



EAST AFRICA **INTERNET** **GOVERNANCE FORUM** **(EAIGF) 2024**

Building Our **Multi Stakeholder Digital Future** For East Africa

11th - 12th September, 2024 | Kampala Serena Hotel, Uganda



Contents

Introduction	4
Main Objective of the EAIGF	4
Priority themes/issues of focus for EAIGF 2024	5
EAIGF 2024 Proceedings	6
Welcome remarks	6
Keynote address	7
High Level Panel	8
Lightning session	10
Breakout Sessions	13
Main Session	22
Closing Ceremony and Recognition of Regional ICT Partners	24

Introduction

The 11th East African Internet Governance Forum 2024, held in Kampala, September 11, 2024, under the theme “**Building Our Multi Stakeholder Digital Future for East Africa.**” The forum was held after the East Africa School on Internet Governance and the East Africa Youth Internet Governance Forum, both held on September 10, 2024.

First held in 2008, the East Africa Internet Governance Forum (EAIGF) has created a space for continued dialogue on Internet Governance issues and best practices and consequently spurred a momentum for localised integration of global practices on Internet Governance while also instituting a consensus-building process to develop a common understanding of Internet Governance issues as well as building policy capacity to enable meaningful participation in global Internet policy, governance, and development. Discussion from the regional Forums such as the EAIGF feeds into the global Internet Governance Forum, which assembles contributions from across the world with the goal of realising the multistakeholder model at a global scale.

Main Objective of the EAIGF

The EAIGF is a platform for an inclusive multilateral, multi-stakeholder, and multilingual debate and discussion on issues pertinent to enhancing Internet Governance development in East Africa and beyond.

Specific objectives for EAIGF are as follows:

- To increase awareness and build capacity on Information Society and Knowledge Management issues for East African Internet users, to ensure that all stakeholders are well prepared for contribution and interaction.
- To ensure that the concerns of East African citizens are considered in the Regional and global IGF process.
- To put in place a coordinated process in East Africa for dealing with Information Society and Knowledge Management issues in the sub region.
- To strengthen the multi-stakeholder dialogue model for Information Society and Knowledge Management in East Africa through the regional and national fora.
- To ensure a multi-stakeholder representation in National and the Regional Forum in East Africa.
- To ensure that all the countries are part of the sub regional and to strengthen their national processes.
- To facilitate national and sub regional exchanges and interactions between countries and in the Sub Region.
- To facilitate follow up of EAIGF decisions and recommendations in appropriate regional and global fora.
- To promote use of local content in East Africa and knowledge in cyberspace.

Priority themes/issues of focus for EAIGF 2024

Harnessing innovation and balancing risks in the digital space: The Internet and digital technologies are an intrinsic part of every country's development, spurring innovation in many areas such as healthcare, distance learning, and socio-economic growth. However, this centrality of the digital space also creates global vulnerabilities that call for collective action, as individual actions alone cannot effectively address them. This theme aims to foster dialogue and knowledge exchange on success stories and best practices in reaping the benefits of digital innovation for all, as well as efforts of all stakeholders to tackle the risks arising from this rapid transformation.

Enhancing the digital contribution to peace, development, and sustainability: Some of the biggest challenges facing the world are the need of improving sustainability and working together for peace, and at the same time working for social and economic development in our countries and regions. Harnessing the transformative potential of digital technologies and the Internet can be an important ally to achieve global progress that promotes peace, drives sustainable development and addresses pressing environmental challenges. This theme will explore the multifaceted ways in which digitalization can drive socioeconomic change and development for present and future generations.

Advancing human rights and inclusion in the digital age: The digital environment is an increasingly important facet of daily life all around the world. Therefore, discussions about how to empower all people and drive genuine inclusion of all communities in shaping its development is vital. This includes efforts to connect and empower all populations, in particular marginalised communities and vulnerable groups to reap the benefits that the Internet has to offer and ensure that the same rights they enjoy offline also apply online. This theme will delve into the innovative solutions, frameworks and initiatives that foster universal meaningful connectivity and ensure the protection of human rights in the digital realm.

Improving digital governance for the Internet We Want: The very nature of the global Internet requires effective models of multistakeholder governance to be at its core, garnering continued efforts by all stakeholders to address digital issues and the promotion of greater cooperation. This theme is about identifying ways to strengthen and support the open, transparent, inclusive and bottom-up governance process related to the use and evolution of the Internet, working towards the vision of achieving the Internet We Want.

