stressed that regulations must keep pace with technological advancements to avoid stifling creativity and growth. Community engagement in policymaking was highlighted as a key strategy for developing more effective and sustainable solutions. The role of education in fostering a digitally literate population was also emphasized, with continuous learning opportunities and vocational training seen as vital to preparing individuals for

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

a digital economy.

The session also underlined the potential of public-private partnerships to drive technological development. By leveraging the strengths and resources of both sectors, more comprehensive and scalable solutions could be developed. The transformative potential of emerging technologies such as blockchain and IoT was also discussed, with blockchain offering enhanced transparency and security in transactions and IoT revolutionizing agriculture through precise resource management.

In conclusion, the discussion highlighted the importance of connectivity as a foundation for digital development and called for more coordinated efforts in policy implementation across the region. This would allow countries to benefit from regional synergies and address cross-border challenges such as cybersecurity and data privacy more effectively. The session advocated for a holistic approach to digital development, involving flexible regulations, community engagement, continuous education, public-private partnerships, and the strategic use of emerging technologies to drive sustainable development in West Africa.

DISЯUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

IGF24

FEATURED WORKSHOPS

DISЯUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

HOW FAR, THUS FAR?

WORKSHOP: EMBEDDING HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS WITHIN TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

The session titled 'Embedding Human Rights Considerations within Technical Infrastructure and Governance' took place on 12 July 2024 and lasted for an hour. The discussion was moderated by Don Le, with Ihueze Obilor and Dinah Van De Geest as panelists. The session began with the panelists introducing themselves and their respective organizations. Don Le, the Archival Management and Decision Talk Program Coordinator at Article 19, explained that his organization is deeply involved in engaging with technical standards bodies such as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). Ihueze Obilor, a Senior Program Officer at Paradigm Initiative, leads digital inclusion programs, while Dinah Van De Geest, also from Article 19, supports civil society organizations in engaging with technical standards development.

The discussion focused on the role of Internet infrastructure, business, and human rights. Mr. Obilor shared insights into Paradigm Initiative's transition from solely advocating for civil society to actively participating in the development of technical standards. This shift began in 2023, driven by the realization that digital inclusion must be accompanied by digital safety and privacy. He emphasized that if people are brought online without ensuring their security, the job remains incomplete. He used a restaurant analogy to explain the need for civil society to engage in the development process: just as a waiter serves food without knowing how it's prepared, civil society previously advocated for digital rights without being involved in the 'kitchen' of software development. Now, Paradigm Initiative aims to be proactive, engaging directly with developers to ensure human rights are considered from the outset.

The session highlighted several challenges faced by civil society organizations in this domain. These include a high knowledge barrier, financial constraints, lack of transparency, limited accessibility to essential documents, and the predominance of gatekeeping and political power dynamics. The conversation also touched on the differences between the IETF and ITU, noting that while the IETF is highly technical, the ITU operates on national, regional, and global levels, offering more accessible entry points for civil society. The discussion underscored the importance of AI governance, particularly in terms of ethical considerations, accountability, transparency, fairness, and security.

One key takeaway from the session was the need to question developers on how they incorporate human rights into software and applications. Embedding human rights considerations in technology ensures that digital tools serve all individuals equitably and protect fundamental rights. The session also addressed the significant barriers civil society organizations face when engaging in technical discussions, including the high knowledge gap and financial constraints. Financial support is crucial to enable these organizations to engage more effectively in training, research, and the development of tools that help embed human rights within technical infrastructure. Strengthening the technical knowledge and skills of civil society organizations is also essential to empower them to advocate for digital rights and safety more effectively.

One key takeaway from the session was the need to question developers on how they incorporate human rights into software.

WORKSHOP: EMBEDDING HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS WITHIN TECHNICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

The session discussed the importance of diversity and inclusion in software development. Developers should ensure that software is accessible and inclusive, considering factors such as language, culture, and physical abilities to make technology usable for all. Additionally, before implementing new technologies, governments and organizations should conduct human rights impact assessments to identify potential risks and mitigate adverse effects. Ethical data practices were highlighted as a priority, with organizations urged to obtain informed consent, anonymize data, and safeguard privacy rights to build trust in technology.

Collaboration among government, industry, civil society, and academia was emphasized as vital for addressing challenges and developing solutions that prioritize human rights in technology. A collaborative approach can help shift the culture within technical communities, ensuring that human rights are embedded in technical standards and infrastructure. The development of robust legal frameworks and regulatory mechanisms was also discussed as

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

WORKSHOP: AGILE APPROACHES FOR INTERNET EXCHANGE POINTS (IXPS) & INCENTIVE POLICIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF DATA CENTERS IN WEST AFRICA

The session on 'Agile Approaches for Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) & Incentive Policies for the Development of Data Centers in West Africa,' held on 11 July 2024 was moderated by Dr. Alex Corenthin, the Manager of ccTLD. sn – NIC Sénégal. Dr. Corenthin, a retired computer scientist and Associate Professor from the École Supérieure Polytechnique of UCAD, played a direct role in the establishment of the Internet in Senegal. The speakers for the session were Danny Afanhounko, CEO of Cloud Inspire, and Khoudia Gueye, FODE Technical Infrastructure Manager at FORCE-N, Université Numérique Cheikh Hamidou KANE.

The panelists began by briefly introducing themselves and their areas of expertise. Mr. Afanhounko discussed Internet Exchange Points (IXPs), which he defined as interconnection points for multiple networks to provide localized services. He noted that Africa, despite having 56 IXPs and 150 Tier III data centers, still lags behind other continents in offering cloud services. As a result, many young entrepreneurs and even established African businesses host their servers in foreign data centers to access necessary services via international Internet connections. This situation effectively reduces Africa to merely a physical location provider, with little incentive for businesses to remain on the continent. Without accompanying service offerings, data centers in Africa risk becoming obsolete.

Africa, despite having 56 IXPs and 150 Tier III data centers, still lags behind other continents in offering cloud services.

WORKSHOP: AGILE APPROACHES FOR INTERNET EXCHANGE POINTS (IXPS) & INCENTIVE POLICIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF DATA CENTERS IN WEST AFRICA

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

To address this, the African Internet Exchange Point Association (AF-IX) initiated the project of virtual IXPs to foster interconnections between different data centers across the continent, promoting high-quality services. The goal is to introduce flexibility into the exchange environment so that users in one African country, like Togo, can access services from a company based in another, such as Senegal, through direct fiber connections between data centers. Essential services that enhance the value of IXPs and data centers include video, images, messaging, and chat functionalities. Mr. Afanhounko emphasized that the Internet alone, without such services, holds little value. Mobile IXPs, which provide solutions to remote areas, were also discussed as they offer faster and more reliable information access, along with connectivity and services. Mr. Afanhounko highlighted that mobile IXPs could be instrumental in helping African entrepreneurs address the real challenges faced by rural communities. Knowing they have access to affordable connectivity, these entrepreneurs will be motivated to create solutions that drive Internet penetration, leading to significant success. With the Internet market projected to generate $2.4 trillion in revenue by 2030, a 20% increase, Africa risks missing out on substantial opportunities if it is not adequately prepared. To capitalize on this, the focus must be on IXPs, which harbors the new 'black gold'—data—and the entire value chain needed to build an African or pan-African cloud. Achieving this level of performance will require training young people in interconnection, configuration, and management tools to create and deliver the complete value chain, including building IXPs and supporting data centers in offering end-to-end cloud services.

Community-based model for IXPs, regardless of the managing structure, emphasizing teamwork, sincere collaboration, and transparent communication to build trust.

WORKSHOP: ICANN'S NEW GTLD PROGRAM, DIGITAL AFRICA, AND HOT TOPICS`

Mme. Gueye's presentation echoed many of the issues raised by Mr. Afanhounko, including the need for resilient digital infrastructure, the development of the digital economy, digital sovereignty, and the underrepresentation of African countries at the annual AfPIF meetings. She highlighted the operational challenges of national IXPs and the absence of a regional IXP in West Africa. Mme. Gueye inquired about the status of IXPs initiated by the AXIS project, a collaboration between the Internet Society and the African Union. She noted that, due to non-operational IXPs like SenIX, a Senegalese student might experience slow Internet connections when accessing content from a local university, as traffic must pass through international servers before returning to Senegal. This situation underscores the problem of local traffic being exchanged abroad.

