

WEST AFRICA INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM 2026

Strategic Final Report

Digital Sovereignty and Economic Value in West
Africa's Integrated Digital Market



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Acknowledgements and source note

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Executive Summary

The 18th edition of the West Africa Internet Governance Forum, held in Freetown, Sierra Leone, from 11 to 15 May 2026, took place at a defining moment for the region. West Africa is moving from general digital transformation ambition toward a more demanding policy agenda shaped by artificial intelligence, platform economies, digital public infrastructure, mobile money, cross-border services, cybersecurity threats, data governance, content moderation, creator economies and the need for a more integrated regional digital market. The Forum provided a multistakeholder platform for examining how these developments can be governed in ways that strengthen sovereignty, retain economic value, protect rights, build trust and deepen regional cooperation.

The central theme, "Digital Sovereignty and Economic Value in West Africa's Integrated Digital Market", framed sovereignty not as isolation from the global Internet, but as the ability of institutions, businesses, communities and citizens to make informed and accountable choices about digital infrastructure, data, platforms, standards, technologies and markets. Across the Forum, participants converged around the view that West Africa cannot build meaningful sovereignty through national fragmentation. The region needs shared rules, interoperable systems, stronger public institutions, resilient infrastructure, trusted data governance, skilled human capital, accountable platforms and coordinated participation in regional and global policy processes.

The event architecture reflected this broad agenda. The West Africa School on Internet Governance provided structured capacity development through an online and residential process. More than 600 applications or expressions of interest were received, 177 participants were selected for the online phase, 150 completed the online programme, and 30 fellows took part in the Freetown residential workshop alongside 14 observers. The School produced 4 policy clinic outputs on platform accountability and fiscal justice, AI-enabled public services and redress, interoperable public digital infrastructure, and a 72-hour regional cyber resilience framework. These outputs gave practical policy expression to the Forum's wider theme and demonstrated the value of linking training with actionable institutional proposals.

The West Africa Youth Internet Governance Forum highlighted that young people are no longer marginal participants in the region's digital transformation. They are creators, entrepreneurs, civic actors, users, innovators and future policymakers. The Youth IGF focused on safe platforms, child online protection, digital literacy, online trust, youth entrepreneurship, creator economies, local content, digital skills and equitable platform safety standards for African users. Its discussions showed that youth inclusion requires more than representation in meetings. It requires access to infrastructure, finance, mentorship, safe online environments, education, market opportunities and direct participation in shaping the rules that govern digital spaces.

The Parliamentary Track, convened through the West African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance, strengthened the link between multistakeholder dialogue and legislative readiness. Parliamentarians examined digital sovereignty in action, AI governance, fiscal justice, consumer protection, data protection, cybersecurity, platform accountability and ECOWAS-level harmonisation. The track underscored that laws cannot remain reactive while technologies, markets and risks evolve rapidly. Legislatures need sustained capacity building, comparative policy support and closer engagement with regulators, technical experts, civil society and young people in order to produce laws that are innovation-friendly, rights-respecting and regionally coherent.

The main WAIGF sessions and high-level plenaries deepened these issues through policy dialogue on Universal Acceptance, digital rights evidence, platform and content governance, digital literacy, regional digital market integration, AI governance, data protection, cybersecurity, infrastructure

sovereignty, public digital infrastructure, economic justice and human capital development. The ACHPR consultation on platform and content guidelines brought African human rights standards into the discussion on content governance, while the LondaPulse session highlighted evidence gaps and digital rights concerns across the continent. The Universal Acceptance session reminded participants that digital inclusion is also linguistic and technical, requiring domain names, email addresses and systems that work for all languages and scripts.

The Forum identified 6 strategic messages that should guide regional follow-up. First, digital sovereignty must be operationalised through capacity, infrastructure, standards and institutions rather than through rhetoric. Second, West Africa's digital single market will depend on trust layers such as interoperable identity, payments, data exchange, cybersecurity cooperation, consumer protection and legal predictability. Third, the governance of AI and emerging technologies must move quickly toward procurement standards, public sector safeguards, impact assessments, redress mechanisms and human oversight. Fourth, platform accountability must address economic value, fiscal justice, consumer protection, content governance, youth safety, creator monetisation and transparency. Fifth, cybersecurity is a regional public good requiring stronger national capabilities and cross-border coordination. Sixth, inclusion must be understood broadly, covering access, affordability, language, disability, gender, rural connectivity, digital literacy, child protection and meaningful participation in policy design.



The Freetown outcomes call for a shift from annual dialogue to structured implementation. The Forum recommended stronger coordination between the WAIGF Secretariat, the ECOWAS Commission, national IGFs, national digital agencies, regulators, parliamentarians, the technical community, youth networks, civil society, academia, the private sector and development partners. It also called for regional policy labs, thematic working groups, annual progress reviews, parliamentary briefings, alumni networks, evidence generation and mechanisms for converting recommendations into policy instruments, capacity programmes and institutional partnerships. This strategic report is therefore designed not only as a record of proceedings, but as a practical basis for follow-up and regional coordination.

Table 1. Strategic highlights of WAIGF 2026

Area	Main insight	Follow-up implication
Digital sovereignty	Sovereignty was understood as institutional capability, regional coordination and public value, not isolation from the global Internet.	Translate the concept into measurable action on infrastructure, data, skills, standards, procurement, cybersecurity and market governance.
Economic value	Participants emphasised that data, platforms, payments, digital identity, connectivity and local content must generate value for West African citizens and firms.	Develop fiscal, regulatory and innovation frameworks that support fair taxation, local entrepreneurship, creator monetisation and regional digital trade.
AI and data	The region needs responsible AI policies that are practical for public institutions and adapted to local realities.	Adopt procurement safeguards, impact assessments, auditability, human review and accessible redress in AI-enabled public services.
Cyber resilience	Cybersecurity risks affecting public platforms, financial systems and digital identity can move quickly across borders.	Strengthen national CERTs and SOCs, establish regional escalation channels and test 72-hour incident response protocols.
Platform accountability	The governance of platforms must include rights, safety, taxation, consumer protection, transparency and economic justice.	Engage platforms through coherent regional standards, clear reporting duties and accessible complaint mechanisms.
Youth and inclusion	Youth, children, creators, women, persons with disabilities and rural communities require targeted inclusion strategies.	Integrate digital literacy, child protection, accessibility, local language support and youth enterprise financing into digital policy.
Implementation	The Forum generated strong consensus but requires clearer mechanisms for follow-up.	Create a light regional follow-up system linking WAIGF outcomes to ECOWAS processes, national IGFs, parliamentarians and policy labs.

WAIGF 2026 at a Glance

18th West Africa Internet Governance Forum | Freetown, Sierra Leone | 11–15 May 2026

The 18th edition of the West Africa Internet Governance Forum convened the regional Internet governance community around the theme of digital sovereignty and economic value in West Africa’s integrated digital market. The figures below provide a consolidated statistical snapshot of the full event, including the main forum, the West Africa School on Internet Governance, the West Africa Youth IGF and the Parliamentary Track.

5 days of regional dialogue	1,400+ total registrations	430+ onsite participants
300+ online participants	1,700+ estimated total reach	12 ECOWAS Member States represented
28+ countries represented across all tracks	22 institutional partners	35+ sessions and consultations

Core event figures

Indicator	Figure / Description
Main theme	Digital Sovereignty and Economic Value in West Africa’s Integrated Digital Market
Dates	11–15 May 2026
Venue	Miatta Conference Centre, Freetown, Sierra Leone
Host country	Sierra Leone
Event duration	5 days
Major tracks	4 tracks: WASIG, Youth IGF, Main WAIGF and Parliamentary Track
Outcome documents	4 official communiqués adopted

Note: The figures are consolidated from the event reporting package and organiser-approved statistical framing. They are intended for executive reporting and communication purposes.

Participation Profile and Programme Architecture

Stakeholder representation, session structure and cross-track participation

Estimated stakeholder representation

Stakeholder group	Share	Estimated count
Government and public institutions	39%	Approx. 546+ participants
Civil society and community organisations	18%	Approx. 252+ participants
Private sector and digital industry	15%	Approx. 210+ participants
Technical community	10%	Approx. 140+ participants
Academia and research institutions	8%	Approx. 112+ participants
Youth and students	6%	Approx. 84+ participants in the overall stakeholder profile
Media	2%	Approx. 28+ participants
Regional and international organisations	2%	Approx. 28+ participants

Programme architecture

Component	Figure	Description
Main WAIGF	2 days	High-level dialogue, plenaries and regional policy sessions
West Africa School on Internet Governance	2 days	Capacity development, residential fellowship and policy clinics
West Africa Youth IGF	1 day	Youth-led policy dialogue with 200+ participants
Parliamentary Track / WAPNIG	2 days	Legislative dialogue on digital sovereignty, AI and cyber policy
High-level sessions	3	Ministerial and executive-level policy exchanges
Plenary sessions	4	Regional discussions on digital sovereignty and governance priorities
Parallel thematic sessions	18	Specialised sessions across the main policy agenda
Workshops and consultations	12	Focused consultations and technical policy discussions
Total sessions across all tracks	35+	Main sessions, consultations, workshops and track-specific activities

The programme design combined policy dialogue, practical capacity development and constituency-specific engagement. This structure enabled the Forum to connect high-level regional priorities with the perspectives of youth, parliamentarians, technical experts, civil society, public authorities and the private sector.