Harnessing the power of AI for social development: Artificial Intelligence (AI) revolutionizing the way we live our lives causing excitement and alarm about its potential impact on society. AI has opened economic opportunities for companies to grow their business, automated administrative functions in the education sector, while making our cities smarter and greener through AI-powered transport systems. However, there are also growing concerns about the negative impact of AI including on evolving digital divide, ethical concerns and on the future of work. This theme will explore ways for addressing these concerns deliberating on what should be done to harness the power of AI for social good and development.

EAIGF 2024 Proceedings

Welcome remarks:

Speakers: **Mr. Joshua Mpairwe** (President, Internet Society Uganda Chapter); **Ms. Lillian Nalwoga** (Chair, EAIGF/AFIGF);

Ms. Anja Gengo [Associate Program Expert United Nations Secretariat for the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)]

The President warmly welcomed delegates to Uganda. He noted that the EAIGF brings together national coordinators from across the East African region and that coming together as a region helps to contribute to a better Internet in Africa. He extended an invitation to the delegates for the Africa IGF that was scheduled to take place from November 20–22 in Addis Ababa Ethiopia, as these discussions feed into the global IGF. He called upon delegates to identify key issues as individual countries and work towards better solutions to drive innovation.

Ms. Nalwoga welcomed delegates to the 11th EAIGF in Kampala and noted that their presence signified a strong commitment to advancing Internet policies within the East African Community which the Internet Society of Uganda deeply appreciates, especially the participation in the crucial dialogue, the EAIGF.

She acknowledged that the forum serves as a platform for shaping the future of Internet governance in East Africa, ensuring that our policies benefit all Internet users and stakeholders involved in digital governance. She commended the efforts of the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) Members of Parliament in their engagement to formalize and harmonize digital policies across the region, with the aim of creating a fair, inclusive, and effective Internet governance framework. She reminded participants that many member states have already made significant progress in developing legal frameworks that enforce Internet governance and ensure compliance among telecommunications companies. However, some states are still in the process of establishing harmonized policies that enable meaningful and responsible Internet use. She noted that Uganda and Kenya have demonstrated exemplary leadership in developing robust digital policies, setting a standard for others to benchmark and collaborate towards a more cohesive and synchronized approach to Internet governance.

In alignment with the United Nations and African Union charters, she added that our policies must not only safeguard human rights but also foster innovation within the ICT sector. By doing so, we can create opportunities for employment and stimulate growth through private-sector engagement, especially for our youth. She encouraged participants not only to deliberate on these critical strategies but also focus on addressing the pressing issue of climate change. She called for sustainable policies, ensuring that the growth of digital platforms and governance models contribute to environmental preservation.



Remarks from Ms. Anja Gengo, Associate Program Expert United Nations Secretariat for the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

Ms. Gengo noted that the IGF is a collaborative effort shaped by local and regional laws. And that engagement in the IGF reflects the growth and development of Internet policies and regional Internet frameworks, paving the way for a more inclusive and brighter digital future. She mentioned that the EAIGF discussions come at a pivotal time, as the Global Digital Compact is set to undergo challenging debates among member states in New York to refine principles that guide Internet use globally, for a better Internet future. In 2025, the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) will provide a valuable opportunity for all to assess the achievements of the past few decades and to set objectives for the years ahead. She admitted that it will be a momentous occasion to reaffirm our commitment to the value of the IGF and the multi-stakeholder model, which has made remarkable progress in decision-making processes over the past few decades, shaping the future of Internet governance. She extended an invitation to all participants to join the global IGF of 2024 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where the outcomes of the Uganda Youth IGF, Uganda IGF, EAIGF, and Africa IGF will contribute to the global IGF discussions, leading to the success of the 19th Global IGF. She thanked the participants for their commitment to Internet Governance and asked them to join the IGF community in shaping the future of the Internet.

Eng. Murenzi noted the vital role played by the East African Community (EAC) in engaging with different stakeholders at the regional level to facilitate significant contributions to the Internet governance space. He emphasized the importance of the forum as a pivotal meeting held on rotational basis and that policies and guidelines from East African governments will shape the future of the IGF, and all countries will fully engage and collaborate to ensure success for the annual gatherings.

Keynote address:

Hon. Kabbyanga Godfrey Baluku, Minister of State for ICT and National Guidance, Uganda

The Honorable Minister of State for ICT and National Guidance of Uganda, represented by Mr. Amos Mpungu, Principal ICT Officer, at the ministry. He welcomed delegates to the 11th East Africa IGF. He appreciated the significant strides made by digital services in East Africa, such as M-Pesa, in creating better financial systems that benefit governments, the private sector, and other stakeholders. He called upon synergies between governments and the private sector in fostering East Africa's digital future. He added that to advance East Africa's digital development, policies must be implemented to ensure a better internet for all.