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Mme. Gueye questioned whether the experiences of West African IXPs could be considered a success or failure and whether these IXPs host significant content providers. She pointed out the disparity in the ratio of public Internet resources to the population when comparing Africa to other continents. To address these issues, she recommended an agile approach to improve Africa's standing in this domain. Her first pillar of this approach is a community-based model for IXPs, regardless of the managing structure, emphasizing teamwork, sincere collaboration, and transparent communication to build trust. In her agile approach, open governance and the promotion of neutrality are seen as essential for the success of IXPs and for fostering trust among stakeholders. She also stressed the importance of training and raising awareness, cautioning operators and ISPs that IXPs are not competitors but crucial allies. Mme. Gueye also advocated for addressing the energy problem and considering alternative solutions such as solar power.

The session identified several key takeaways, including the issues facing IXPs in Africa, the basic concepts and importance of IXPs, the lack of services offered by data centers in Africa, the different types of IXPs (physical, virtual, and mobile), and Internet statistics in West Africa and Senegal. To advance the development of IXPs and data centers in West Africa, it was recommended that IXPs in Africa become fully operational, supported by government policies that provide financial and fiscal incentives to stimulate the sector.

Community-based model for IXPs, regardless of the managing structure, emphasizing teamwork, sincere collaboration, and transparent communication to build trust.

WORKSHOP: ICANN'S NEW GTLD PROGRAM, DIGITAL AFRICA, AND HOT TOPICS`

The establishment of a regional IXP in West Africa was also deemed crucial. African governments must implement incentive measures to boost the sector and ensure that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have well-structured business models. IXPs should clearly define their procedures and make them widely known. Additionally, African states must ensure the availability and continuity of energy supply. Sensitization and advocacy efforts with regional bodies such as ECOWAS, the African Union, and national governments are also necessary.

Other points of discussion included the promotion of local content and the need for political will among the ruling class to clearly express a genuine desire to develop the digital economy in Africa. This includes encouraging the establishment of Content Delivery Networks (CDNs) and facilitating national peering policies, which would significantly

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

impact Internet costs.

WORKSHOP: ICANN'S NEW GTLD PROGRAM, DIGITAL AFRICA, AND HOT TOPICS

The session on 'ICANN's New gTLD Program, Digital Africa, and Hot Topics,' held on 11 July 2024 featured Yaovi Atohoun, Director of Stakeholder Engagement & Operations for Africa at ICANN, as the speaker. The session began with Mr. Atohoun introducing himself and providing a brief overview of his presentation. He started by giving a refresher on ICANN, its role, and emphasizing that his discussion would focus specifically on generic top-level domains (gTLDs). He explained the three key areas under ICANN's purview: protocol parameters, names, and numbers. He highlighted that numbers refer to IP addresses, which are crucial for connecting equipment to the Internet, enabling users to engage in activities such as remotely monitoring their homes equipped with cameras. All connected devices communicate via IP addresses.

Mr. Atohoun pointed out that there are two categories of IP addresses: IPv4 and IPv6, although he chose not to delve into the details. He mentioned that IPv4 addresses, in particular, have been limited resources at certain times. ICANN, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, allocates blocks of IP addresses to different regions (such as Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, etc.). He found it noteworthy that any organization can directly approach AFRINIC, the regional Internet registry for Africa, to obtain these addresses. He also emphasized that the Internet is not solely a technical domain but includes policy discussions that anyone can participate in.

Mr. Atohoun described the unique structure of ICANN, which includes an organization of around 400 staff members and a community with structured entities like the Government Advisory Committee (GAC), representing governments and intergovernmental organizations. He encouraged participants to engage more with ICANN by visiting their official website (www.icann.org) for further information and participating in public comment opportunities.

He highlighted the significant increase in the number of new generic top-level domains since 1980, thanks to the ICANN community. From just seven in 1980, the number grew to 14 in 2005, 22 in 2012, and now exceeds 1,200. ICANN is preparing to open a new round for acquiring these new extensions. As an example, he mentioned that the city council of Durban could apply for the '.durban' extension, or any individual could request an extension to use their name.

To facilitate this, ICANN has established two programs: the Applicant Support Program (ASP), which assists applicants (such as communities) that lack financial or technical resources, with a French version of the Applicant Support Handbook available to guide them, and the Registry Service Provider (RSP) program, which helps organizations without technical means by allowing them to use services from other providers. ICANN evaluates these providers. Mr. Atohoun concluded by sharing links to various ICANN platforms and continued to encourage the audience, and Africans in general, to actively participate in ICANN activities.

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

The session underscored several key takeaways, including a reminder of ICANN's role, mission, organization, Board of Directors, and community, as well as the categories of IP addresses (IPv4, IPv6). It also highlighted the importance of building a more inclusive Internet through new generic top-level domains and the upcoming round of gTLDs. Additionally, the session touched on the RDRS program (Registration Data Request Service).

Community-based model for IXPs, regardless of the managing structure, emphasizing teamwork, sincere collaboration, and transparent communication to build trust.

WORKSHOP: ICANN'S NEW GTLD PROGRAM, DIGITAL AFRICA, AND HOT TOPICS˙

Recommended actions including urging African stakeholders to engage more with ICANN activities, such as public comments, and encouraging African governments that do not yet have representatives on the GAC to do so. The African community is also encouraged to explore the RDRS program and participate in the upcoming webinar on 30 July 2024. All Africans are invited to visit the ICANN website (www.icann.org), the e-learning platform (learn.icann.org), or contact queries.nairobiec@icann.org or gseafrica@icann.org for more information.

Other discussion points included the fact that Africa is the only region where IPv4 addresses are still available through AFRINIC, and that there is a limited number of domain names per country, capped at one. It was also noted that some African governments have not yet sent representatives to the GAC, despite previous correspondence from ICANN encouraging them to do so.

WORKSHOP: META PLATFORMS OPEN AI

The Meta Workshop and Discussion on Open AI featured Olivia Tchamba, Public Policy Manager for Francophone Africa, and Ololade Shyllon, Head of Privacy Policy for Africa, the Middle East, and Turkey. The workshop began with introductory remarks by Ms. Tchamba, setting the stage for a detailed presentation by Ms. Shyllon, who covered several

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

key topics related to AI.

The session started by contextualizing the technological evolution of AI, emphasizing that its origins are not as recent as many might think. The introduction included a definition of AI, distinguishing between classical AI, which primarily processes existing data, and generative AI, which creates new data. Ms. Shyllon elaborated on the functionality of AI, discussing its significant applications in scientific discovery, productivity optimization, and security enhancement, thereby highlighting the vast opportunities AI presents across various sectors.

In her discussion of AI at Meta Platforms, previously known as Facebook, Ms. Shyllon provided a historical overview of AI implementation within the company. Since 2004, Meta has developed various language models, some proprietary and others made available to the public. The progression of these models began with LLM OPT-175B, followed by Llama 1 in 2021, which was not widely released. Llama 2, however, was made publicly available for coding purposes, and in April 2024, Llama 3 was launched.

Community-based model for IXPs, regardless of the managing structure, emphasizing teamwork, sincere collaboration, and transparent communication to build trust.

WORKSHOP: ICANN'S NEW GTLD PROGRAM, DIGITAL AFRICA, AND HOT TOPICS`

The session also addressed Meta's stance on open-source AI, highlighting its benefits and the necessary exceptions. The principle of open source is considered advantageous for fostering innovation by providing broader access and greater control, which in turn reduces computational costs and makes innovation more affordable. Open source allows for more customizable and predictable solutions, thereby encouraging innovation. For Meta, open source is particularly beneficial as it stimulates both internal and external innovation, draws on an active developer community, and enhances products through external contributions. Additionally, open source helps reduce costs while increasing the flexibility and customization of solutions. However, Ms. Shyllon also acknowledged that in certain circumstances, open-source might not be appropriate and may require adaptations or special considerations.