Track-Specific Results and Outcome Indicators

Schools, youth participation, parliamentary engagement and policy outputs

West Africa School on Internet Governance

Indicator	Figure
Applications or expressions of interest	600+
Participants admitted to online programme	177
Participants completing online programme	150
Residential fellows	30
Observers	14
Total residential participants	44
Policy clinics conducted	4
Policy outputs produced	4

Youth IGF and Parliamentary Track

Indicator	Figure
Youth IGF dedicated day	1
Youth IGF participants	200+
Youth-led sessions	8
Youth speakers and moderators	40+
Youth recommendations adopted	15+
Youth communiqué adopted	1
Parliamentary Track duration	2 days
Parliamentarians and legislative representatives	25+
Countries represented in Parliamentary Track	8+
Parliamentary communiqué adopted	1

Outcome indicators

Indicator	Figure
Official communiqués adopted	4
Policy clinic recommendations	20+
Strategic recommendations adopted	40+
Speakers and panellists	100+
Partner organisations engaged	22
Countries represented across all tracks	17+

Together, these figures show that WAIGF 2026 functioned as a regional policy platform, a capacity development mechanism and a multistakeholder coordination space. The event combined broad public sector engagement with strong participation from civil society, youth, the technical community, academia, the private sector, media and regional partners, resulting in 4 official communiqués and a consolidated regional agenda for digital sovereignty and economic value.

WHO WAS IN THE ROOM — SHARE OF PARTICIPANTS



■ STAKEHOLDER GROUP ■ ALL OTHER GROUPS

TOTAL REGISTRATIONS

1,400+

430+ ONSITE PARTICIPANTS

300+ ONLINE PARTICIPANTS

1,700+ ESTIMATED TOTAL REACH



4

OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUÉS ADOPTED



12

ECOWAS MEMBER STATES REPRESENTED



28+

COUNTRIES ACROSS ALL FOUR TRACKS



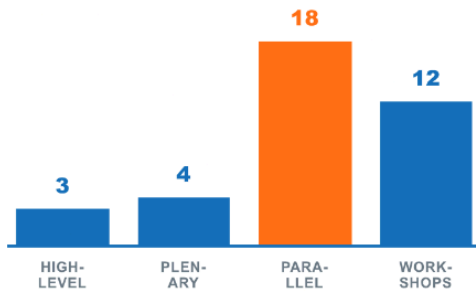
22

INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS ENGAGED

PROGRAMME ARCHITECTURE

SESSIONS

35+ TOTAL



Main WAIGF

High-level dialogue, plenaries & regional policy sessions



WASIG — School on Internet Governance

Capacity development, residential fellowship & policy clinics



West Africa Youth IGF

Youth-led policy dialogue with 200+ participants

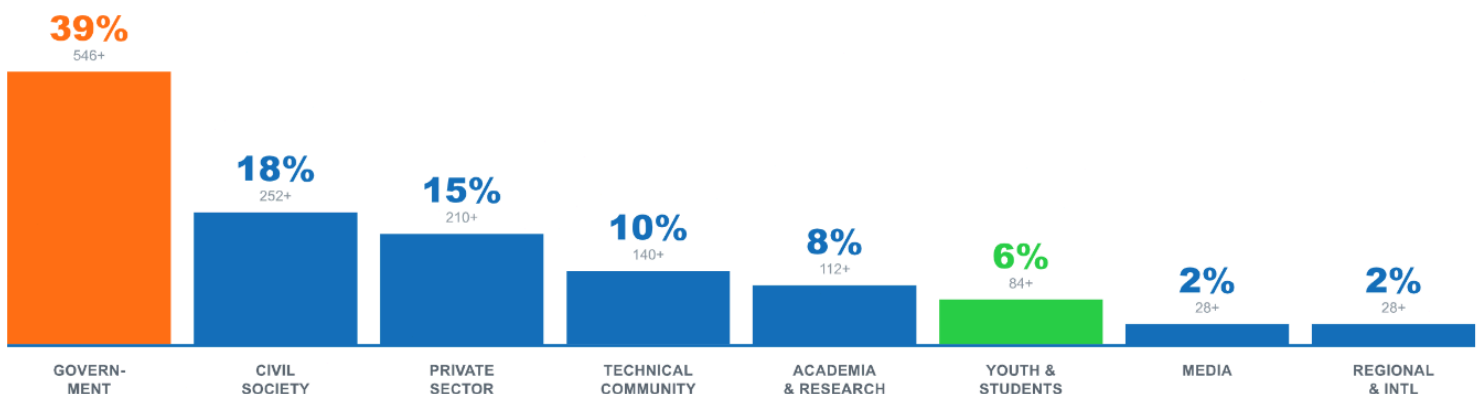


Parliamentary Track / WAPNIG

Legislative dialogue on digital sovereignty, AI & cyber policy

STAKEHOLDER REPRESENTATION

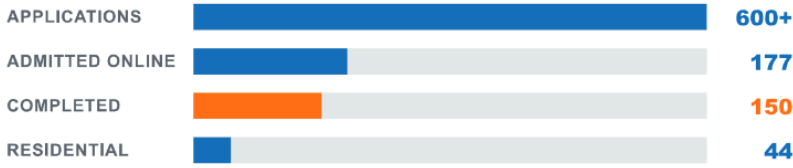
Estimated share of total participants



SCHOOL ON INTERNET GOVERNANCE

A selective, residential capacity-development track — WASIG.

150

 COMPLETED THE ONLINE PROGRAMME

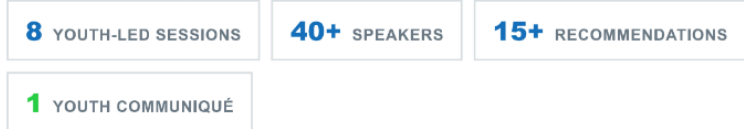
PARLIAMENTARY TRACK / WAPNIG

25+

 PARLIAMENTARIANS & LEGISLATIVE REPS

YOUTH IGF

200+

 YOUTH IN A DEDICATED ONE-DAY PROGRAMME

OUTCOME INDICATORS

4

 OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUÉS

100+

 SPEAKERS & PANELLISTS

40+

 STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

20+

 POLICY CLINIC RECOMMENDATIONS

22

 PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

17+

 COUNTRIES ACROSS TRACKS

Strategic context

WAIGF 2026 was held at a time when digital transformation across West Africa is both accelerating and becoming more politically consequential. The region has seen rapid growth in mobile connectivity, digital payments, platform services, fintech innovation, e-government initiatives, youth entrepreneurship, digital media and data-driven public services. At the same time, the policy environment remains marked by uneven infrastructure, limited affordability, regulatory fragmentation, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, gaps in data protection enforcement, persistent digital exclusion and increasing dependence on external technology platforms. These realities shaped the Freetown discussions and made the 2026 theme particularly timely.

The phrase "digital sovereignty" was approached with caution and precision. Participants rejected narrow interpretations that equate sovereignty with technological autarky or national isolation. Instead, the Forum treated sovereignty as the capacity to exercise meaningful agency in a connected digital world. For West Africa, this means the ability to govern data responsibly, protect citizens, regulate markets, build resilient infrastructure, negotiate with global platforms, preserve the open Internet, participate in global technical and policy spaces, and ensure that digital transformation produces economic and social value within the region.

This interpretation is especially important in the context of regional integration. Many of the digital services used by West African citizens do not stop at national borders. Payment systems, online content, digital advertising, e-commerce, cloud services, mobile money, data flows, cybersecurity incidents, online fraud, AI applications and platform harms operate regionally and globally. A purely national response is therefore inadequate. The region needs harmonised principles, interoperable systems, common safeguards and institutional channels for cooperation, while still respecting national legal systems and domestic implementation needs.

Freetown also provided a symbolic setting for this conversation. Sierra Leone has been advancing digital transformation through public sector modernisation, connectivity initiatives, innovation policy, digital financial services and efforts to strengthen national communications governance. Hosting WAIGF 2026 created an opportunity to connect national experience with regional policy dialogue, while also placing Sierra Leone within wider debates on digital sovereignty, economic value and regional market integration. The presence of government institutions, regulators, telecom operators, financial service providers, civil society organisations, technical bodies, youth leaders and parliamentarians gave the Forum a practical and cross-sectoral character.

The Forum reaffirmed the multistakeholder model as a necessary condition for legitimate Internet governance. Governments provide policy leadership, public investment and legal frameworks. Regional institutions create spaces for harmonisation and cooperation. Regulators and digital agencies translate policy into enforceable rules. The technical community preserves the integrity, resilience and interoperability of the Internet. Civil society brings rights, inclusion and accountability perspectives. The private sector drives investment, innovation and service delivery. Academia and researchers produce evidence and train future experts. Youth networks bring lived experience, creativity and future-oriented thinking. Parliamentarians transform policy consensus into democratic legislation and oversight.

The 2026 edition therefore served 3 functions at once. It was a forum for policy dialogue, a platform for capacity development and a mechanism for regional agenda-setting. It examined immediate issues such as online safety, platform transparency, AI governance and cyber resilience, but also addressed deeper structural questions about digital markets, value creation, public infrastructure, human capital and institutional readiness. The outcome is not a single narrow policy agenda. It is a

broader strategic framework for turning West Africa's digital transformation into a source of shared prosperity, trusted governance and regional influence.

The report that follows is organised to support this purpose. It does not reproduce the extensive session-by-session documentation that exists in the rapporteur reports. Instead, it consolidates the discussions into a coherent account of the event, the tracks, the outcomes and the follow-up priorities. The objective is to give decision-makers a report that is sufficiently comprehensive to reflect the full event, while remaining concise enough to be read and used for institutional action.

Programme architecture and stakeholder participation

The programme architecture of WAIGF 2026 reflected the maturity of the regional Internet governance ecosystem. The event was not limited to a single conference format. It combined capacity building, youth engagement, high-level policy dialogue, technical sessions, partner-led discussions, parliamentary engagement and a final communique process. This structure allowed participants to move from learning to deliberation, from sectoral discussion to regional synthesis, and from thematic analysis to actionable recommendations.

The West Africa School on Internet Governance opened the event with a strong capacity development component. Its model linked online preparation with an intensive residential workshop. Fellows were exposed to the history and institutional architecture of Internet governance, the role of WAIGF and national IGFs, digital sovereignty and economic value, platform accountability, taxation, data governance, AI, digital public infrastructure, cybersecurity, lawful access, rights and regional cooperation. The School was deliberately practice-oriented. Its policy clinic required fellows to work in groups, analyse concrete governance challenges and produce policy outputs relevant to ECOWAS and Member States.