He also shared key digital development strides made by Uganda such as the Uganda digital roadmap launched in 2023, which focuses on cybersecurity, digital skills, and other key areas that require collaboration across the ICT sector. He acknowledges the role that the private sector plays in Uganda's digital economy, where last-mile connections are essential to scaling digital growth in rural areas and fostering increased collaboration and networking for a stronger internet community. As a leader in Africa's digital transformation agenda, he said that Uganda's shared vision of a digitally empowered community is a reality being shaped today through decisions and policies that ensure security and benefits for all people in East Africa. he concluded by affirming that we can indeed build a beacon of internet governance in Africa.



High Level Panel:

“Building our Multi-stakeholder Digital Future for East Africa.”

The session explored approaches to building a digital future for East Africa. Panelists shared insights on how the region can leverage digital technology to drive economic growth, enhance digital governance, and improve the quality of life for its citizens. Other areas discussed included improving infrastructure development, strengthening regulatory frameworks and policies to foster digital trade and e-commerce, harmonising data protection and privacy laws, developing robust cyber security frameworks and cross-border collaboration on cybercrime, among others.

Session Highlights:

Data Governance: Data is a sensitive resource that needs to properly be governed by all stakeholders. And as a way of managing data, the Government of Uganda established a Data Protection Office (DPO), an independent authority that oversees the implementation of the Personal Data and Privacy Act. Additionally, the office has been training organizations on data protection and cybersecurity. Data is a sensitive resource thus governments were encouraged to work closely with data processors to protect the privacy of their citizens.

Online safety and security: Digital platforms such as META are empowering people to build communities and network for business, offering opportunities for users to access social information relevant to their interests. META has clear guidelines and policies to help users manage their time online, reduce the risk of addiction, and prioritize safety for all users. META also provides tools that allow users to set reminders, notifying them if they spend excessive time online, encouraging mindful usage. META also conducts awareness training to ensure users are well-informed on how to safely navigate its platforms.

Digital Inclusion: Out of the four billion unconnected people in the world, more than half are in Africa, largely due to issues of affordability and access, especially in geographically remote areas. Other challenges include language barriers, digital illiteracy due to limited access to content, and the high cost of devices, all of which restrict internet access for many in Africa. Solutions such as exploring the use of renewable energy like solar power to extend electricity to remote areas, and harmonizing ICT policies to benefit marginalized communities could go a long way in mitigating these challenges.

“As a continent, there is a reason we talk about Ubuntu, the spirit of togetherness. Various stakeholders may seek monopolies, but this isn’t the best way to develop solutions that are truly inclusive. The power of digital rights is undeniable, and a community that doesn’t protect its interests is a vulnerable one. When citizens express concerns, it shows their desire to engage in the digital space, so respecting the rights of all individuals is crucial. Digital inclusion is a necessity in Africa, yet many remain disconnected due to a lack of access to technology, devices, and affordable bandwidth. Africa must act.”

- Mr. Gbenga Sesan, Executive Director, Paradigm Initiative.

In conclusion, harmonizing policies and embracing a digital future will ensure growth at all levels for all stakeholders and connect more people to the internet by acting and getting the job done. Collaboration in digital transformation requires working together on infrastructure development and within the ecosystem. By widening and deepening political culture and innovation, East Africa can leverage technology to access essential resources. Digital inclusion is key to achieving greater connectivity in the region.

Digital trade and policy: The pillars of East African integration, including the Customs Union, Common Market Protocol, and Monetary Union, have strengthened financial transactions across the region. East Africa has developed interoperability standards, fostering better working relationships among member states. Building a robust digital infrastructure in East Africa involves capacity building in every aspect of communication, advancing the digital transformation agenda with a focus on Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), data policy, privacy, and protection to ensure the safety of all East Africans. All tools and protocols require a regional data-sharing policy to facilitate communication among member states. Regional laws take precedence over national laws, and the harmonization of these policies is more effective than individual guidelines. East Africa has been invited to present its digital agenda to the United Nations General Assembly UNGA Secretariat.

Policies and frameworks for protecting intellectual property (IP) in Africa are also essential. Harmonizing regional laws is important, countries such as Uganda subscribe to IP laws and conventions. Developing IP laws ensures that local innovators and individuals in the region can benefit. This also includes ICT training. Collaboration with international organizations, such as JICA, fosters innovation and incubation from academic institutions and offers solutions that enhance service provision and maximize opportunities. Intellectual property can also be used as collateral to secure loans, especially for industries.