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

WORKSHOP: RESILIENCE OF INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE IN SENEGAL AND WEST AFRICA

Ms. Shyllon's presentation then focused on three crucial aspects of responsible AI: privacy and security, fairness and inclusion, and transparency and control. Regarding privacy and security, she stressed that the use of AI necessitates careful attention to these issues due to the sensitivity of the data collected, processed, stored, interconnected, and reused, especially in generating cross-referenced data. Ensuring data protection is critical in AI applications and remains central to Meta's privacy policies. On the topic of fairness and inclusion, Meta is committed to ensuring that AI functions equitably for everyone. To this end, they continue to develop and expand tests and tools aimed at minimizing potential biases and promoting a more inclusive and accessible AI. Meta continuously assesses whether their policies adequately address the unique harms experienced by specific sub-populations to guarantee fairness and inclusion. In terms of transparency and control, Meta aims to enhance public understanding of AI by providing tools and resources such as 'model cards' and 'system cards' to increase transparency. Ms. Shyllon also emphasized Meta's commitment to using AI responsibly, underlined by the development of a guide for responsible AI use.

Throughout the panel, key points were highlighted, including a reminder of AI's historical background, with particular emphasis on the fact that AI has been part of technological development for decades. Meta, for instance, introduced AI in 2004 with the creation of Facebook, and long before that, the first chatbot was developed in 1956. The discussion underscored the opportunities provided by AI, especially through an open-source approach that stimulates innovation by offering broader access and control. Meta's focus on open-source AI and its impact on innovation and creativity was a central theme of the session. Furthermore, the panel highlighted Meta's responsible and collaborative approach to AI, advancing both the capabilities of AI and the responsible use of this technology.

As the session concluded, discussions turned to concerns about AI's impact on employment and the need to strike a balance to ensure that AI ultimately benefits humanity. Ms. Shyllon ended the session on a positive note, emphasizing the importance of adapting to technological advancements and encouraging the audience to view AI positively as a source of opportunities.

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

WORKSHOP: RESILIENCE OF INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE IN SENEGAL AND WEST AFRICA

The session on 'Resilience of Internet Infrastructure in Senegal and West Africa', held on 11 July 2024 was moderated by Bocar KANE. The panel featured Pr. Ahmath Bamba Mbacké from the Internet Society (ISOC) Sénégal, Pr. Idrissa SARR from Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar and ISOC Sénégal, Cédric Adrien Mbeyet, Stakeholder Development Manager at AFRINIC, and Francis Alaneme, Application Support Manager at the Nigerian Internet Registration Association (NIRA).

The session began with the moderator highlighting the critical importance of the Internet in the daily lives of users, which makes it essential to discuss its resilience and accessibility. The concept of resilience encompasses various aspects, such as network quality, redundancy, and security. A key question posed during the discussion was what measures are currently being implemented to ensure that the Internet remains resilient in Senegal and across West Africa.

In his presentation, Pr. SARR noted that several studies have been conducted on the resilience of the Internet in different countries, with the findings available on platforms such as ISOC Pulse. These studies evaluate countries based on criteria such as infrastructure, governance, awareness, and security. He emphasized that in Senegal, there is a need to focus on improving the availability of resources that would enable the local hosting of data and services and the establishment of local Internet exchange points. He also pointed out that Senegal has implemented a set of redundant protocols to secure services associated with the. SN domain. The country remains attentive to ICANN's recommendations to enhance its country code top-level domain (ccTLD) extensions.

The concept of resilience encompasses various aspects, such as network quality, redundancy, and security.

WORKSHOP: RESILIENCE OF INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE IN SENEGAL AND WEST AFRICA

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

Cédric Adrien Mbeyet raised the question of who is responsible for ensuring Internet resilience. He argued that it should be a multistakeholder approach, where every sector – government, civil society, the private sector, and relevant organizations – plays a role. At AFRINIC, they support the establishment and strengthening of critical infrastructure at Internet exchange points, which are vital because their unavailability can significantly impact Internet functionality. AFRINIC also prioritizes capacity building and raising awareness among all stakeholders involved in the Internet ecosystem.

Francis Alaneme emphasized that collaboration among various Internet actors is crucial for achieving a resilient Internet. He specifically highlighted the importance of interoperability among operators at Internet exchange points.

Pr. Mbacké addressed the geopolitical aspects of Internet resilience, stressing the need for agreements between states to achieve resilience at a sub-regional level. He pointed out that a state's level of Internet resilience is often linked to its GDP, making it essential to raise awareness among governments about the importance of investing in resilient infrastructure.

The concept of resilience encompasses various aspects, such as network quality, redundancy, and security.

WORKSHOP: RESILIENCE OF INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE IN SENEGAL AND WEST AFRICA

The second part of the discussion focused on the risks of investing in digital development, considering the challenges that still need to be addressed in improving Internet resilience in West Africa. The discussion concluded with a consensus on the necessity of developing 'Made in Africa' solutions and strategies. Achieving this requires strong political will and a clear vision to build an African Internet with solutions created on the continent rather than merely adapted for it.

The main points of discussion included the quality of network infrastructure, redundancy and security, the interoperability of Internet service providers, service resilience, and the negative impact of Internet shutdowns at the state level.nal security. The session also addressed the need for cultural sensitivity in

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

WORKSHOP: STRENGTHENING CYBERSECURITY WITH AI: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR WEST AFRICA

The session titled 'Strengthening Cybersecurity with AI: Opportunities and Challenges for West Africa' took place on July 12, 2024. It was moderated by Balla Kane, an associate officer at Global Cybercrime Program managed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The panelists included Dame Diongue, a computer science researcher at the Gaston Berger University of Saint-Louis and representative of ASCII, and Warrant Officer Papa Djibril Ngom, an expert in cybersecurity and a trainer/researcher at the National School of Cybersecurity with Regional Vocation.

AI's potential to detect cyber threats was emphasized, but the panel also pointed out that AI requires substantial data to be truly effective

WORKSHOP: STRENGTHENING CYBERSECURITY WITH AI: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR WEST AFRICA

The session explored various facets of cybersecurity, with a particular focus on the role of AI, digital investigation, and capacity building in North and West Africa. The discussion underscored the importance of digital inclusion and

awareness, highlighting recent initiatives, challenges, and advancements in cybersecurity. One of the key topics discussed was the role of AI in enhancing cybersecurity measures. AI's potential to detect cyber threats was emphasized, but the panel also pointed out that AI requires substantial data to be truly effective. The discussion included insights from a workshop held in Niger, which introduced AI tools for detecting AI-generated images, particularly in the context of combating child exploitation. The workshop also highlighted the disparity in digital maturity between North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa, illustrating the varying levels of preparedness and response capabilities in these regions.

The panelists identified three main components of cyber criminality: digital investigation, prevention, and capacity building. These aspects were discussed in the context of ongoing efforts in the region, such as the workshops in Senegal aimed at enhancing the knowledge and prevention strategies for cyber criminality among teachers. The conversation also touched upon the infrastructure needed for effective cybersecurity, noting that it requires more than

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

just physical systems; it also needs expert collaboration and robust national implementation strategies. The role of the private sector was acknowledged as crucial, particularly in providing advanced tools and coordinating national cybersecurity strategies. Furthermore, the panelists stressed the importance of cultural sensitivity in cybersecurity practices, emphasizing that these practices must consider local contexts and include comprehensive user education to be effective.

The session concluded with several recommended actions for moving forward. It was suggested that Sub-Saharan African countries invest more in enhancing their cybersecurity infrastructure and systems. There was also a call to expand and standardize digital training programs for educators and other stakeholders across the region to ensure that all involved parties are well equipped to handle cybersecurity threats. The promotion of AI research and integration was highlighted as a critical step in improving cyber threat detection and management across the region. Strengthening international cooperation was deemed essential for sharing knowledge and resources across countries, helping to bolster cybersecurity efforts collectively. The importance of improving cybersecurity awareness among Internet users was also emphasized, with the need to develop and implement educational programs that inform users about safe practices and the risks associated with cyber threats. Additionally, the session recommended strengthening and enforcing laws designed to protect vulnerable populations, especially children, from online exploitation. It was also noted that cybersecurity policies and practices should take cultural factors into account to ensure they are appropriate and effective within different contexts. Support was also advocated for initiatives like Liberia's plan to build a cybersecurity lab dedicated to research and development in the field.