The selection pipeline for the School showed significant regional demand. More than 600 applications or expressions of interest were received. From this pool, 177 participants were selected for the online phase, 150 completed the online programme, and 30 fellows were selected for the residential workshop in Freetown, with 14 observers. These figures demonstrate not only the appeal of Internet governance training, but also the need for sustained and structured capacity programmes across West Africa. The School has become a regional talent pipeline for policymakers, civil society actors, technical experts, researchers, youth leaders and private sector professionals who can contribute to national and regional digital governance processes.



The Youth IGF created a distinct space for young people to define their priorities in their own terms. Youth discussions addressed the safety of digital platforms, child online protection, online trust, digital literacy, youth entrepreneurship, creator economies, local digital value, AI skills and responsible participation in digital markets. The track also captured the tension between opportunity and vulnerability. Young people benefit from digital platforms, but they are also exposed to cyberbullying, harmful content, misinformation, exploitation, weak monetisation models and unequal safety standards. Their recommendations called for stronger education, safer platforms, innovation support, equitable access and direct youth participation in digital policymaking.

The main WAIGF sessions brought together a wider range of stakeholders around core policy themes. High-level plenaries addressed the central theme of digital sovereignty and economic value, platform accountability and economic justice, and data, AI and emerging technologies governance. Other sessions focused on Universal Acceptance, digital rights evidence, the ACHPR platform and content guidelines, digital literacy, regional digital single market integration, infrastructure sovereignty, coordinated platform governance and the accountability of AI systems in public institutions. These sessions provided the substantive backbone of the Forum and linked technical issues with governance, rights, markets and development.

The Parliamentary Track added a necessary legislative dimension. Through the West African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance, parliamentarians discussed how to strengthen legislative readiness for AI, digital sovereignty, platform accountability, fiscal justice, consumer protection, cybersecurity and data governance. The track recognised that parliamentary engagement is often episodic, while technology policy is continuous and fast-moving. It therefore called for sustained capacity building, parliamentary briefings, model clauses, regional exchange and better connections between parliamentary committees, regulators, technical experts, civil society and youth networks.

Partner and technical sessions contributed specialised expertise. The Universal Acceptance discussion linked digital inclusion with technical standards, language diversity and domain name systems. Paradigm Initiative's LondaPulse session connected the Forum to digital rights evidence and monitoring. The ACHPR consultation introduced a continental human rights frame for platforms and content creation. Meta's engagement on online safety and child protection provided a platform perspective while also opening space for scrutiny. The Google Hustle Academy session gave participants a practical introduction to AI concepts, prompt design, generative tools and digital productivity. Telecom and financial partners anchored the discussion in connectivity, digital financial services and market realities in Sierra Leone and the wider region.

The multistakeholder composition of the Forum was one of its major strengths. The event engaged governments, ECOWAS institutions, regulators, parliamentarians, national IGF actors, technical organisations, civil society, academia, media, youth leaders, telecom operators, financial service providers, global platforms and development partners. This diversity ensured that the discussions did not treat digital transformation as a purely technical issue. It was approached as a governance challenge, a development opportunity, a rights issue, a market question and a regional integration priority.

Table 2. Consolidated programme architecture

Component	Purpose	Core contribution to the final outcomes
West Africa School on Internet Governance	Build regional capacity and prepare fellows to analyse complex Internet governance challenges.	Generated practical policy outputs on platform accountability, AI and redress, interoperable public infrastructure and regional cyber resilience.
West Africa Youth IGF	Enable young people to identify priorities and solutions for safe, inclusive and opportunity-driven digital transformation.	Elevated youth entrepreneurship, creator economies, child online protection, digital literacy and equitable online safety standards.
Main WAIGF policy sessions	Provide high-level and technical dialogue on the central theme and cross-cutting digital governance issues.	Produced regional messages on digital sovereignty, economic value, AI, data, infrastructure, platforms, rights and digital single market integration.
Parliamentary Track	Strengthen legislative readiness and parliamentary oversight in digital policy.	Positioned parliamentarians as key actors in AI regulation, platform accountability, consumer protection, fiscal justice and legal harmonisation.
Partner and technical sessions	Bring specialised institutional expertise and evidence into the Forum.	Connected the Forum to Universal Acceptance, digital rights monitoring, ACHPR platform guidelines, AI skills, telecom markets and digital finance.
Final communique process	Consolidate the key messages of the Forum into a short political outcome document.	Translated the Freetown discussions into recommendations for ECOWAS, Member States and the multistakeholder community.

Consolidated outcomes across the tracks

The outcomes of WAIGF 2026 are best understood through the interaction between its tracks rather than through isolated session summaries. The School generated capacity and policy prototypes. The Youth IGF brought urgency, lived experience and innovation perspectives. The main Forum provided a regional policy frame. The Parliamentary Track connected the agenda to legislation and oversight. Partner sessions supplied evidence, technical knowledge and operational examples. Together, these elements produced a coherent set of outcomes around sovereignty, value, trust, inclusion and implementation.

West Africa School on Internet Governance. The School confirmed that capacity building remains central to regional digital sovereignty. Fellows were not only trained in concepts and institutions; they were asked to translate those concepts into policy instruments. The policy clinic on platform accountability and fiscal justice examined how non-resident platforms operating across West Africa should contribute to public revenue, protect consumers, provide transparent reporting and cooperate with regulators. The policy clinic on AI-enabled public services and redress proposed safeguards for procurement, algorithmic transparency, bias testing, human review, data protection and complaint mechanisms. The clinic on interoperable public digital infrastructure focused on digital identity, payments, registries, authentication and data exchange. The cyber resilience clinic proposed a 72-hour regional response framework that would help ECOWAS Member States coordinate during major cyber incidents.

Youth engagement. The Youth IGF placed human capital, safety and economic opportunity at the centre of the regional agenda. Young participants stressed that digital literacy must begin earlier in education systems and should include critical thinking, cybersecurity awareness, responsible AI use, coding, robotics and safe online behaviour. The youth sessions also highlighted creator economies

as a major frontier for employment and cultural expression. Young creators need monetisation pathways, fair platform policies, access to digital tools, intellectual property awareness, payment channels and market visibility. At the same time, the discussions emphasised that youth opportunity cannot be separated from online trust. Children and young users need protection from grooming, harmful content, cyberbullying, exploitative data practices and unsafe design features.

Main policy and high-level sessions. The main sessions established that digital sovereignty must be linked to economic value. Participants noted that West Africa often generates data, attention, content and market growth without retaining a proportionate share of the value created. This is visible in digital advertising, platform services, payment rails, cloud dependence, app marketplaces, online betting, content monetisation and data-driven business models. The sessions therefore called for stronger bargaining power, regional standards, local innovation ecosystems, tax cooperation, transparent platform reporting and public policies that enable West African firms to scale across borders.

Universal Acceptance and linguistic inclusion. The Universal Acceptance session demonstrated that inclusion is not only about connectivity. It is also about whether systems recognise diverse domain names, email addresses, scripts and local language realities. When websites, public services, applications or payment systems fail to accept Internationalised Domain Names or email addresses using non-Latin characters, they reproduce exclusion. Universal Acceptance should therefore be incorporated into public procurement, university curricula, developer training, government platforms and private sector compliance frameworks. This issue is technical, but its policy significance is social and economic.

Digital rights and evidence. Discussions around LondaPulse and related digital rights evidence stressed that many African countries have adopted digital transformation strategies, yet implementation gaps remain significant. Participants raised concerns about online surveillance, restrictions on freedom of expression, misinformation, internet disruptions, weak data protection enforcement, limited accountability for platform decisions and exclusion of marginalised communities. The Forum recognised that credible evidence is essential for policy reform. Without regular monitoring, comparative data and civil society analysis, digital rights concerns can remain invisible until they become crises.

Platform and content governance. The ACHPR consultation on platform and content creation provided an important bridge between regional Internet governance and African human rights standards. Participants discussed misinformation, harmful content, content moderation, platform transparency, the protection of freedom of expression and the need for effective remedy. The discussions showed that West Africa needs content governance approaches that are neither indifferent to harm nor permissive of disproportionate state control. The appropriate path is rights-based, transparent, participatory and grounded in due process. Regional coordination is essential because platforms operate across borders and because inconsistent rules can undermine both rights and regulatory effectiveness.

Platform accountability, economic justice and human capital. The platform accountability sessions expanded the debate beyond content moderation. Participants addressed fiscal justice, online betting, consumer protection, data extraction, advertising transparency, local presence of platforms, complaint mechanisms and the responsibility of technology companies to invest in human capital. The discussions highlighted the imbalance between the value generated by West African users and the revenue, data and influence captured by external platforms. They also emphasised

that regulation should not be anti-innovation. Rather, it should create fair and predictable markets in which local businesses, creators and startups can compete.

Artificial intelligence, data and emerging technologies. AI was one of the most prominent cross-cutting issues. Sessions focused on both opportunity and risk. AI can improve public services, agriculture, health, education, logistics, financial inclusion, language access and administrative efficiency. Yet poorly governed AI can reinforce discrimination, undermine privacy, reduce accountability, exclude vulnerable populations and create opaque public decisions. Participants repeatedly called for practical governance tools, including AI impact assessments, procurement standards, model documentation, data protection safeguards, bias testing, public sector training, independent oversight, human review and accessible redress. The Forum made clear that AI governance in West Africa should be realistic, rights-based and linked to institutional capacity.

Regional digital single market and infrastructure sovereignty. The regional digital market discussions focused on the trust layers required for cross-border services. Participants emphasised interoperable digital identity, payments, authentication, consumer protection, cybersecurity cooperation, data governance, dispute resolution and harmonised regulatory frameworks. Infrastructure sovereignty was discussed in practical terms, including broadband expansion, Internet exchange points, local data infrastructure, cable redundancy, cloud portability, resilient public platforms and rural access. The message was that the digital single market cannot be built only through declarations. It requires reliable infrastructure, interoperable systems, common rules and institutions capable of managing cross-border trust.