Artificial Intelligence: META is building businesses as a pillar through emerging technologies like AI. The development of language models is a key focus for META to help communities leverage the potential of global business inclusion, such as with LAMAR 3.0, and this extends to innovations in health, agriculture, and other sectors. Developers and businesses are encouraged to join META’s “Data for Good” program, an iconic initiative that brings developers together to collaborate and generate more income and revenue for governments.



Lightning Session

Greening the Internet with Solar Powered Routers by Research and Education Network Uganda (RENU).

The session focused on the role of solar powered routers and the benefits for multi-stakeholder digital development. RENU Uganda offers other services like capacity building, cybersecurity training, web hosting services, and connectivity services including the portable WIFI. The solar powered Internet routers offer reduction in carbon emissions, are cost efficient, operational in off-grid areas, highly sustainable and operational in remote areas. For governments, the solar powered routers align with the climate change Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) seven and support digital inclusion in rural areas. In the private sector, it offers reduced costs and sustainable practices, business opportunities in the production and installation, and for Civil Society it offers increased access to information and community ownership of the Internet infrastructure.

Session One: Presentation of 2024 National IGF Reports

Seven reports were presented by national coordinators members of the respective EAC member states. The reports were a summary of the national IGF 2024 events held in the respective countries. These summaries focused on the IGF theme, key Internet Governance issues and recommendations for the future.



Burundi IGF:

The national IGF featured high-level panel discussions that primarily focused on the affordability of the Internet in Burundi. With a newly developed 5,000 km fiber optic cable network, the Metropolitan Area Network (MAN) in Bujumbura and neighboring districts, connectivity had immensely improved. The organizers of the Burundi Internet Governance Forum (IGF) were urged to strengthen discussions for meaningful engagement in the Internet ecosystem, including participation from youth, government, and other key stakeholders. On the other hand, the Government of Burundi was encouraged to quickly adopt emerging technologies to enable the promotion of e-commerce and enhance governance, while keeping ICT at the top of the national agenda to boost Internet penetration. Additionally, Burundian telecom regulatory authorities were called upon to collaborate

in reducing costs of the Internet and expanding accessibility. There was also a recommendation to explore the use of solar-powered Internet systems to ensure rural connectivity.



DRC IGF:

The DRC Internet Governance Forum (DRC IGF) 2024 was held under the theme, “Building Our Multi-Stakeholder Digital Future.” A major highlight of the forum was the focus on ICT and innovation in DRC emphasizing the development of robust AI and emerging technologies to enhance transparency and accountability, ensuring public security and privacy throughout the entire life-cycle of these technologies. Additionally, the forum underscored the importance of strengthening partnerships between the government and the private sector to drive Congo’s digital future. Another notable milestone was the hosting of the School of Internet Governance (IGF) in Kinshasha, marking a significant step towards fostering inclusive digital policy discussions in the region.



Kenya IGF:

The recent initiatives, including the Kenya School of Internet Governance, Youth IGF, and the Children’s IGF, have made significant strides in shaping the digital landscape in Kenya. Notably, female students had the highest levels of participation, contributing to discussions on key issues such as affordability, cybersecurity, and personal data protection. The focus on promoting human rights, particularly regarding access to information and the inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWDs), has enhanced efforts towards digital peace and governance. These initiatives have also led to important policy recommendations for Kenya’s digital future. The Children’s IGF provided a platform for young voices to actively engage in Internet governance, with this year’s theme, “Building Kenya’s Multi-Stakeholder Digital Future,” emphasizing the importance of collaborative efforts in shaping a digital environment that benefits all stakeholders.



Rwanda IGF:

The Rwanda Internet Governance Forum (Rwanda IGF) 2024 was held under the theme, “Building Our Multi-Stakeholder Digital Future.” The event featured a keynote speech by Ozonnia Ojielo, the UN Resident Coordinator, which set the tone for the discussions. A major highlight of the forum was the focus on ICT and innovation in Rwanda, emphasizing the development of robust AI and emerging technologies to enhance transparency and accountability, ensuring public security and privacy throughout the entire life cycle of these technologies. Additionally, the forum underscored the importance of strengthening partnerships between the government and the private sector to drive Rwanda’s digital future. Another notable milestone was the hosting of the inaugural School of Internet Governance (IGF) in Kigali, marking a significant step towards fostering inclusive digital policy discussions in the region.



Tanzania IGF:

The Tanzania Internet Governance Forum (Tanzania IGF) was held under the theme, “Building Our Multi-Stakeholder Digital Future.” The event brought together 70 participants from various sectors, including technology, government, and civil society, focusing on two key activities. Discussions primarily centered on the role of AI and emerging technologies in shaping Tanzania’s digital future and the importance of protecting human rights online. The forum also emphasized Internet governance and its critical role in advancing Tanzania’s digital transformation initiatives for 2024 and beyond.