During the discussion, several additional points were raised. The disparity in digital maturity between North Africa and less advanced countries was a key concern, particularly how these countries can catch up in terms of digitalization and cybersecurity. Best practices for managing data for AI in cybersecurity applications were also discussed, as well as the effectiveness of cybersecurity workshops in achieving their goals and what improvements might be necessary. The roles of the public and private sectors in national cybersecurity strategies were examined, with a focus on how they can collaborate more effectively to enhance natio

cybersecurity strategies, discussing how these strategies could be adapted to reflect the cultural differences across various regions to ensure they are effective and inclusive.

The session concluded with some final remarks on related issues. The historical context of AI was briefly mentioned, noting that AI technologies have been evolving since the 1990s and are now crucial for future cybersecurity efforts. Challenges related to connectivity were also discussed, particularly the need for more rigorous monitoring and management of Internet connectivity as data flow increases across the region. Additionally, the risks associated with password management were highlighted, especially the dangers of allowing browsers to remember passwords, which can pose significant security threats. Finally, the importance of basic security practices, such as locking laptops, was emphasized as a simple yet crucial step in maintaining both personal and professional cybersecurity, ensuring privacy, and complying with necessary policies.

The session was a comprehensive exploration of the current state of cybersecurity in West Africa, with a particular focus on the role of AI in addressing the region's challenges and the steps needed to improve cybersecurity efforts across the continent.

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

IGF 24

THE PARLIAMENTARIAN TRACK

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

HOW FAR, THUS FAR?

During the WAIGF, a dedicated session were organized for 37 Parliamentarians from 14 West African countries, focusing on key topics such as:

- Building a Multistakeholder Digital Cooperation
- Content Policies and Moderation
- Evaluating, Valuing, and Regulating Digital Platforms in Digital Economies

A significant outcome of the regional Parliamentary Track was the establishment of the West Africa Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance (WAPNIG). This network is committed to fostering the exchange of ideas and best practices related to digital policies and regulations across the West African region.

Besides participating in other high-level and plenary sessions of the West Africa IGF, Parliamentarians met West Africa IGF Stakeholders, namely representatives of the West Africa Youth IGF and of the West Africa School on Internet Governance to encourage collaborations with youth and school graduates.

SESSION 1: BUILDING A MULTISTAKEHOLDER DIGITAL COOPERATION

The concept of resilience encompasses various aspects, such as network quality, redundancy, and security.

SESSION 1: BUILDING A MULTISTAKEHOLDER DIGITAL COOPERATION

The session began with a brief introduction by moderators Miss Mariam Jobe and Hon. Alhagie Mbow from The Gambia. Miss Jobe outlined the session's key objectives, the discussions expected to take place, and the anticipated outcomes. She introduced the panelists and acknowledged the significant role played by Hon. Shuaibu Afolabi Salisu, a Nigerian Senator, in organizing the session. Hon. Mamadou Niang from the Senegalese National Assembly expressed his delight at the presence of fellow parliamentarians at the West Africa IGF, hosted by the Senegalese Government. Miss Celine Bal emphasized the importance of this inaugural parliamentary track for West Africa and stressed the need for its continuation.

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

In his opening remarks, Hon. Shuaibu Afolabi Salisu expressed gratitude to the Senegalese Government for hosting the event and highlighted the significance of regional cooperation in policymaking to create a conducive environment for the Internet. He emphasized the importance of inclusive policies that involve youth and women in advancing Africa's development. He concluded by noting the historical significance of the maiden West Africa Parliamentary track in promoting Internet-based democracy and regional unity, referencing the ongoing efforts towards a single currency.

Hon. Alhagie Mbow discussed the alignment of subregional and global efforts, emphasizing the need to maintain sovereignty in the digital age. He recalled the initiation of the global IGF parliamentary track in 2019 and its goals. He encouraged collaboration between parliamentarians and other stakeholders and invited panelists to share successful examples of such partnerships.

Mr. Gbenga Sesan highlighted the 2019 Nigerian digital rights bill as a successful collaboration between the private sector and parliamentarians. He urged the development of data protection bills and the review of outdated laws. Sesan stressed the need for cooperation between the private sector and government to foster a thriving digital environment for Africa's young population. He concluded by urging parliamentarians to support executive efforts in passing relevant bills for digital cooperation.

Mr. Kadotien Alassane Soro provided an overview of Yango, describing it as more than just an e-hailing taxi platform but a solution-driven company that improves users' lives and creates economic opportunities. He appreciated the openness of member states' governments in facilitating innovation and transparency in services. Mr. Cedrick Adrien Mbeyet explained the basics of Internet routing and its importance in enabling services like Yango. He highlighted the unequal distribution of resources among global registries, with Africa having the lowest, and emphasized the need for more collaboration to improve these numbers. Mbeyet concluded by stressing that AFRINIC exists as a result of African collaboration, making continued cooperation essential.

The concept of resilience encompasses various aspects, such as network quality, redundancy, and security.

SESSION 1: BUILDING A MULTISTAKEHOLDER DIGITAL COOPERATION

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

SESSION 2: CONTENT POLICIES AND MODERATION

In the second session titled 'Content Policies and Moderation,' the discussion was moderated by Celine Bal and Mariam Jobe, with Amina Ramallan serving as the rapporteur. The panelists included Miss Olivia Tchamba, the Public Policy Manager for Francophone Africa at Meta, and Miss Emilar Gandhi, the Team Lead for Stakeholder Engagement at Meta.

The session began with Miss Olivia Tchamba outlining Meta's current efforts in content policies, content moderation, and the processes involved in developing and applying rules for moderation. She provided an overview of Meta's mission, which seeks to balance the empowerment of users with the need to maintain platform security. Highlighting Meta's global reach, which includes 3.8 billion users worldwide and 204 million users in Africa, she discussed the security tools available to help users stay safe. Miss Tchamba emphasized the importance of user feedback and invited parliamentarians to suggest online actions that should be prohibited. The responses included concerns about pedophilia, piracy, violence, and fraud, all of which Miss Tchamba confirmed are already addressed within Meta's standards.

Following her remarks, Miss Olivia Tchamba introduced Miss Emilar Gandhi, who elaborated on the development of Meta's community standards. Miss Gandhi explained that Meta consults with external stakeholders to ensure that user insights are incorporated into the community standards. These standards address issues such as hate speech, bullying, violence, nudity, and harassment. She also discussed how the content policy team collaborates with Meta's global operational team to develop effective technology for content moderation. Despite some regional misalignments, she noted that community standards are clearly explained for global understanding.

Miss Gandhi further highlighted the positive outcomes that users achieve through Meta platforms, underscoring the inclusion of stakeholders in policy development discussions. She added that Meta employs AI technology to detect and moderate content that violates community standards, with users also having the ability to report such content. Miss Gandhi proposed that more in-depth sessions could be arranged for parliamentarians to gain a deeper understanding of specific Meta content policies and moderation initiatives. She concluded by noting Meta's global engagement with parliamentarians on regulation and the importance of African voices in strengthening community standards.

During the question and comment period, a member of parliament raised the issue of directing some of the revenue generated from Meta's operations in Africa towards advancing the continent's digital revolution. Another member expressed concerns about the potential risks associated with data leaving the continent, to which it was noted that developing Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) is crucial to ensure that data remains local, thereby minimizing the need for data to leave the region before returning.

Miss Olivia Tchamba concluded the session by reiterating Meta's ongoing engagement with parliamentarians worldwide to discuss regulation and platform usage. She emphasized the importance of contributions from African voices in shaping robust community standards. The session concluded with the recognition that more detailed discussions on specific content moderation topics should be arranged, and that ongoing dialogue between Meta and parliamentarians is essential to refining content policies and moderation practices.

Key takeaways from the session included the fact that Meta has 3.8 billion users globally, with 204 million in Africa, and provides various security tools to keep users safe. The session also emphasized Meta's commitment to engaging with external stakeholders when developing community standards, as well as its reliance on AI technology to assist in content moderation. The need for Meta to consider channeling some of its revenue back into Africa's development was also highlighted.