Cybersecurity and regional trust. Cyber resilience emerged as a priority across the School, main sessions and Parliamentary Track. Participants recognised that cyber incidents affecting payment systems, government platforms, telecom networks, customs systems, health data, electoral information or public communication channels can quickly affect several countries. The Forum called for stronger national Computer Emergency Response Teams, Security Operations Centres, legal cooperation on digital evidence, trusted points of contact, joint exercises, incident response playbooks and multilingual crisis communication. The 72-hour response framework proposed by WASIG fellows captured the need for a practical and time-bound regional approach.

Parliamentary engagement. The Parliamentary Track reinforced the importance of lawmaking and democratic oversight. Parliamentarians need to understand AI, data governance, digital rights, cybersecurity, platform markets and digital public infrastructure in order to scrutinise government policy and adopt effective laws. The track also linked digital sovereignty to fiscal policy and consumer protection. Laws on digital platforms, online services, fintech, cybercrime, data protection and emerging technologies should not be developed in isolation from regional integration. ECOWAS-level harmonisation, parliamentary exchange and model legislative tools can help reduce fragmentation while respecting national contexts.

Partner and private sector contributions. The presence of telecom operators, digital financial service providers, platforms and technical organisations strengthened the practical relevance of the Forum. Connectivity providers and regulators highlighted infrastructure and affordability constraints. Digital finance actors illustrated the scale and importance of mobile money and cross-border payment innovation. Technical community partners reinforced the need to preserve Internet interoperability, promote standards and build capacity. Global platforms were encouraged to respond more directly to African safety, transparency and monetisation concerns. This mix of actors helped the Forum avoid abstract debate and stay connected to operational realities.

Final communique. The WAIGF 2026 final communique consolidated the Forum's political outcome. It reaffirmed multistakeholder cooperation, regional coordination, digital sovereignty as capability, rights-based governance, AI and data safeguards, cyber resilience, platform accountability, Universal Acceptance, child online protection, youth leadership, parliamentary engagement and the need for follow-up mechanisms. Its value lies in providing a concise regional mandate for the more detailed implementation agenda set out in this report.



Outcome synthesis by track

Track	Key outcomes	Strategic value
WASIG 2026	Capacity pipeline, policy clinic outputs, practical proposals on platforms, AI redress, interoperable public infrastructure and cyber resilience.	Converts training into institutional policy capacity and creates an alumni base for implementation.
Youth IGF	Youth priorities on safe platforms, online trust, child protection, digital literacy, creator economies and entrepreneurship.	Positions young people as policy actors and economic contributors, not only beneficiaries.
Main WAIGF sessions	Regional consensus on digital sovereignty, economic value, AI, data governance, platform accountability, rights, infrastructure and digital single market priorities.	Provides the substantive policy foundation for regional and national follow-up.
Parliamentary Track	Legislative readiness agenda for AI, platform accountability, consumer protection, fiscal justice, cybersecurity and harmonisation.	Connects multistakeholder dialogue with democratic lawmaking and oversight.
Partner sessions	Technical and evidence-based inputs on Universal Acceptance, LondaPulse, ACHPR platform guidelines, AI skills, connectivity and financial services.	Grounds policy discussions in standards, data, human rights frameworks, skills and market operations.
Final communique	Common political recommendations for ECOWAS, Member States and the regional Internet governance community.	Creates a concise reference point for advocacy, implementation and institutional alignment.

Opening and institutional setting. The opening of the Freetown edition established the political and institutional significance of the Forum. The host country framed the event as part of a wider effort to modernise public services, expand connectivity, strengthen communications governance and position Sierra Leone within regional digital transformation. The presence of ECOWAS, technical community organisations, private sector partners, civil society, youth leaders and parliamentarians gave the event a regional character from the outset. The opening also clarified that the Forum was not designed as a purely ceremonial gathering. It was intended to generate a shared interpretation of digital sovereignty and to identify concrete mechanisms through which the region can retain value, strengthen trust and build institutional capability.

A single event with multiple policy functions. The week in Freetown moved through a deliberate sequence. Capacity building came first through the School, followed by youth engagement, specialised consultations, high-level policy sessions, parliamentary dialogue and the final communique process. This sequencing mattered because it allowed ideas to circulate between tracks. Concepts introduced during the School reappeared in the main sessions and the communique. Youth concerns on safety, skills and economic opportunity informed the wider debate on platform accountability and human capital. Parliamentary discussions translated several policy messages into questions of legislation, oversight and harmonisation. The event therefore operated as a system rather than as a set of disconnected meetings.

WASIG as a regional policy laboratory. The West Africa School on Internet Governance was one of the strongest institutional assets of the 2026 edition. Its value lay not only in the number of fellows trained, but in the way it combined conceptual grounding, regional policy analysis and practical group work. Fellows examined the Internet governance ecosystem, the WAIGF architecture, digital sovereignty, platform accountability, taxation, data governance, AI, digital public infrastructure, cybersecurity and regional cooperation. They were then asked to move from learning to design. This methodology is important because many digital governance challenges in the region are not caused

by lack of awareness alone. They are caused by limited capacity to translate awareness into institutional tools, policy briefs, regulatory options and implementation pathways.

Platform accountability and fiscal justice policy clinic. The first WASIG policy clinic addressed the challenge of ensuring that digital platforms operating across West Africa contribute fairly to economic development and public value. Fellows examined the growing influence of non-resident platforms in advertising, content distribution, online betting, e-commerce, data collection and consumer-facing services. The group highlighted the need for transparent reporting, fair taxation, regulatory cooperation, accessible complaints channels, data protection compliance and consumer protection. The value of this output is that it connected platform governance to fiscal and development questions. In West Africa, platform accountability cannot be limited to moderation decisions. It must also address whether the region captures an equitable share of the value generated by its users, creators and markets.

AI-enabled public services and redress policy clinic. The second policy clinic focused on public sector AI and the rights of people affected by automated or data-driven decisions. Fellows recognised that AI systems can support administrative efficiency, fraud detection, service targeting, language processing and policy analysis. They also warned that AI can create exclusion or discrimination when deployed without adequate safeguards. The group proposed practical requirements such as procurement standards, impact assessments, documentation of data sources, bias testing, human oversight, auditability, privacy protection and accessible redress. This approach is particularly relevant for public institutions, where citizens may have limited ability to refuse an automated system or challenge a decision. The recommendation is therefore not to delay innovation, but to embed accountability from the beginning.

Interoperable public digital infrastructure policy clinic. The third policy clinic examined the foundations of a regional digital single market through the lens of public digital infrastructure. Fellows focused on digital identity, payments, registries, authentication, data exchange and public service platforms. They emphasised that interoperability should not mean centralisation or loss of national control. Rather, countries can maintain authority over foundational systems while agreeing on technical and governance standards that allow trusted cross-border services. This is essential for trade, mobility, remittances, public services and private innovation. The clinic also noted that interoperability must be accompanied by privacy safeguards, cybersecurity, consumer protection and inclusion for people who lack formal documentation, reliable connectivity or digital literacy.

Regional cyber resilience policy clinic. The fourth policy clinic proposed a 72-hour regional cyber resilience framework. This output responded to the reality that cyber incidents affecting one country can have rapid cross-border consequences, especially where telecom networks, payment systems, government services and digital identity platforms are interconnected. The proposed framework emphasised early notification, trusted points of contact, incident classification, multilingual public communication, technical escalation, legal cooperation and post-incident learning. The approach is valuable because it turns cyber cooperation from a general aspiration into a time-bound operational model. It also recognises that cyber resilience is not only a technical matter. It depends on law, trust, communication, leadership and clear institutional mandates.

Youth priorities and digital opportunity. The Youth IGF sessions made clear that young people experience digital transformation as both opportunity and exposure. They use platforms to learn, communicate, organise, create content, build businesses and access markets. At the same time, they face cyberbullying, misinformation, online scams, harmful content, weak monetisation pathways, limited access to devices and uneven digital education. The youth discussions called for

more coherent investment in digital literacy, entrepreneurship, AI skills, creator tools, online safety and regional market access. A recurrent message was that youth inclusion should not be reduced to invitations to speak at events. Young people should be involved in policy design, programme implementation, platform consultations and national digital strategies.

Child online protection and online trust. The session on safe platforms, child online protection and online trust highlighted the need for shared responsibility between platforms, governments, schools, families, civil society and child protection institutions. Discussions addressed age verification, harmful content, cyberbullying, grooming, parental awareness, reporting channels and the limits of technological tools. Participants noted that children are often more agile online than parents and teachers, which makes digital literacy for adults as important as digital education for children. The discussion also raised concerns about whether safety technologies are adequately trained for African contexts and whether global platforms apply equivalent protection standards across regions. The strategic message was that online safety must be locally informed, rights-respecting and connected to broader trust in the digital economy.

Youth entrepreneurship and creator economies. The youth entrepreneurship and creator economy discussions positioned young people as producers of digital value. Participants examined how local content creators, digital entrepreneurs, freelancers and small businesses can use platforms, AI tools, mobile money and online markets to generate income. However, they also noted barriers such as weak payment integration, limited access to finance, poor connectivity, lack of mentorship, unclear intellectual property rules, low visibility, platform monetisation restrictions and dependence on algorithms that are not transparent. The Forum therefore called for stronger support ecosystems that link skills training with business development, financing, tax clarity, creator rights, market access and regional collaboration.

Google Hustle Academy and practical AI literacy. The Hustle Academy session contributed a practical skills dimension to the youth and entrepreneurship agenda. Participants were introduced to core AI concepts such as prompts, tokens, predictive AI, generative AI and large language models, alongside demonstrations of tools that can assist research, content generation, productivity and business planning. The relevance of this session was not only technical. It showed that AI literacy must be broadened beyond specialists. Entrepreneurs, public servants, students, creators and civil society actors need enough practical understanding to use AI responsibly, evaluate its outputs, recognise its limits and participate in policy debates about its deployment.