South Sudan IGF:

The South Sudan Internet Governance Forum (IGF) was held under the theme, “Building Our Multi-Stakeholder Digital Future in South Sudan.” The event emphasized the importance of collaboration, with the National Communications Authority playing a pivotal role in fostering partnerships among all stakeholders to build a stronger digital future for South Sudan. A key focus was on closing the digital divide, ensuring that increased cooperation will drive greater digital inclusion and development across the country.



Uganda IGF:

Uganda hosted the 13th edition of the Uganda Internet Governance Forum (IGF) under the theme “Building a Multi-stakeholder Digital Future for Uganda.” The discussions included the Uganda Youth Internet Governance Forum, themed “Building a Multi-Stakeholder Digital Future for Youth in Uganda,” and the Uganda School on Internet Governance, in partnership with the Uganda Association of Sign Language Interpreters. Key topics of discussion included the agreement on the localization of the IGF and fostering policy framework engagements with the Parliamentary Commission on Legal Affairs to address the reduction of internet tax. The forum also highlighted gaps in the implementation of the Data Protection Law, which limit its effectiveness, particularly in building trust between the media and the state. Data breaches continue to pose challenges, making it difficult to fully protect journalists. Participants emphasized that journalists should proactively adopt safety mechanisms, especially with more identities becoming available online. Policy initiatives should focus on building the digital resilience of women in journalism and creating communities of practice that develop multi-stakeholder solutions to address data privacy issues. Emerging technologies like AI and voice-to-text systems have the potential to infringe on users’ rights. As a result, the government advocates for a multi-stakeholder approach in collaboration with civil society organizations (CSOs) and the private sector to develop innovative solutions. The government reaffirmed its commitment to the National Digital Roadmap, with a focus on digital infrastructure, digital services, cybersecurity, digital skills, and strategies to enhance internet innovations.



Breakout Sessions

Breakout Session 1:

Inclusive AI Governance: Enhancing human rights and ethical development in East Africa.

Speakers: Rachel Magege (Pollicy, Tanzania); Louis Gitinywa [Rwandan Digital Rights Lawyer and Legal Consultant (Kigali Attorneys and Partners)]; Angela Minayo (Article 19 Eastern Africa, Kenya); Tricia Gloria Nabaye (Pollicy, Uganda)

Moderator: Muthuri Kathure (Mozilla Foundation)

Session highlighted the importance of respecting human rights and due diligence, along with effective reporting mechanisms, as crucial elements when dealing with the challenges of deploying AI. AI can be a double-edged sword, fueling misinformation and disinformation while also offering critical solutions for communities. Governments are using it as a scapegoat, often neglecting the challenges to free expression in the region.

We must ensure that developers and tech companies adhere to ethical development standards and protocols, holding them accountable for their AI technologies. A case in point is the need to report AI-related issues to U.S. organizations monitoring tools and platforms operating in Africa.

Governments should establish regulatory bodies to oversee what data is being collected and to control AI deployment. Additionally, public reporting must be enhanced so that governments, AI developers, and tech companies comply with operational standards in Africa. As consumers and end users, there is a need to focus on the ethical realities of AI, particularly relating to disinformation and misinformation from the end-user perspective.

Governments should act as critical players to ensure that citizens receive the necessary knowledge about the interoperability of AI policies and strategies in East Africa. In East Africa, Rwanda is among the only countries to develop AI as a national strategy. Rwanda's AI strategy is commendable and can only be assessed based on its implementation and the achievements it yields for regional governments to benchmark and emulate, leveraging similar policies in their countries. Panelists also agreed that Indigenous technology solutions are often more effective, and big technology companies should be encouraged to engage in technology transfers to enhance AI usage in Africa.

Technology and innovation regulation require a paradigm shift, especially regarding human rights and access to information. AI practitioners must be licensed and monitored to ensure that human rights considerations are comprehensible to both technology companies and Internet end users.

Whereas having ethical considerations for AI deployment is crucial, the approach to human rights must be tailored to the specific context of each continent as they vary and can sometimes be subject to criticism. Large language models have global legal and ethical standards that can be amorphous and limited, so they must be adapted to fit their respective environments. AI needs to be people-centered, promoting the interests of the people rather than just serving governmental agendas.

The African Union has released the Africa AI Strategy to elevate the vision of Africa's digital future to the Group of Seven (G7) nations, establishing a regional strategy for developing AI across all countries. However, the full potential of AI presents significant challenges. Data centers on the continent must be adequately equipped to handle these demands.

Breakout Session 2:

Digital Hustle: How East Africa's youth are innovating, disrupting, and thriving in the technology era.