Recommended actions from the session included the continuation of dialogue between Meta and the West African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance (WAPNIG) to refine content policies and moderation practices. Additionally, member states were encouraged to develop or utilize available Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) to ensure data remains local. Lastly, it was suggested that Meta be consulted for more in-depth capacity-building sessions for parliamentarians to provide greater insight when passing relevant bills, laws, and regulations.

SESSION 3: DIGITAL PLATFORMS IN DIGITAL ECONOMIES – EVALUATION, VALUE, AND REGULATION

The session on 'Digital Platforms in Digital Economies – Evaluation, Value, and Regulation' was held on 12 July 2024. It was moderated by Zanyiwe Asare, Vice President and Head of Public Policy for the Africa Region at Yango. The session featured Mr. Roman Snetskoi, Antitrust Manager at Yango, as a panelist.

The discussion began with an exploration of the role of digital platforms in various sectors, including ride-hailing, video-sharing, social networks, food delivery, and advertising. Roman Snetskoi highlighted the significant growth in Internet usage in Sub-Saharan Africa, where there was a 115% increase in Internet users between 2016 and 2021. This growth, along with a rise in digital payments and improved Internet speeds, sets a strong foundation for the expansion of e-services across the continent, thereby unlocking substantial digital potential in Africa.

The session then delved into the value that digital platforms bring to users, businesses, and governments. Mr. Snetskoi discussed how digital platforms have transformed traditional markets, particularly in the areas of taxi services and food ordering. For instance, the integration of digital platforms has revolutionized how taxi services are ordered, accepted, and completed, leading to more streamlined operations and quicker transactions.

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

A significant portion of the session focused on the challenges of regulating digital platforms, especially concerning competition law. The discussion centered on whether existing legislation should be adapted to address these new challenges or if specific new legislation should be introduced. The panelists weighed the benefits and drawbacks of both approaches, emphasizing the importance of finding a balance between effective regulation and fostering innovation.

The session concluded with a discussion on the importance of involving the private sector in the regulatory process. The panelists suggested organizing conferences and workshops to facilitate discussions on ongoing issues and to gather input from digital platform operators. This collaborative approach aims to ensure that digital markets develop in a way that benefits all stakeholders while maintaining fair competition and promoting innovation.

In summary, the session provided an insightful analysis of the transformative impact of digital platforms on various markets, the economic value they generate, and the complex regulatory challenges that need to be addressed. The discussions highlighted the importance of cooperation between regulators and the private sector to foster the growth of digital economies in a way that is both innovative and fair.

SESSION 4: PARLIAMENTARY COLLABORATION FOR ADVANCING INTERNET GOVERNANCE IN WEST AFRICA

The session focused on establishing the West African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance (WAPNIG) and officially launching the network. The discussion began with each onsite member of parliament (MP) introducing themselves and sharing their specific areas of concern, which would be addressed in the network's dedicated activities. These concerns included capacity building for MPs on using the Internet and digital technologies, general Internet governance, legislation around digital taxation, the impact of digital technology on employment, digital inclusion of vulnerable groups, digitization of parliaments, data governance and protection, artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, and the exchange and implementation of best practices.

The structure of WAPNIG was formed during the session, ensuring both gender balance and geographical distribution. Senator Shuaib Afolabi Salisu from Nigeria was appointed as Chair, with Hon. Mamadou Niang from Senegal as Co-Chair. Hon. Alhagie Mbow from The Gambia was named Coordinator, and Hon. Yao Yao Lazare from Côte d'Ivoire as Deputy Coordinator. Hon. Lydia Akanvariba from Ghana was appointed Treasurer, with Hon. Gerard from Benin as Deputy Treasurer. Hon. Fatou Ba from Senegal was designated for Public Relations, and the Secretariat will be managed by Mr. Benjamin Ikibah and Miss Mariam Jobe. Draft Terms of Reference, outlining memberships and responsibilities, will be shared with MPs for their review and comments.

Key takeaways from the session included the MPs' concerns about capacity building, digital taxation, employment shifts due to digital technology, digital inclusion, the digitization of parliaments, data governance, artificial intelligence, and the exchange of best practices. Additionally, MPs were encouraged to share reports on current practices and legislation

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

from their respective ECOWAS countries with WAPNIG.

The session concluded with several recommended actions. MPs were asked to inform their Heads of Parliament about WAPNIG via an official communique. Senator Shuaib Afolabi Salisu, as the convener of WAPNIG, will write to the ECOWAS Parliament and meet with the ECOWAS commissioner. The WAPNIG Secretariat will draft the Terms of Reference and develop a 2024 calendar of activities based on the areas of concern highlighted by MPs. A survey may also be conducted to gather additional input. Planned activities include online workshops, capacity-building initiatives with interested partners, and involvement in IGF-related activities.

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

THE WEST AFRICA SCHOOL OF INTERNET GOVERNANCE

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

HOW FAR, THUS FAR?

The West Africa School of Internet Governance (WASIG) is dedicated to enriching the multistakeholder model by fostering opportunities for individuals from underserved and underrepresented communities to engage actively in the West African Internet Governance ecosystem. The 7th edition of WASIG was held online from May 20th to June 20, 2024, followed by an in-person session in Dakar, Senegal, on July 14, 2024.
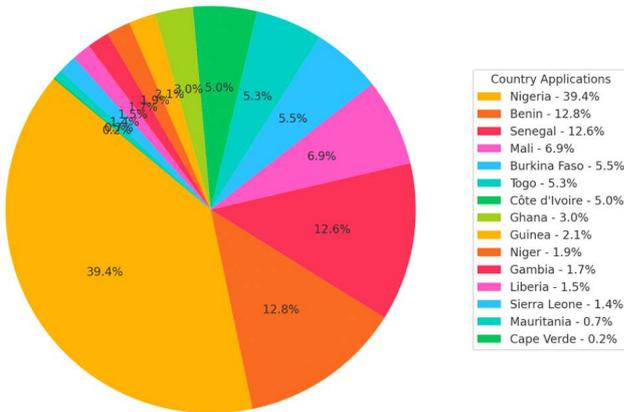
WASIG is designed as a one-month certified online courses, culminating in a three-day intensive learning session in Dakar. The program offers participants insights into Internet governance from both global and West African perspectives. It features fireside chats with experts and provides opportunities for engagement in the West Africa Youth IGF and WAIGF in Senegal. Upon successful completion, participants are awarded certificates. The curriculum covers key topics such as the evolution of the Internet, the history of Internet Governance (IG), mapping of IG processes and actors, the classification of IG issues within the African context, and a deep dive into emerging challenges such as Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Cybersecurity, Digital Economy, and Human Rights. Additionally, the program includes a digital policy practicum.
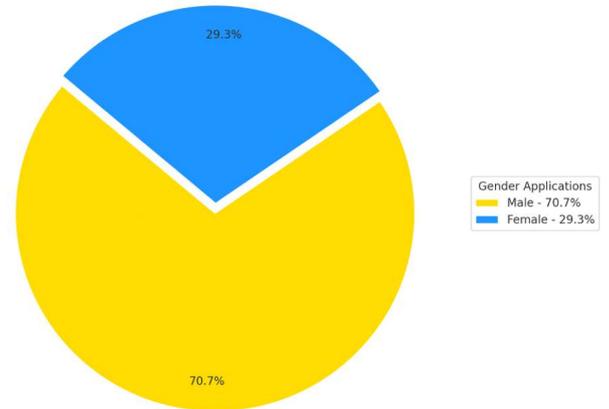

WASIG is designed as a one-month certified online courses, culminating in a three-day intensive learning session in Dakar.