Universal Acceptance as an inclusion issue. The Universal Acceptance session broadened the meaning of digital inclusion. It showed that users can be excluded not only by lack of connectivity, but also by systems that reject their names, languages, scripts, domain names or email addresses. In a multilingual region, this is a governance issue. Public digital services, education systems, business platforms and developer communities should be able to support Internationalised Domain Names and email addresses that reflect linguistic diversity. Universal Acceptance also links local inclusion to global Internet interoperability. Its implementation requires awareness among policymakers, procurement officers, software developers, universities, registrars and private sector service providers.

LondaPulse and the evidence base for digital rights. The LondaPulse session reinforced the need for evidence-driven digital governance. Participants discussed gaps between digital policy commitments and implementation, with attention to access, online safety, data protection, surveillance, misinformation, restrictions on expression and inclusion of marginalised communities. Evidence tools such as LondaPulse help policymakers and civil society identify trends, compare

country experiences and monitor whether legal frameworks are producing meaningful protection. The session also showed that digital rights should not be treated as a separate agenda from economic development. Users, investors and innovators need trust that rights will be respected, data will be protected and online participation will not be arbitrarily restricted.

ACHPR consultation on platforms and content creation. The consultation on the development of ACHPR guidelines on platforms and content creation gave the Forum a continental human rights dimension. Participants discussed misinformation, harmful content, freedom of expression, content moderation, accountability and the role of platforms in shaping public discourse. A central concern was how to respond to harmful online activity without enabling disproportionate censorship or political abuse. The consultation highlighted the importance of due process, transparency, accessible remedy, civil society participation and alignment with African human rights norms. It also demonstrated that West African perspectives should contribute actively to continental standard-setting, especially because the region faces distinctive linguistic, political and market conditions.

High-level plenary on digital sovereignty and economic value. The principal high-level plenary examined how West Africa can retain value within an integrated digital market. Participants linked sovereignty to infrastructure, data governance, payment systems, local innovation, skills and regional cooperation. They noted that many digital activities create value that leaves the region through foreign platforms, external payment rails, cloud dependence or limited local enterprise scale. The discussion did not propose withdrawal from global services. It called for stronger regional capacity to negotiate, regulate, interoperate and innovate. Practical examples included regional payment solutions, digital identity, data centres, infrastructure redundancy, local startups, policy harmonisation and human capital development.

Platform accountability, economic justice and human capital development. The platform accountability discussions emphasised that West Africa must address the social, fiscal and economic power of digital intermediaries. Platforms influence what information people see, how creators earn income, how businesses advertise, how consumers are protected and how public discourse is shaped. Participants called for stronger transparency, local channels for complaints, fair taxation, cooperation with regulators, safety standards adapted to African contexts and investment in skills. The linkage with human capital was important. The region cannot regulate platforms effectively or build local alternatives without a skilled workforce of engineers, lawyers, policy analysts, entrepreneurs, safety specialists, researchers and public servants.

Digital literacy and online governance. The session on digital literacy, platform accountability and online governance highlighted the social foundations of digital transformation. Participants noted that many users encounter digital platforms without adequate preparation to identify misinformation, protect privacy, manage online risks or use digital tools productively. The discussion placed particular emphasis on early education, computer exposure, robotics, innovation, critical thinking and responsible internet use. It also addressed the balance between freedom of expression and regulation. The conclusion was that stronger digital literacy can reduce vulnerability to manipulation and harm while also reducing pressure for heavy-handed state control. An informed user base is a core component of online trust.

Artificial intelligence, data and emerging technologies. The AI and emerging technologies sessions recognised that West Africa faces a dual challenge. The region must adopt emerging technologies to improve public services, productivity and competitiveness, but it must also prevent irresponsible deployment from deepening inequalities or violating rights. Participants discussed data

quality, algorithmic bias, local language limitations, institutional capacity, public procurement, skills and regulatory fragmentation. They also noted opportunities in agriculture, health, education, financial inclusion, climate resilience, public administration and local content. The recommended path was balanced: encourage experimentation and innovation while establishing safeguards for transparency, accountability, privacy, fairness, security and human review.

AI governance for public institutions. A dedicated dialogue on AI governance for public institutions moved the discussion from principles to implementation. It focused on how governments can responsibly procure, deploy and oversee AI systems. Participants argued that public institutions should not purchase opaque systems without clear accountability for data use, model performance, security and errors. They also noted that public sector staff need training to understand the limits of AI tools, including the risk of inaccurate outputs, bias and over-reliance. The session reinforced the need for clear procurement language, independent review for high-impact systems, documentation, audit trails and complaint mechanisms for affected citizens.

Data governance, protection and redress. The high-level discussion on data, AI and emerging technologies governance emphasised that data protection is a foundation for trust and innovation. Weak data governance can expose citizens to fraud, profiling, discrimination and loss of control over personal information. It can also undermine confidence in public services and digital markets. Participants called for stronger enforcement capacity, better coordination between data protection authorities and sector regulators, public awareness, institutional data stewardship and rights-based approaches to data sharing. Redress was a recurring issue. Citizens need practical mechanisms to challenge harmful data practices, automated decisions or misuse of personal information.

Regional digital single market and coordinated platform governance. The regional digital single market session linked infrastructure, regulation and market integration. Participants discussed cable redundancy, broadband investment, private sector collaboration, digital public infrastructure, harmonised legal frameworks and coordinated platform governance. The session recognised that technical infrastructure and legal interoperability must advance together. A country may digitise services domestically, but regional value will remain limited if systems cannot interoperate across borders or if businesses face inconsistent rules in every market. The discussion therefore called for a regional trust architecture that enables cross-border services while protecting consumers, data and security.

Connectivity, telecoms and digital finance. The involvement of telecom operators, mobile money providers and financial partners anchored the Forum in the realities of connectivity and digital commerce. Telecom networks remain the backbone of inclusion, while mobile money and digital financial services are among the most visible forms of digital transformation for ordinary citizens. Participants recognised the importance of affordability, coverage, quality of service, consumer protection, interoperability and reliable identity systems. Digital finance also raises governance questions around fraud, cross-border payments, agent networks, data protection and regulatory coordination. These issues are central to any meaningful regional digital market.

Parliamentary Track and legislative readiness. The Parliamentary Track recognised that the region's digital governance agenda increasingly requires informed legislation. Parliamentarians discussed how to move from general awareness to readiness on AI, cybersecurity, platform accountability, consumer protection, data protection, fiscal justice and digital sovereignty. They also considered the need for harmonisation across ECOWAS to avoid conflicting national laws that could fragment markets or weaken rights. The track emphasised that parliaments should exercise oversight over public digital systems, procurement of high-risk technologies, cybersecurity powers

and the use of public funds for digital infrastructure. Legislative readiness is therefore both a legal and democratic governance priority.

AI governance for parliamentarians. The parliamentary AI session underscored that lawmakers need practical literacy on emerging technologies. They do not need to become engineers, but they need to understand enough to ask the right questions about risk, accountability, procurement, data, bias, liability and oversight. The session encouraged parliamentarians to scrutinise AI systems used in public administration and to ensure that legal frameworks protect citizens without discouraging innovation. It also encouraged regional exchange, because similar AI systems, vendors and policy challenges will appear across several countries. This makes comparative learning and model legislative guidance valuable.

Civil society, media and accountability. Civil society organisations and media actors contributed a public interest perspective across the Forum. Their interventions emphasised rights, transparency, inclusion, evidence, digital literacy and accountability. They also highlighted the risks of surveillance, internet shutdowns, online harassment, misinformation and weak remedy. Media engagement was particularly important because public understanding of digital policy remains uneven. A more digitally informed public sphere can help citizens understand both the opportunities and the risks of digital transformation. Civil society and media should therefore be treated as implementation partners in awareness, monitoring and accountability, not only as external critics.

Technical community and open Internet principles. The technical community reminded participants that sovereignty and regulation must preserve the global, open and interoperable nature of the Internet. Discussions on domain names, numbering resources, Universal Acceptance, routing, exchange points and network resilience showed that technical standards are central to policy outcomes. A fragmented or poorly implemented technical environment can undermine inclusion and innovation. The technical community also plays an essential role in capacity building, incident response, standards adoption and evidence-based policy advice. The Forum's multistakeholder model is strongest when technical expertise is integrated early into policy development.

Final communique process and outcome coherence. The final communique was not an isolated text. It reflected the convergence of themes across the School, Youth IGF, main sessions, Parliamentary Track and partner dialogues. Its recommendations on digital sovereignty, digital public infrastructure, AI, cybersecurity, platform accountability, rights, child protection, Universal Acceptance, youth leadership, parliamentary engagement and regional coordination are therefore grounded in the full event process. The communique provides the political signal, while this report provides the supporting narrative, strategic analysis and implementation pathway.

Overall event outcome. The most important result of WAIGF 2026 was the formation of a shared regional narrative. Participants moved beyond treating digital issues as separate silos and began to connect infrastructure, markets, rights, AI, platforms, cybersecurity, youth opportunity and legislation under a common theme. That narrative is essential for West Africa because the region's digital transformation will not be secured by isolated projects. It requires a coordinated agenda that links institutions, people, markets and technology under a public interest vision.

4. Strategic insights from Freetown

The Forum generated a set of strategic insights that go beyond individual session outcomes. These insights should guide the interpretation of the Freetown agenda and shape the region's follow-up actions. They are presented here as a consolidated narrative rather than as a long list of isolated messages.

First, digital sovereignty must be made operational. The term is increasingly used in policy debates, but the Freetown discussions showed that it becomes meaningful only when connected to specific capabilities. These include the capacity to maintain resilient networks, govern data, procure technology responsibly, regulate platforms, protect consumers, secure public systems, develop local talent, enforce rights, negotiate with global actors and participate in technical standard-setting. A country with many digital strategies but weak institutions cannot exercise meaningful sovereignty. A region with 15 fragmented policy environments cannot fully capture the benefits of a digital single market. Operational sovereignty therefore requires institutional investment, regional cooperation and measurable implementation.