Speakers: **Sedrick Otolo** (Co-founder and Director of The Unlimited Youths); **Yasmin Ahmed** (Director of Programs at Femtech Law Initiative); **Beatrice Kayaga** (Projects Coordinator, Internet Society Uganda Chapter); **Denise Ayebare** (Law Student, Makerere University); **Hood Lubowa** (Digital Rights and Engagement Officer, Oxfam Uganda)

This session deliberated on existing opportunities to increase digital literacy and civic rights in Uganda. The EU supported project allocated €270,000 for a 2024–2027 initiative titled “Re-centering the Civic Internet through Partnership” (ReCIPE), which Oxfam in Uganda established as part of its global effort to eradicate inequality. The project's goal is to enhance digital literacy and influence among communities, civic activists, and civil society members to elevate Ugandan voices in the online arena. It also calls on government agencies and technology corporations to enact and uphold laws that protect digital rights. ReCIPE, which reaches more than 10 million internet users, focuses on developing an inclusive digital ecosystem, supporting just governance practices that safeguard the vulnerable, and aligning with Uganda's Digital Vision 2040.

Digital Literacy is the ability to use digital technology which comes with many opportunities for youth in East Africa. These include digital trade, online education, training and research. The challenge is that digital literacy training is not extended to the youth in remote and semi-urban areas due to a lack of adequate advocacy, high costs of Internet, absence of electricity in rural areas thereby making it hard to extend computing knowledge and increasing the continuous lag from the time policies are passed to the point of implementation.

While digital rights and privacy are fundamental to all persons online, youth should learn to protect their digital rights and privacy online. This they can do by knowing what digital rights are. A good resource being the [DQ Institute guidelines and standards for digital rights](#). Being unaware of your digital rights disqualifies you from being digitally literate.

There was a call to sensitize youths on cybersecurity risks such as malicious links and websites they log in to while being cautious on the kind of data shared and why. Every online transaction, regardless of how small it is, leaves a digital imprint.

Governments and technology companies were called upon to align their policies to ensure that they preserve data privacy. For example, technology companies must ensure privacy by design of systems to enable efficient handling of user data collection, encryption of information, limited access of personal data and continuous updates and patches to software and phasing out of old devices.

Governments must strike a balance on national security versus privacy. Additionally, there should be continuous policy dialogues with all stakeholders such as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), technology companies, academia and the public.

Impact of automation and innovation on job security; automation will replace some jobs and therefore a need for skills building for people to work with the new technology, upskilling people from the top - down for seamlessness and the use and application of AI can. Despite the growth in automation, limits to AI which cannot apply critical thinking as humans and as such should only be used as an aiding tool. A call for deployment knowledge assessment surveys on how easily people can adapt to the technology was made.

Technology and civic engagement can be effectively leveraged to amplify marginalized voices in civic engagement by prioritizing awareness through social platforms and ensuring that their voices are heard. The challenges faced by activists in their line of duty are mainly poor digital infrastructures in areas beyond the city, high costs on internet services and cyber harassment. Technology should be used as an enabler for online civic engagements.

Youth participation in policy making processes enhances youth participation in policy engagements at national, regional and global levels. In Uganda, the power of the youth comes from the constitution, Article one: “the power belongs to the people” as such, there are more than five Members of Parliament (MPs) in Uganda representing the youth in Parliament. Therefore, youth must engage in the various national youth platforms, in policy talks when invited to take part in policy making discussions, and actively participate in the East African Youth Council at the regional level.

Role of youth in advocating for digital rights in terms of influencing policies is crucial as they make up most of the population in East Africa. Youths are the pushing voice to drive widespread digital rights advocacy. The challenge is the inability to have all youth agree and think alike for efficient advocacy. Therefore, for youth to remain agile, continuous learning, mentorship, seizing opportunities available and seeking to turn their passion into an income generation must be at the forefront of their advocacy agenda.

Breakout Session 3:

The Green Tech Revolution: Multistakeholderism for sustainable climate Action in East Africa.

Speakers: Epainetus Sirengo; June Okal (ICANN); Innocent Adriko (ISOC Foundation); Peace Amuge (APC); Keith Andere (Moderator)

The green tech revolution is rapidly transforming industries and economies worldwide, offering immense potential to drive sustainable development and climate action. However, developing regions like East Africa risk being left behind without concerted efforts from diverse stakeholders.