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

Application distribution by country
Total Applicants: 1272

Application distribution by gender
Total Applicants: 1272

Country Applications
- Nigeria - 39.4%
- Benin - 12.8%
- Senegal - 12.6%
- Mali - 6.9%
- Burkina Faso - 5.5%
- Togo - 5.3%
- Côte d'Ivoire - 5.0%
- Ghana - 3.0%
- Guinea - 2.1%
- Niger - 1.9%
- Gambia - 1.7%
- Liberia - 1.5%
- Sierra Leone - 1.4%
- Mauritania - 0.7%
- Cape Verde - 0.2%

Gender Applications
- Male - 70.7%
- Female - 29.3%

This year, applications were invited from stakeholders across West Africa, with a focus on attracting key actors or decision-makers in Internet governance or ICT policy processes. Applicants were expected to be capable of contributing to IG activities within their institutions, countries, the continent, and globally. The program welcomed candidates from all stakeholder groups, including youth and women's groups, civil society, the private sector, media, government offices and regulatory agencies, security and defense forces, academia, technical communities, archives, libraries, documentation centers, parliaments, and West African regional institutions.
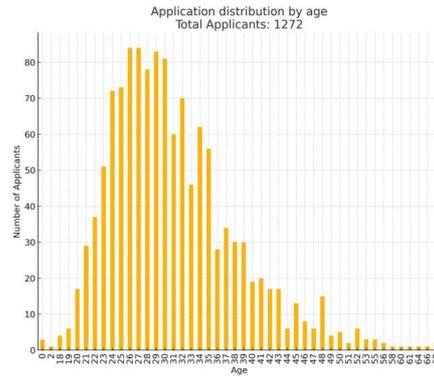
A total of 1,270 individuals from 15 West African countries applied for the program this year. Out of these, 100 participants were selected for the online program, and 42 attended the in-person session in Dakar, representing 14 West African countries. These participants came from diverse backgrounds, encompassing government, technical, academic, civil society, and private sector stakeholders from countries such as Nigeria, Benin, Mali, Guinea, Ghana, The Gambia, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Cabo Verde, Togo, and Liberia.

The sessions at WASIG 2024 were thorough, addressing a broad spectrum of topics crucial to Internet governance in West Africa.
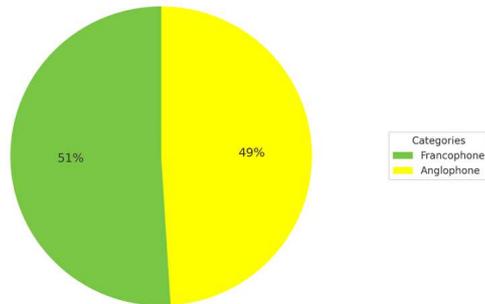
SESSION 1: INTERNET GOVERNANCE HISTORY, ACTORS, NRIS, ISSUES, AND WHY IT MATTERS FOR WEST AFRICA

The session on 'Internet Governance History, Actors, NRIs, Issues, and Why It Matters for West Africa,' held on July 9, 2024, was moderated by Nnenna Nwakanma, Technical Advisor on Digital Cooperation at HealthAI. The session provided an in-depth exploration of Internet governance, focusing on the collective efforts to develop and implement principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures that shape the evolution and utilization of the Internet. The discussion began by tracing the historical development of Internet governance, from its early days as a research initiative to its emergence as a crucial global network influencing various aspects of life.
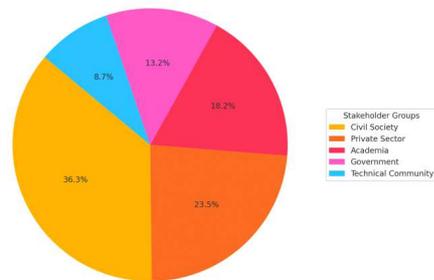
Application distribution by age
Total Applicants: 1272

Francophone vs Anglophone Countries in ECOWAS

Categories
Francophone
Anglophone

Distribution by Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholder Groups
Civil Society
Private Sector
Academia
Government
Technical Community

Significant milestones in the history of Internet governance were highlighted, including the creation of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). These events were pivotal in shaping the governance landscape, and the session underscored their importance in the ongoing management of the Internet. A key component of the session involved an exercise that focused on identifying key African actors who played crucial roles during the WSIS process, which ultimately led to the establishment of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). This exercise also spotlighted West African pioneers who were instrumental in shaping the region's approach to Internet governance, emphasizing their contributions to the global discourse.

The session further explored the roles of various stakeholders in Internet governance, including international organizations such as ICANN and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), as well as national regulatory bodies and regional organizations. The contributions of civil society groups, advocacy organizations, and the private sector in shaping Internet policies were also emphasized. Attention was then directed to National and Regional Initiatives (NRIs)
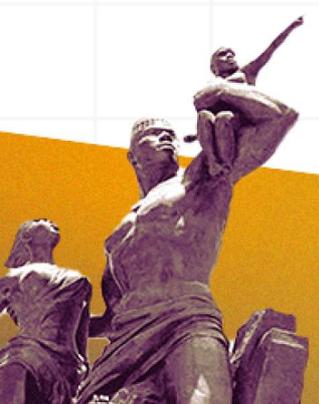
IN PERSON PARTICIPANTS IN DAKAR

IN PERSON PARTICIPANTS IN DAKAR

| NAME	COUNTRY	STAKEHOLDERS GROUP
Amina Ramallan	Nigeria	Government
Tobi Edith Ahohuendo	Benin	Technical
Maiga Nana Salama	Mali	Technical
Diallo Fatoumata Binta	Guinea	Private Sector
Sarah Aryee Naa Odey	Ghana	Technical
Alassana CHAM	The Gambia	Civil Society
Traoré Epse GOUE Nadège	Ivory Coast	Government
Binty Masaray	Sierra Leone	Civil Society
DEMBELE Joachim	Burkina Faso	Technical
Yoganguina Bôa Djavph	Senegal	Academic Sector
Khady ALao Fary	Senegal	Academic Sector
NGOM Khadim	Senegal	Government
Attiogbé Adakou Kekeli Afi	Senegal	Academic Sector
FALL Yacine	Senegal	Government
SALL Aissatou	Senegal	Government
Abibatou Assetou Koura Tamba Sangare	Senegal	Technical
NIANG Fatou Bintou	Senegal	Academic Sector
Gbadamassi Raihannath	Benin	Civil Society
Suzete Centeio	Cabo Verde	Government
Eric SOTELO	Cabo Verde	Government
Abdrahamane Samba SIDIBE	Mali	Civil Society
Gagny TRAORE	Mali	Civil Society
Astan Abdoulaye TRAORÉ	Mali	Civil Society
Fatoumata M'Mah NIMAGA	Mali	Civil Society
Amadou MBAYE	Senegal	Government
Amadou SALL	Senegal	Government
Serigne Abdou Lahatt Sylla	Senegal	Government
Amouzougan Folli Herbert	Togo	Technical
Henry Cummings A.	Liberia	Technical

in West Africa, highlighting their successes, challenges, and the opportunities they offer for local stakeholders. The discussion underscored the importance of NRIs in influencing Internet governance from the grassroots level, particularly within the West African context.he Internet, focusing on its architecture, the development of protocols and

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Overall Distribution by Stakeholder Groups
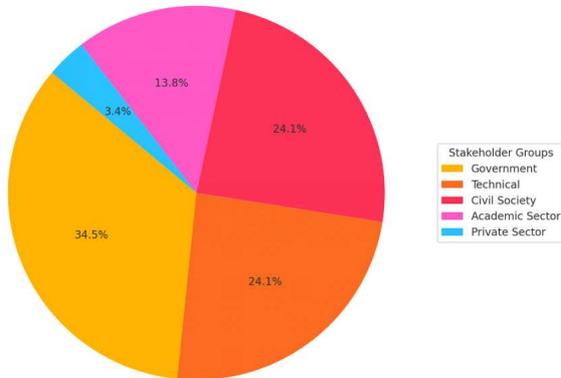
Distribution of Participants by Country
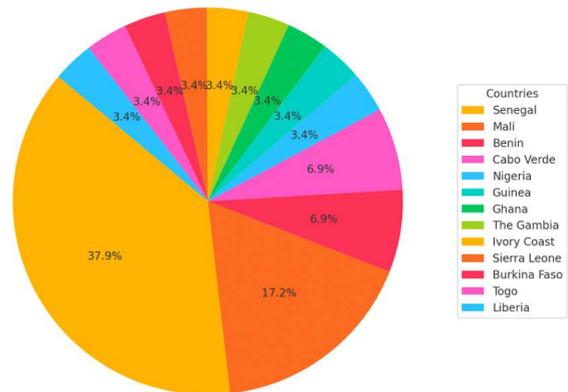
Prevailing issues in Internet governance, such as access and connectivity, cybersecurity, privacy, content regulation, and the digital economy, were thoroughly examined. The session emphasized the critical role that effective Internet governance plays in the social, political, and economic development of West Africa. It was demonstrated how sound governance practices can help bridge the digital divide, enhance democratic participation, and foster economic growth within the region.