Second, regional integration is essential for scale and bargaining power. West African digital startups, creators, fintech firms and service providers need access to markets larger than their home countries. Public institutions need interoperable systems to support mobility, trade, payments, identification and service delivery. Regulators need common approaches to platforms, cyber incidents, data flows and consumer complaints. The Forum made clear that a regional digital market is not simply an economic objective. It is also a governance project that requires trusted identity systems, payments interoperability, data protection, cybersecurity cooperation, dispute resolution, cross-border recognition and harmonised legal principles.

Third, infrastructure remains the foundation of inclusion and sovereignty. Discussions repeatedly returned to connectivity gaps, high costs, rural access, cable vulnerabilities, limited local hosting, dependence on external cloud services, weak redundancy and insufficient Internet exchange capacity. Digital transformation cannot be inclusive if access remains unreliable or unaffordable. It cannot be sovereign if critical services are exposed to avoidable single points of failure. It cannot be economically transformative if businesses and creators cannot reach markets efficiently. Infrastructure policy must therefore be linked with universal access funds, private investment, local content hosting, spectrum management, public service digitisation, energy reliability and regional redundancy planning.

Fourth, AI governance is no longer a future issue. Artificial intelligence is already entering public services, education, media, business processes, language tools and content creation. The Forum recognised that West Africa should not wait until harms become entrenched before establishing safeguards. However, participants also warned against copying regulatory models without adaptation. The region needs practical AI governance suited to its institutions and development priorities. This includes public sector training, clear procurement rules, impact assessments for high-risk systems, data protection, bias testing adapted to African contexts, human review, accessible complaint channels, transparency in automated decisions and regional cooperation on standards.

Fifth, platform accountability must be multidimensional. Public debate often focuses on content removal or misinformation, but the Forum expanded the issue to include economic justice, taxation,

advertising transparency, consumer rights, online betting, data extraction, creator monetisation, local representation, complaint handling and youth safety. This wider lens is important because platforms increasingly shape public discourse, markets, livelihoods, cultural production and access to information. West Africa should engage platforms through clear, rights-respecting and regionally coherent expectations. Accountability should not be reduced to censorship; it should include transparency, due process, fair value distribution and meaningful user protection.

Sixth, child online protection and youth opportunity must be addressed together. The Forum avoided portraying young people only as vulnerable users. Children and youth need protection from online harms, but they also need opportunities to learn, create, innovate and participate. Policies should therefore combine age-appropriate design, safety tools, reporting channels, digital literacy for parents and teachers, mental health awareness, and safeguards against grooming and cyberbullying with investment in skills, entrepreneurship, local content, coding, robotics, AI literacy and access to markets. The safest digital future is not one that excludes children and youth from technology, but one that equips and protects them.



Seventh, digital rights remain central to trust. The discussions on digital rights evidence, content governance and online trust showed that users will not fully benefit from digital transformation if they fear arbitrary surveillance, unlawful restriction of expression, misuse of personal data, opaque platform decisions or lack of remedy. Trust requires both security and rights. Governments should be able to respond to cybercrime, fraud and online harms, but these responses must be legal, necessary, proportionate and subject to oversight. Platforms should moderate harmful content, but their decisions should be transparent and appealable. Data-driven services should innovate, but they must respect privacy and protect vulnerable users.

Eighth, capacity is the bridge between policy ambition and implementation. Many countries in the region have adopted digital strategies, cybersecurity policies, data protection laws or innovation initiatives. Yet implementation often suffers from limited staffing, unclear mandates, inadequate budgets, weak coordination, insufficient technical expertise and lack of evidence. WAIGF 2026 showed that capacity development cannot be treated as a side event. It is a strategic requirement. WASIG, youth training, parliamentary briefings, technical workshops, university partnerships, policy labs and alumni networks should form part of a continuous regional capacity ecosystem.

Ninth, parliamentary engagement is indispensable. Digital governance increasingly involves questions that require law, budget allocation and democratic accountability. Without informed parliamentarians, the region risks adopting laws that are either too weak to address real harms or too restrictive for rights and innovation. Parliamentarians should be involved early in policy development, not only at the final stage of passing bills. They also need access to comparative research, model provisions, expert briefings and continuous dialogue with regulators, civil society, the private sector and youth networks.

Tenth, WAIGF itself should evolve from dialogue platform to implementation catalyst. The Forum's legitimacy lies in its convening power and multistakeholder character. Its future value will increasingly depend on whether its outcomes can influence national and regional policy processes. This does not mean turning WAIGF into a regulatory body. It means improving the mechanisms through which recommendations are tracked, policy briefs are disseminated, working groups are sustained, parliamentary actors are briefed, youth and alumni networks are engaged, and ECOWAS processes are informed by the region's multistakeholder community.

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Recommendations and implementation priorities

The recommendations below consolidate the final communique, the track outcomes and the strategic insights from Freetown. They are intended for ECOWAS, Member States, national IGFs, regulators, parliamentarians, the technical community, civil society, private sector actors, academia, youth networks and development partners. The recommendations are grouped into a limited number of implementation priorities to avoid fragmentation and to make follow-up easier.

On digital sovereignty and regional economic value, ECOWAS and Member States should convert the Freetown consensus into a practical regional agenda. This agenda should define the capabilities required for meaningful digital sovereignty, including infrastructure resilience, data governance, local talent, trusted public digital systems, cybersecurity, platform governance, procurement standards, digital rights safeguards and economic value retention. It should avoid symbolic or isolationist approaches and instead strengthen the region's ability to cooperate, negotiate and innovate within the global Internet.

On the regional digital single market, Member States should accelerate harmonisation around the trust layers that enable cross-border services. These include digital identity interoperability, payments interoperability, authentication, consumer protection, data protection, cybersecurity coordination, dispute resolution, electronic transactions, digital signatures and recognition of digital credentials. The goal should be to make it easier for citizens, firms, creators, startups and public institutions to operate across borders while ensuring that users remain protected and rights are respected.

On infrastructure and connectivity, governments, regulators, operators and development partners should invest in broadband expansion, rural access, affordable connectivity, Internet exchange points, local and regional hosting, cable redundancy, cloud portability, resilient public platforms and energy reliability for digital infrastructure. Universal access mechanisms should be reviewed to ensure they support measurable inclusion outcomes, including connectivity for schools, health facilities, community centres, innovation hubs and underserved rural areas.

On AI and data governance, Member States should develop or update national AI strategies and data governance frameworks in line with regional principles. Public institutions deploying AI should be required to conduct risk and impact assessments, document data sources, test for bias, ensure human oversight, provide reasons for high-impact decisions and create accessible complaint channels. Procurement rules should require vendor transparency, security safeguards, data protection compliance, auditability and clear accountability for harms. Regional cooperation should support shared guidance, public sector training and model governance tools.

On cybersecurity and cyber resilience, ECOWAS and Member States should strengthen national Computer Emergency Response Teams, Security Operations Centres, sectoral incident reporting, legal cooperation on digital evidence, cybersecurity skills and public communication protocols. A regional 72-hour incident coordination framework should be tested through exercises and linked to trusted points of contact. Cybersecurity measures should respect privacy, due process and human rights, because trust in security institutions depends on accountability as well as technical capacity.

On platform accountability and fiscal justice, West Africa should develop coherent expectations for digital platforms operating across the region. These expectations should cover transparency reporting, consumer complaint systems, data protection, content moderation due process, youth safety, advertising transparency, taxation, online betting oversight, creator monetisation and cooperation with regulators. Regional dialogue with platforms should be structured, evidence-based

and rights-respecting. The aim should be to create fairer digital markets while preserving innovation and freedom of expression.

On digital rights and online trust, Member States should ensure that responses to misinformation, cybercrime, harmful content and online abuse are lawful, necessary, proportionate and subject to oversight. Content governance should be aligned with African human rights standards and developed through inclusive consultation. Civil society and researchers should be supported to generate evidence on digital rights, platform practices, internet access, online harms and policy implementation. Users should have access to remedy when their rights are violated by public institutions or private platforms.

On child online protection and youth inclusion, governments, schools, platforms, families and civil society should work together to build safer digital environments. This requires digital literacy for children, parents and teachers; age-appropriate design; reporting channels; mental health awareness; safeguards against grooming, cyberbullying and harmful content; and stronger cooperation with child protection institutions. At the same time, youth policies should expand access to coding, AI literacy, entrepreneurship support, creator tools, mentorship, finance and regional market opportunities.

On Universal Acceptance and multilingual inclusion, public institutions, universities, developers, registrars, businesses and technology providers should ensure that systems accept Internationalised Domain Names, non-Latin email addresses and diverse language inputs. Universal Acceptance should be included in digital public procurement, developer training, public service platforms and digital literacy programmes. Linguistic inclusion is a concrete dimension of sovereignty and inclusion, particularly in a region with rich language diversity.

On parliamentary engagement, the West African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance should be strengthened as a permanent channel for legislative capacity building. Parliamentarians should receive briefings on AI, cybersecurity, data protection, platform governance, digital taxation, consumer protection and digital public infrastructure. ECOWAS and WAIGF partners should support model legislative clauses, comparative policy notes and regular parliamentary dialogues to reduce fragmentation and improve democratic oversight.

On WAIGF follow-up, the WAIGF Secretariat and partners should create a lean implementation mechanism that tracks progress on key recommendations. This mechanism should not be bureaucratic. It should identify a small number of annual priorities, convene thematic policy labs, support national IGF feedback loops, brief ECOWAS and parliamentary actors, maintain an alumni and youth engagement network, and produce an annual progress note before the next Forum. The purpose is to ensure that WAIGF recommendations remain visible and actionable.

Priority recommendations and proposed implementation pathway

Priority	Primary actors	Action pathway
Operationalise digital sovereignty	ECOWAS, Member States, WAIGF Secretariat, regulators, technical community	Define a regional capability framework covering infrastructure, data, standards, procurement, cybersecurity, human capital, rights and economic value.
Advance the regional digital single market	ECOWAS, national digital agencies, regulators, payment authorities, private sector	Develop interoperable trust layers for identity, payments, authentication, consumer protection, data governance and dispute resolution.