This session explored how multi-stakeholder collaboration can harness the power of green technologies to tackle climate change and foster inclusive growth in East Africa. Key topics that were discussed included mapping the green tech landscape in East Africa, aligning policy, innovation and investment, bridging the green skills gap, enabling international cooperation financing the green transition and driving consumer demand by raising awareness and shifting mindsets towards sustainable consumption. This session focused on understanding how we can make sure that technology is sustainable. It recognized that given that data centers and machines all pose pressure to the environment and climate in general. The session focused on questions below:

How can we ensure that the benefits of green technology are equitably distributed among different socioeconomic groups in East Africa?

Inclusive policy making processes need to be adopted. Additionally, it is important to ensure that there are subsidies for alternative energy, educate communities on these energy alternatives and be intentional on the kind of partnership required and involved in the process.

How can education and training programs be designed to equip the workforce with the necessary skills for a green economy?

According to KICTANet's experience, education is passed on- through mentorship, capacity building and practice and from a technology perspective, for example data centers are moving to natural cooling systems as the information and mindset of people around the environment continues to change.

What financing mechanisms are most effective in supporting green tech initiatives, particularly in developing regions?

The Paris Agreement urges countries to make voluntary commitment to climate change adoption while leveraging our rich biodiversity to be a center in global conversation. He called for realignment of our budgets to fund Green Innovations while tapping into the Adoption fund and the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the world's largest multilateral climate fund.

What role do you see for government policy in promoting green technology adoption, and what specific policies would you recommend?

Need to harmonize the Regional Climate policies, develop and implement e-waste policies and regulations and expressed concern about the implications of digitalization and policies, connecting renewable energy to national grids, the application of cloud seeding, commercializing trees through sale of QR Codes and adopting early warning systems while using technology to disseminate such information.

Breakout session 4:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Digital Democracy: Tackling behavior and information manipulation in contemporary democratic processes

Speakers: **Raymond Qatahar Mujuni** (Investigative Journalist [NTV Uganda]); **Timothy Kalyegira** (Media Practitioner [Nation Media Group]); **Silver Kayondo** (Lawyer [Partner - Ortus Advocates]); **Janet Machuka** [Digital Communications Specialist (Kenya)]; **Morine Amutorine** (Software Engineer / Data Analyst [UN Pulse Lab])

Moderator: Canary Mugume (Investigative Journalist)

Artificial Intelligence incorporates the concepts of Just-In-Case learning versus Just-In-Time learning. Learning in the post-AI world is unique, and the WSIS Report of 2023 indicates that deep fakes are increasing at a worrying trajectory. Challenges in the technical aspects of ChatGPT and OpenAI, which intend to raise their subscription fees from \$20 to \$2,000 may limit access to information and content on the internet. Censorship is likely to increase because of AI, especially within governmental organizations and agencies.

It was noted that the implications of AI-driven technologies can be multifaceted, as all AI systems base their algorithms on the interactions of the people using them. Democracy itself will be reframed from being a government-defended institution to being challenged by individuals who propose better systems of management using AI. While AI will enhance technological capabilities, it will not overpower human critical thinking and solutions. Furthermore, it may reframe democracy on the African continent, influenced by the respective GDPs of specific countries.

There is a need to reconsider the roles and strategies of social media platforms in AI deployment for democratic participation. The deployment of algorithms in AI can define content search and influence community thinking, thereby creating either a negative or positive impact. Drawing from recent GenZ protests in Kenya, panelists highlighted the negative impact of AI, where AI was used to generate hate speech images that incited an uproar on social media and influenced demonstrations across the country.

It's thus crucial to understand how AI tools and algorithms for a successful social media experience. The real-time aspect must be factored in to ensure better management of information and effective fact-checking.

Due diligence in AI is essential, and as the AI market continues to grow, we must conduct thorough due diligence to recommend better AI technologies for improved outcomes.

Challenges to Artificial Intelligence (AI and Digital Democracy): AI in elections is becoming increasingly common, posing a threat to the political future of Africa, which may include the emergence of AI-generated leaders. At the heart of AI are ethics and human values, which are crucial for developers to ensure a well-intentioned deployment that enhances performance.

Skill development and capacity building at all levels is essential. Developers thus need to create AI models capable of providing information that is ethically compliant and protects people's data, including that of marginalized groups.

Africa is at the tail end of the generative AI landscape in the world. Understanding the complexities we face regarding how we will use AI in the future is crucial. Stakeholders need to identify the biggest solutions for generative AI, especially for multinational organizations and tech companies.

Political, legal, technological, innovation, business, finance, people, and culture are fundamental areas that need to be further explored to find new ways of solving local problems and to change the level of analysis and perspective. The complexity of AI continues to grow and varies across different nations and contexts. Interfacing with AI technologies is remarkable; for example, drones are used for discovering minerals and delivering medical supplies, which improves efficiency in all aspects from a results-oriented perspective.