Through interactive discussions and stakeholder engagement, participants gained a comprehensive understanding of how Internet governance can drive sustainable development in West Africa, and also connected with the historical context and the pioneers who shaped the region's path. The session highlighted the importance of continued collaboration and dialogue among all stakeholders to ensure that the Internet remains a force for positive change and inclusive growth in West Africa.

SESSION 2: HOW DOES THE INTERNET WORK? : ARCHITECTURE, PROTOCOLS, GOVERNANCE, AND THE TRANSITION TO IPV6 IN AFRICA

The session titled 'How Does the Internet Work? Architecture, Protocols, Governance, and the Transition to IPv6 in Africa' took place on July 9, 2024, from 9 a.m. to 10:00 UTC in Hall 1, Senegal. The session provided an in-depth exploration of the intricate workings of t

standards, and the key institutions responsible for its governance. Participants gained a comprehensive understanding of how data is transmitted across the Internet using packet-switching technology and the crucial role of TCP/IP

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

in ensuring data integrity and delivery. The session also covered the Domain Name System (DNS), which is vital for translating human-friendly domain names into IP addresses, ensuring the smooth functioning of the Internet.

WASIG is designed as a one-month certified online courses, culminating in a three-day intensive learning session in Dakar.

Yaovi Atohoun, Director of Stakeholder Engagement & Operations for Africa at ICANN, set the stage for the discussion. He provided an overview of the organizations that develop and maintain Internet protocols and standards, such as the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) and the Internet Research Task Force (IRTF). Yaovi explained how these bodies, along with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and the Internet Society (ISOC), contribute to the stability and security of the Internet. His insights highlighted the collaborative efforts required to manage and govern the global Internet infrastructure effectively.

Following Mr. Yaovi's presentation, Mr. Brice ABBA, Community Development Manager at AFRINIC, took the discussion further by focusing on the importance of Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) and the transition from IPv4 to IPv6, particularly within the African context. Brice explained how IXPs are essential for enhancing local and regional Internet performance by facilitating efficient traffic exchange between networks, which helps reduce latency and improve speed. He emphasized the critical nature of transitioning to IPv6, given its vastly larger address space, which is necessary to support the increasing number of Internet users and connected devices across Africa. Brice presented this transition as a key opportunity for Africa to improve Internet scalability, security, and innovation.

Throughout the session, students had the opportunity to interact directly with both Yaovi Atohoun and Brice ABBA. They engaged in discussions about how they could contribute to and participate in the policy processes of ICANN and AFRINIC. The panelists emphasized the importance of student involvement in these processes, encouraging them to take an active role in shaping the future of Internet governance in Africa. The interactive nature of the session allowed students to ask questions and gain a clear understanding of how they could make meaningful contributions to the ongoing development and governance of the Internet, both regionally and globally. This interaction was particularly valuable, as it empowered the students to see their potential impact within the Internet governance ecosystem.

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

SESSION 3: A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH (HRBA) TO ACCESS TO THE INTERNET, DIGITAL RIGHTS, AND DIGITAL INCLUSION
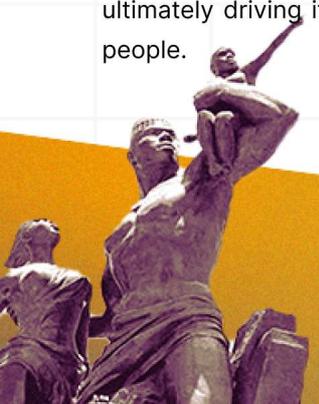
Emmanuel shared case studies on how AI policies are being drafted worldwide, highlighting various approaches and their effectiveness. He gave special attention to the landmark Continental Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy and the African Digital Compact, which are crucial for accelerating Africa's digital transformation by harnessing the potential of new digital technologies. These initiatives are designed to guide the continent in leveraging AI to achieve its development goals while ensuring the well-being of its people, promoting ethical practices, minimizing risks, and maximizing opportunities.y framework addressing these technologies.

The session explored how West African countries can work together on national and regional strategies that align with these broader continental frameworks. Emmanuel emphasized the importance of developing policies that not only guide the ethical use of AI but also protect against potential risks while unlocking the vast opportunities AI presents. Through engaging discussions with the fellows, Emmanuel identified key priorities and actionable steps to ensure that Africa fully benefits from AI's potential. He called for an Africa-owned, people-centered, development-oriented, and inclusive approach to enhancing AI capabilities across the continent, focusing on areas such as infrastructure, talent development, data sets, innovation, and partnerships.

WASIG is designed as a one-month certified online courses, culminating in a three-day intensive learning session in Dakar.

Moreover, Emmanuel stressed the importance of implementing adequate safeguards to protect against the threats posed by AI. He argued for a balanced approach that fosters innovation while ensuring the security and safety of African societies. The session concluded with a strong call for African countries to accelerate their AI capabilities through strategic investments and collaborations. Emmanuel emphasized that this approach would not only help Africa keep pace with global advancements but also position the continent as a leader in ethical and inclusive AI development, ultimately driving its digital transformation and ensuring that the benefits of AI are equitably distributed among all its people.

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

PRACTICUM: NAVIGATING DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES: POLICY CHALLENGES AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN BUILDING REGIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The Practicum Sessions, titled 'Navigating Disruptive Technologies: Policy Challenges and Stakeholder Engagement in Building Regional Frameworks,' took place on July 9 and 10. These sessions provided participants with a hands-on opportunity to explore the policy challenges posed by disruptive technologies and engage in collaborative efforts to build a multistakeholder regional policy.

WASIG is designed as a one-month certified online courses, culminating in a three-day intensive learning session in Dakar.

The session was initiated by Nnenna Nwakanma, Technical Advisor on Digital Cooperation at HealthAI, who provided an overview of the practicum's schedule and tasks, ensuring that all participants understood the objectives and structure of the activities. Following this introduction, Nnenna detailed the various roles available within the exercise, allowing participants to select the roles that best matched their interests and expertise.

Participants were then divided into four stakeholder groups: Civil Society, Technical Community, Private Sector, and Government. Each group assumed the role of their respective stakeholder in the process of drafting a comprehensive AI strategy document for ECOWAS. During the breakout sessions, participants worked collaboratively on specific assignments, with each group focusing on different aspects of the policy challenges presented by disruptive technologies, such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the Internet of Things. The objective was to adopt a deep understanding of how these technologies impact society, the economy, and governance in the region, and to develop well-rounded policy recommendations.

Throughout the two-day practicum, participants engaged with various stakeholders, including government representatives, industry experts, civil society advocates, and academic researchers. This multistakeholder approach

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

SESSION 3: A HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH (HRBA) TO ACCESS TO THE INTERNET, DIGITAL RIGHTS, AND DIGITAL INCLUSION

Emmanuel shared case studies on how AI policies are being drafted worldwide, highlighting various approaches and their effectiveness. He gave special attention to the landmark Continental Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy and the African Digital Compact, which are crucial for accelerating Africa's digital transformation by harnessing the potential of new digital technologies. These initiatives are designed to guide the continent in leveraging AI to achieve its development goals while ensuring the well-being of its people, promoting ethical practices, minimizing risks, and maximizing opportunities.

The session explored how West African countries can work together on national and regional strategies that align with these broader continental frameworks. Emmanuel emphasized the importance of developing policies that not only guide the ethical use of AI but also protect against potential risks while unlocking the vast opportunities AI presents. Through engaging discussions with the fellows, Emmanuel identified key priorities and actionable steps to ensure that Africa fully benefits from AI's potential. He called for an Africa-owned, people-centered, development-oriented, and inclusive approach to enhancing AI capabilities across the continent, focusing on areas such as infrastructure, talent development, data sets, innovation, and partnerships.

Moreover, Emmanuel stressed the importance of implementing adequate safeguards to protect against the threats posed by AI. He argued for a balanced approach that fosters innovation while ensuring the security and safety of African societies. The session concluded with a strong call for African countries to accelerate their AI capabilities through strategic investments and collaborations. Emmanuel emphasized that this approach would not only help Africa keep pace with global advancements but also position the continent as a leader in ethical and inclusive AI development, ultimately driving its digital transformation and ensuring that the benefits of AI are equitably distributed among all its people.