Strengthen AI and data governance	Member States, data protection authorities, public procurement bodies, universities, civil society	Adopt AI strategies, impact assessments, public sector procurement safeguards, redress mechanisms and regional guidance for high-impact systems.
Build cyber resilience	CERTs, SOCs, ECOWAS, regulators, law enforcement, telecom operators	Test a 72-hour incident coordination framework, create trusted contact channels and strengthen rights-respecting legal cooperation on digital evidence.
Improve platform accountability	Regulators, tax authorities, platforms, civil society, consumer protection agencies	Create transparent obligations on reporting, complaints, taxation, content governance, online safety, digital advertising and creator monetisation.
Protect children and empower youth	Education ministries, platforms, schools, youth networks, child protection agencies	Integrate digital literacy, safety tools, online trust education, AI skills, entrepreneurship support and age-appropriate protection into national programmes.
Embed Universal Acceptance	ICANN community, governments, developers, universities, registrars, service providers	Include Universal Acceptance compliance in procurement, technical training, public platforms and developer ecosystems.
Strengthen parliamentary readiness	WAPNIG, national parliaments, ECOWAS Parliament, regulators, WAIGF partners	Provide regular briefings, model clauses, comparative analysis and committee-level engagement on digital governance legislation.
Create a WAIGF follow-up mechanism	WAIGF Secretariat, ECOWAS, national IGFs, WASIG alumni, partners	Track a small set of priorities annually, convene policy labs and produce a progress note for the next WAIGF cycle.

Role of ECOWAS. The ECOWAS Commission is central to the implementation of the Freetown agenda because many priority issues are regional by nature. Cross-border payments, platform services, data flows, cyber incidents, online fraud, digital trade, mobile money, consumer protection and digital identity all require coordination beyond national borders. ECOWAS should therefore use the WAIGF outcomes as input for regional digital economy, cybersecurity, data governance and digital market processes. Its role should not be to replace national policymaking, but to provide coherence, model guidance, convening power and mechanisms for harmonisation where fragmentation would harm citizens and businesses.

Role of national governments. Member States should review the Freetown outcomes against their national digital strategies, AI plans, cybersecurity frameworks, data protection laws, universal access programmes and public digital infrastructure projects. Each country does not need to implement every recommendation in the same way. However, all should identify where domestic reforms can support regional interoperability, rights protection and market integration. Governments should also improve coordination between ministries responsible for communications, innovation, finance, education, justice, trade, security, youth and public administration, because digital transformation cuts across all these mandates.

Role of regulators and digital agencies. Regulators will be essential in translating broad policy messages into operational rules. Communications regulators, data protection authorities, financial regulators, competition authorities, consumer protection agencies and cybersecurity institutions should coordinate more systematically. Platform accountability, online betting, digital financial services, data protection, consumer complaints and cyber incidents often fall across several mandates. The Forum highlighted the need for regulatory cooperation at national and regional levels. Clear memoranda, joint consultations, shared evidence and coordinated enforcement priorities can reduce gaps and improve predictability for businesses and users.

Role of parliaments. Parliaments should treat digital governance as a standing policy area rather than as an occasional response to new technologies or crises. Committees responsible for communications, justice, security, finance, education, youth, trade and human rights all have a role. Parliamentary oversight should examine public procurement of digital systems, implementation of data protection laws, cybersecurity powers, universal access funds, digital taxation, platform regulation and the impact of AI on public services. WAPNIG can support this process by organising briefings, comparative exchanges and model legislative resources that help national parliaments act with more confidence and coherence.

Role of the technical community. Organisations such as ICANN, AFRINIC, the Internet Society and national technical communities can support implementation through training, standards awareness, Universal Acceptance, network resilience, Internet exchange point development, routing security and technical policy advice. The technical community should continue to explain how policy decisions affect the stability and interoperability of the Internet. It can also help bridge the gap between policymakers and engineers, which is essential when debates involve domain names, addressing, cybersecurity, infrastructure resilience or public digital systems.

Role of platforms and digital service providers. Global and regional digital platforms should engage the West African policy community with greater transparency and consistency. They should provide accessible reporting, stronger local communication channels, clear complaint mechanisms, child safety tools, support for local languages, transparent content moderation policies and fair monetisation opportunities for creators. They should also cooperate with lawful and rights-respecting regulatory processes. Engagement should not be limited to public relations. It should include measurable commitments, consultation with civil society and youth, and responsiveness to concerns raised by regulators and users in the region.

Role of telecom and financial service providers. Telecom operators, Internet service providers, mobile money providers and financial institutions are central to the region's digital market. Their investment decisions affect access, quality of service, affordability, interoperability and resilience. They should work with regulators and governments on broadband expansion, rural connectivity, digital financial inclusion, fraud prevention, consumer education, cross-border interoperability and infrastructure redundancy. They also have a role in supporting digital skills, innovation hubs, local startups and emergency communication during cyber incidents or connectivity disruptions.

Role of civil society and academia. Civil society organisations should continue to monitor digital rights, platform practices, data protection implementation, internet access, online harms and the impact of digital policies on vulnerable groups. Academia should support evidence generation, policy analysis, technical training and curriculum development. Universities can integrate Internet governance, AI ethics, cybersecurity, data protection, digital economy and public interest technology into programmes in law, computer science, public policy, economics, journalism and international relations. Research partnerships between universities, civil society and policy institutions would strengthen the evidence base for WAIGF follow-up.

Role of youth networks. Youth networks should be integrated into implementation rather than limited to parallel forums. They can support digital literacy campaigns, entrepreneurship programmes, online safety awareness, peer learning, innovation challenges, policy consultations and monitoring of platform practices affecting young users. Youth representatives should be included in thematic working groups on AI, platform accountability, child protection, digital skills and creator economies. This will help ensure that policies reflect the realities of those who are often the first adopters of digital technologies.

Role of development partners. Development partners should align their support with regional priorities identified in Freetown. Support should move beyond one-off events toward multi-year capacity building, policy labs, technical assistance, research, parliamentary engagement, youth programmes, digital public infrastructure safeguards, cybersecurity exercises and monitoring of implementation. The most useful support will be flexible enough to respond to national contexts while still strengthening regional coherence. Partners should also avoid creating fragmented pilot projects that cannot interoperate or scale across the region.

Implementation through policy labs. The Forum should use policy labs as a practical bridge between recommendations and institutional action. A policy lab can take a theme such as AI procurement, platform transparency, Universal Acceptance, cyber incident response or digital public infrastructure and produce a short policy note, stakeholder map, draft checklist and implementation options. This approach is more manageable than broad declarations and more inclusive than closed expert drafting. WASIG alumni, youth representatives, parliamentarians, regulators, civil society, technical experts and private sector actors can all contribute to such labs.

Implementation through national IGFs. National IGFs can localise the Freetown outcomes. Each national IGF could identify 2 or 3 WAIGF 2026 recommendations most relevant to its domestic context and convene focused discussions with government, regulators, civil society, youth, academia and the private sector. This would help avoid the gap between regional dialogue and national policy. It would also generate feedback for the next WAIGF cycle, making the regional Forum more evidence-based and responsive to country-level realities.

Implementation through parliamentary briefings. The Parliamentary Track should be followed by concise briefings for national and regional parliamentary actors. These briefings should translate technical issues into legislative questions. For example, an AI briefing should explain what lawmakers need to ask about procurement, liability, data quality, discrimination, public sector accountability and citizen redress. A platform accountability briefing should explain transparency, taxation, content governance, consumer protection and rights. A cybersecurity briefing should address incident response powers, digital evidence, oversight and protection of civil liberties.

Implementation through public communication. The Freetown agenda should be communicated beyond specialised policy circles. Citizens need to understand why digital sovereignty, AI governance, platform accountability, data protection and cybersecurity matter to their daily lives. Public communication can use media partnerships, community radio, youth networks, universities, civil society campaigns and online platforms. Clear communication will make digital policy more democratic and can reduce misinformation about new laws, public digital systems or online safety measures.

Implementation through regional evidence. The Forum should encourage the production of regional evidence products. These could include a West Africa platform accountability brief, a comparative note on AI strategies, a mapping of national cyber response capacities, a Universal Acceptance readiness scan, a youth digital opportunity index or a review of public digital infrastructure safeguards. Evidence products do not need to be long. Their value lies in creating a shared factual basis for policy dialogue and helping institutions prioritise action.

Resource mobilisation. Implementation will require resources. Some actions can be undertaken through coordination and existing mandates, but others need funding. Priority areas include WASIG sustainability, youth and child protection programmes, cyber exercises, parliamentary capacity, research, Universal Acceptance training, public sector AI governance and digital literacy. Resource

mobilisation should be coordinated so that partners support shared priorities rather than duplicating efforts. Transparent reporting on support and results would strengthen trust and accountability.

Maintaining balance. All implementation should preserve the balance that shaped the Forum. Digital policy must support innovation but also accountability. It must strengthen security but also protect rights. It must expand markets but also protect consumers. It must promote sovereignty but also preserve the open and interoperable Internet. It must protect children without excluding them from opportunity. This balance is not automatic. It requires continuous multistakeholder dialogue, evidence, oversight and willingness to adjust policies when unintended consequences appear.



Follow-up framework

The effectiveness of the Freetown outcomes will depend on follow-up. The Forum generated a strong consensus, but consensus alone does not change policy or institutions. A realistic follow-up framework should be light, practical and connected to existing regional and national processes. It should avoid creating new burdensome structures while still ensuring that key recommendations do not disappear after the annual event.

The first step should be consolidation. Within the immediate post-Forum period, the WAIGF Secretariat, working with ECOWAS and partners, should disseminate the final communique, this strategic report and a short policy brief summarising priority actions. National IGFs should be encouraged to discuss the Freetown outcomes in their own national processes and to identify which recommendations are most relevant to their policy environment. WASIG alumni and youth representatives should be invited to participate in these national feedback loops.

The second step should be thematic policy work. Rather than attempting to pursue all recommendations equally at once, WAIGF partners should identify a limited number of themes for structured follow-up. The 2026 outcomes suggest 5 high-value themes: AI and public sector accountability, platform accountability and fiscal justice, interoperable digital public infrastructure, regional cyber resilience, and youth digital opportunity with child online protection. Each theme could be supported through an online policy lab, a short regional policy note and engagement with relevant ECOWAS or national processes.

The third step should be institutional linkage. The Forum should establish clearer channels for ensuring that recommendations reach the institutions capable of acting on them. ECOWAS directorates, national ministries, regulators, data protection authorities, CERTs, parliamentary committees, universal access agencies, education ministries and regional private sector bodies should receive tailored briefs. Parliamentary actors should receive specific briefings that translate WAIGF recommendations into legislative and oversight questions. Technical organisations should be engaged where recommendations concern standards, Universal Acceptance, routing, addressing, domain names or network resilience.

The fourth step should be monitoring. A simple monitoring framework can help track whether the Freetown recommendations are influencing policy discussions. The framework should not attempt to measure every activity. It should look for signals of progress, such as policy briefs produced, national IGF discussions held, parliamentary briefings delivered, cyber exercises planned, AI procurement guidance drafted, Universal Acceptance training conducted, youth safety programmes launched, or platform accountability consultations initiated. These indicators can be reviewed before the next WAIGF and used to shape the following year's agenda.

The fifth step should be continuity of capacity development. WASIG should be supported as a multi-year regional programme rather than an isolated training event. Its alumni network can become a practical resource for national IGFs, policy consultations, research projects and youth mentorship. The policy clinic model should continue because it links learning with outputs. Future cohorts could build on the Freetown themes, test policy tools, compare country experiences and support ECOWAS with grounded analysis from across the region.

Finally, the follow-up framework should maintain the inclusive character of WAIGF. Implementation should not become a closed institutional process. Civil society, youth representatives, technical experts, academia, media, private sector actors and community networks should remain involved. This is particularly important for issues such as content governance, online safety, AI redress, digital rights, rural connectivity, child protection and accessibility, where lived experience and public accountability are essential.

Monitoring signals for the next WAIGF cycle

Area	Possible signals of progress
Digital sovereignty and value	Regional capability framework drafted; national policy discussions held; economic value and digital market issues reflected in ECOWAS or national strategies.
AI and data governance	AI procurement guidance developed; public sector training delivered; impact assessment templates tested; data protection authorities engaged.
Cyber resilience	CERT contact points updated; regional exercise planned; incident communication protocol drafted; cyber cooperation brief shared with Member States.

Platform accountability	Consultation with platforms held; transparency and complaint mechanism issues documented; fiscal justice and consumer protection included in policy briefs.
Youth and child protection	Youth IGF outcomes discussed in national IGFs; digital literacy or child online safety programmes initiated; youth entrepreneurship support mapped.
Universal Acceptance	Training for developers or universities delivered; public procurement language reviewed; awareness raised among registrars and service providers.
Parliamentary engagement	Briefings delivered to parliamentary committees; WAPNIG workplan developed; comparative notes or model clauses prepared.
WAIGF follow-up	Annual progress note prepared; thematic policy labs convened; WASIG alumni and youth networks engaged in follow-up.

Risk of overextension. One risk after the Forum is attempting to implement too many recommendations simultaneously. The Freetown agenda is broad, and institutional capacity across the region is uneven. The follow-up mechanism should therefore prioritise a small number of themes each year while keeping the broader agenda visible. Selecting 4 or 5 priority themes does not mean abandoning the rest. It means sequencing implementation in a way that is realistic and measurable.

Risk of fragmentation. Another risk is that countries continue to develop digital policies in isolation, creating inconsistent rules for platforms, data, AI, digital identity, cybersecurity and digital payments. Fragmentation increases compliance costs, weakens consumer protection and limits regional scale. ECOWAS and WAIGF should therefore focus on areas where harmonisation brings clear value, while allowing flexibility for national implementation. The most urgent harmonisation areas are cross-border trust services, cybersecurity cooperation, data protection principles, platform accountability and consumer protection.

Risk of rights erosion. The region must avoid using legitimate concerns about misinformation, cybercrime and online harms to justify disproportionate restrictions on expression, privacy or association. Rights-based governance is not an obstacle to security. It is a condition for trust. Laws and policies should include safeguards such as legality, necessity, proportionality, due process, oversight and remedy. Platforms should also respect these principles when moderating content or suspending accounts.

Risk of technological dependency. A persistent concern across the Forum was dependency on external platforms, cloud services, payment systems, AI models and infrastructure providers. This dependency cannot be solved overnight, and it should not be addressed through isolation. The practical response is to build local and regional capacity, support open standards, strengthen procurement skills, improve data governance, develop talent, diversify providers, invest in local infrastructure and negotiate with global actors from a position of regional coherence.

Risk of exclusion. Digital transformation can deepen inequality if access, affordability, language, disability, gender, rural connectivity and skills are not addressed. Public digital services should not assume that all users have smartphones, stable internet, official documents, literacy or confidence in digital systems. Inclusion requires offline alternatives during transition, accessible design, local languages, community support, public access points, digital literacy and targeted investment in underserved areas.

Risk of weak institutional memory. Annual forums can generate strong recommendations that fade before the next cycle. To avoid this, WAIGF should maintain a concise record of commitments, circulate progress notes and ensure continuity through alumni networks, national IGFs and working

groups. Institutional memory is also strengthened when recommendations are linked to named processes, responsible actors and practical outputs rather than remaining as general aspirations.

Sustainability of WASIG and youth engagement. The School and Youth IGF should be treated as long-term investments. Their value increases when participants remain connected to policy processes after the event. Alumni can support national IGFs, contribute to research, join policy labs, mentor new cohorts and assist with public education. Youth networks can help monitor emerging issues and propose solutions that are grounded in lived experience. Sustained engagement will prevent capacity building from becoming episodic.

A practical standard for success. The success of WAIGF 2026 should not be measured only by the quality of the event or the length of its report. It should be measured by whether the Freetown outcomes influence policy discussions, strengthen institutions, inform legislation, improve coordination, build skills and create safer and more inclusive digital environments. This practical standard should guide follow-up by the Secretariat, ECOWAS, Member States and partners.

Conclusion

WAIGF 2026 in Freetown confirmed that West Africa's digital future will be shaped not only by technology adoption, but by the quality of governance surrounding that adoption. The region is entering a phase in which digital infrastructure, data, platforms, AI, payments, identity, cybersecurity and online content are becoming central to economic development, public administration, democratic participation and social trust. The decisions made now will influence whether digital transformation deepens dependency or strengthens agency; whether it extracts value or creates shared prosperity; whether it fragments markets or supports regional integration; whether it exposes citizens to harm or protects rights and opportunity.

The Forum's principal contribution was to connect these questions within one coherent regional agenda. It showed that digital sovereignty and economic value are inseparable. Sovereignty without economic opportunity risks becoming symbolic. Economic growth without rights, trust and accountability risks becoming extractive. Innovation without infrastructure and skills will remain uneven. Security without rights will undermine legitimacy. Inclusion without meaningful participation will remain incomplete. The Freetown outcomes therefore call for balanced, practical and cooperative governance.

The different tracks of the Forum strengthened this message. WASIG developed capacity and policy prototypes. The Youth IGF brought the voice of young users, creators and entrepreneurs. The main Forum sessions consolidated the regional policy agenda. The Parliamentary Track connected the discussion to lawmaking and oversight. Partner sessions brought evidence, standards, operational experience and market realities. The final communique distilled these strands into a shared outcome. Together, they demonstrate the value of WAIGF as a regional platform for dialogue, capacity development and policy coordination.

The next stage is implementation. The Freetown agenda should be translated into policy briefs, parliamentary engagement, regional coordination, national IGF discussions, technical trainings, youth programmes, cyber exercises, AI governance tools and platform accountability dialogues. The Forum should continue to serve as a bridge between communities that do not always work together but must govern the digital future together. If sustained with clarity and discipline, the outcomes of WAIGF 2026 can help West Africa move toward a digital transformation that is open, secure, inclusive, innovative, rights-respecting and capable of creating lasting regional value.

Annex. Partners, tracks and source materials

This annex provides a concise institutional record of the main partners, tracks and source materials used to prepare the report. It is intentionally brief in order to preserve the strategic and reader-friendly character of the document.

The partners and supporting institutions of WAIGF 2026 were the Government of Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Communication, Technology and Innovation of Sierra Leone, the West Africa Internet Governance Forum, the Economic Community of West African States Commission, the Internet Society, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, the African Network Information Centre, the Smart Africa Alliance, the Internet Society Foundation, the Internet Governance Forum Support Association, Meta Platforms Inc., the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Paradigm Initiative, Africell Sierra Leone, Afrimoney, Orange Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone Telecommunications Company Limited, the Universal Access Development Fund, the National Communications Authority of Sierra Leone, Africa Young Voices Media Empire and RCBank Sierra Leone Limited.

The event covered the West Africa School on Internet Governance, the West Africa Youth Internet Governance Forum, main WAIGF high-level plenaries and policy sessions, the Parliamentary Track of the West African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance, partner and technical sessions, policy clinics, consultations and the final communique process. The national Internet governance communities of West Africa were represented through the regional WAIGF process, covering Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

The source base included official session reports from the 2026 Freetown event, the WASIG 2026 comprehensive analytical report, the WASIG Freetown communique, the WAIGF 2026 final communique, the West Africa Youth IGF communique and session reports, the Parliamentary Track communique, partner session materials and the 2025 WAIGF final communique used for continuity of structure and tone. The report consolidates overlapping reports into a single strategic narrative and does not reproduce the full transcript or detailed rapporteur templates.

End of report

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