Practicum: Navigating Disruptive Technologies: Policy Challenges and Stakeholder Engagement in Building Regional Frameworks

The Practicum Sessions, titled 'Navigating Disruptive Technologies: Policy Challenges and Stakeholder Engagement in Building Regional Frameworks,' took place on July 9 and 10. These sessions provided participants with a hands-on opportunity to explore the policy challenges posed by disruptive technologies and engage in collaborative efforts to build a multistakeholder regional policy framework addressing these technologies.

The session was initiated by Nnenna Nwakanma, Technical Advisor on Digital Cooperation at HealthAI, who provided an

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

overview of the practicum's schedule and tasks, ensuring that all participants understood the objectives and structure of the activities. Following this introduction, Nnenna detailed the various roles available within the exercise, allowing participants to select the roles that best matched their interests and expertise.

Participants were then divided into four stakeholder groups: Civil Society, Technical Community, Private Sector, and Government. Each group assumed the role of their respective stakeholder in the process of drafting a comprehensive AI strategy document for ECOWAS. During the breakout sessions, participants worked collaboratively on specific assignments, with each group focusing on different aspects of the policy challenges presented by disruptive technologies, such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and the Internet of Things. The objective was to adopt a deep understanding of how these technologies impact society, the economy, and governance in the region, and to develop well-rounded policy recommendations.

Throughout the two-day practicum, participants engaged with various stakeholders, including government representatives, industry experts, civil society advocates, and academic researchers. This multistakeholder approach ensured that the policy frameworks developed were inclusive, balanced, and reflective of diverse perspectives. The interactive nature of the session allowed participants to directly engage with these stakeholders, enriching their understanding and enhancing the quality of their collaborative work.

On the final day, a consensus-building and negotiation exercise was conducted, simulating real-life negotiations within the Internet governance ecosystem. During this exercise, participants from each group engaged in discussions with representatives from other stakeholder groups, negotiating their positions and working towards a shared consensus on the AI strategy document. This negotiation process was instrumental in helping the fellows understand how diverse interests must be reconciled to produce a cohesive and inclusive strategy.

By the end of the practicum, participants had successfully produced a consensus document that reflected the input and priorities of all stakeholder groups. Moreover, they gained practical experience in policy development, stakeholder engagement, and collaborative problem-solving, equipping them with the skills needed to address the complex challenges posed by disruptive technologies in their professional roles. This session was a critical component of their broader understanding of regional Internet governance and provided valuable insights into the complexities of drafting policy documents through negotiation and consensus.

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

FELLOWS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WASIG EDITIONS

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

HOW FAR, THUS FAR?

The West Africa School on Internet Governance (WASIG) has established itself as a leading platform for training emerging leaders in Internet governance. Fellows from this year's edition have provided valuable feedback, which reflects their commitment to enhancing the program and making future editions even more impactful. Their recommendations span a wide range of areas, from curriculum structure to event logistics, all designed to improve the overall experience for future participants.

PROGRAM DURATION AND STRUCTURE

Many fellows emphasized the importance of extending the program's duration. Some suggested adding an extra day to allow for a more thorough exploration of topics and to prevent fellows from working late into the night, ensuring they can arrive refreshed the next morning. Others advocated for lengthening the program to one or two weeks, which would provide more time for deeper learning, reflection, and interaction among participants. Additionally, they recommended appointing rapporteurs to summarize each day's sessions, providing continuity and ensuring that the following day starts with a clear understanding of what was covered.

Practical workshops were another focus of the feedback, with calls for hands-on sessions in areas such as cybersecurity, AI solution development, and network architecture. Fellows noted that these workshops would enhance both technical and non-technical participants' understanding by offering real-world experience and practical application of the concepts discussed. Including regular breaks between sessions was also suggested to help participants maintain their focus and energy throughout the day.

CULTURAL IMMERSION AND NETWORKING

Networking and cultural exchange were key elements that many fellows wished to see more of in future editions. Structured networking sessions after the formal program would allow participants to strengthen professional relationships and connect with experts in the field. Fellows also recommended organizing cultural tours or group outings, which would provide an opportunity to experience the host country more fully. This cultural immersion, they believe, would not only create lasting memories but also foster a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives—an essential element in global Internet governance.

LOGISTICAL IMPROVEMENTS FOR RAPPORTEURING

Several fellows who served as rapporteurs for the WAIGF Forum raised concerns about the need for better preparation. They requested access to key logistical details—such as session names, panelists, and room numbers—well in advance to help them be more effective in their roles. This would allow them to better prepare for their tasks, avoid confusion,

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

ensured that the policy frameworks developed were inclusive, balanced, and reflective of diverse perspectives. The interactive nature of the session allowed participants to directly engage with these stakeholders, enriching their understanding and enhancing the quality of their collaborative work.

On the final day, a consensus-building and negotiation exercise was conducted, simulating real-life negotiations within the Internet governance ecosystem. During this exercise, participants from each group engaged in discussions with representatives from other stakeholder groups, negotiating their positions and working towards a shared consensus on the AI strategy document. This negotiation process was instrumental in helping the fellows understand how diverse interests must be reconciled to produce a cohesive and inclusive strategy.

By the end of the practicum, participants had successfully produced a consensus document that reflected the input and priorities of all stakeholder groups. Moreover, they gained practical experience in policy development, stakeholder engagement, and collaborative problem-solving, equipping them with the skills needed to address the complex challenges posed by disruptive technologies in their professional roles. This session was a critical component of their broader understanding of regional Internet governance and provided valuable insights into the complexities of drafting policy documents through negotiation and consensus.

ongoing development and governance of the Internet, both regionally and globally. This interaction was particularly valuable, as it empowered the students to see their potential impact within the Internet governance ecosystem.

WASIG is designed as a one-month certified online courses, culminating in a three-day intensive learning session in Dakar.

DISRUPTIVE
TECHNOLOGIES

IGF 24

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY

CEDEAO ECOWAS

OUR SPONSORS & PARTNERS

IGF Internet Governance Forum

ARTICLE 19

YANGO

PARADIGM INITIATIVE

Meta

Internet Society

IGFSA — Internet Governance Forum Support Association

ICANN

HUAWEI

ARTP

FDSUT Tous connectés

GAINDE 2000

HAYO

LA POSTE

D.M.T.A

orange sonatel

waw

DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

HOW FAR, THUS FAR?

IGF 74

WAIGF SECRETARIAT

MARY UDUMA
MAG CHAIR

MARIE NDÉ SENE AHOUANTCHEDE
ECOWAS FOCAL POINT

MURIEL ALAPINI
WASIG COORDINATOR
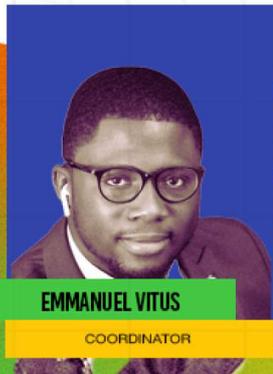
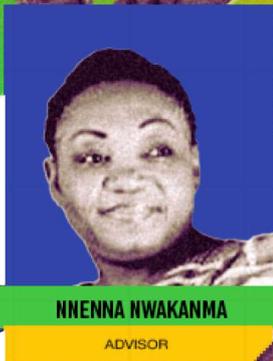**EMMANUEL VITUS**
COORDINATOR

CHINWE OGBUJAH H
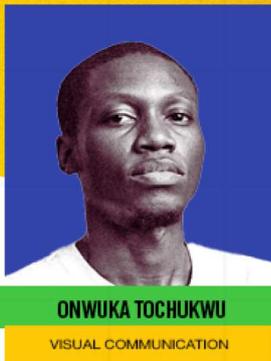COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

MARIAM JOBE
MPS COORDINATOR

NNENNA NWAKANMA
ADVISOR

ONYEDIKACHI OKORIE
TECHNICAL LEAD

ONWUKA TOCHUKWU
VISUAL COMMUNICATION

DISЯUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES
HOW FAR, THUS FAR?

DISЯUPTIVE TECHNOLOGIES
HOW FAR, THUS FAR?