Breakout Session 05: Traditional and New Media for the Internet We Want

The session explored intersection between tradition and new media values and how we merge the values of the Internet we want that is free and not fragmented. It was noted that newsrooms in traditional media are shrinking in size because new media is taking over with people and media entrepreneurs allowing people to work remotely. Worthy to note is that the profitability of traditional media has been affected by new media and this has led to traditional media adapting to the techniques of new media.

Due to this adaptation, traditional media is now looking for multi-skilled people to do everything from photography, writing, producing, and editing. This means that journalists should change with the times. From the field, one needs to come back with short videos, and recorded sound bites. With new media, everyone is a citizen journalist now broadcasting with so many alternatives and options to get information out. Platforms where one has the biggest following will become the default. In new media, news is more interactive, the audience can comment or make suggestions to any piece of the news, and this has shifted traditional media from being the only source of information. In as much as the values of journalism staying the same, new media has turned traditional media journalists into fact-checkers. Traditional media journalists now must do a lot more work to prove stories brought out by new media.

Country perspectives on new media

- **Rwanda's perspective.** Mainstream media, especially print media, was vibrant around the year 2009. Due to their stories, many journalists were arrested, and newspapers were closed. Most radios and televisions in Rwanda are owned by the government but with strict instructions, not to air political shows. However, today many new online platforms like YouTube channels are changing the narrative in Rwanda and yet many more are producing a lot of misinformation. There is also a lot of hate speech on these new contemporary media platforms.
- **Kenya's perspective.** There are several big media players in Kenya like Nation Media Group, Royal Media Services, and Standard Media Group which is almost in a state of insolvency. The sustainability of media houses is becoming increasingly difficult because the government being the biggest advertiser is defaulting on its payment and the regulatory framework is not helping at all. The media compliant commission is not fully constituted, so the media is at its weakest in Kenya now. Press freedom has declined a lot because of too much state interference. It should be noted that the media in Kenya did not leverage on technology until 2019 and the effects of this are being felt to this very day. By the year 2027, it is believed that print media in Kenya will be fully digital. This is because so many Kenyans are no longer buying newspapers but prefer online content which is free and interactive. There is a new trend of celebrity journalism happening in Kenya like Daring abroad, Debunked and so many others.

- **Uganda perspective.** Before Covid-19, newsprint was cheap, but after the pandemic, prices skyrocketed. There are over 40 television stations, over 200 radio stations and three daily newspapers. Media freedoms in Uganda are trampled on by mainly State agents especially law enforcement officers. There are lots of celebrity journalism, Vloggers and social influencers that drive traffic in new media.

Session recommendations

- Governments should desist from stifling media freedoms,
- legacy media houses should evolve and create new media handles and personalities,
- digital journalism needs to be regulated and properly managed and
- Retool journalists to be up to speed with the technological advancement as gatekeepers of information and shapers of the agenda.

Breakout session 06: All eyes on Kenya's Impunity! Examining the abductions and arbitrary arrests of 50+ digital activists.

Speakers: **Miriam Beatrice Wanjiru** (Programmes Officer East Africa, Paradigm Initiative); **Angela Minayo** (Program Officer, Digital Rights and Policy/EA - ARTICLE 19), **James Wamathai** [Partnerships and Advocacy, Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE)]; **Renne Kamau** (Independent Researcher)

The Kenya 2023 Human Rights report's initial findings on blogger and activist safety in Kenya between 2018 and 2023 point to a deeply concerning escalation in threats, violence, and abductions targeting individuals critical of the government or involved in political activism. The death of Kenyan blogger Duke Nyabaro on April 7, 2024, serves as a chilling reminder of the increasing dangers faced by digital activists in the country. Nyabaro was found dead under suspicious circumstances, with a postmortem confirming he was strangled, ruling out suicide. His death reflects a disturbing trend where bloggers and online activists who challenge the government or engage in political discourse are being subjected to severe threats, abductions, and even murder.

This troubling trend appears to have accelerated, particularly in 2024, with more than 50 digital activists abducted, many of them linked to their participation in the #RejectFinanceBill protests, a youth-driven movement largely spearheaded by GenZ activists. These protests, which opposed controversial government policies, saw many activists silenced through intimidation and arbitrary arrests. Digital activism in Kenya has become increasingly risky, as evidenced by the surge in such incidents.

Human rights organizations such as Article 19 Eastern Africa, Paradigm Initiative, and the Bloggers Association of Kenya have expressed grave concern over this pattern of violence against bloggers and digital activists. These groups have condemned the murders, abductions, and arbitrary arrests that have been on the rise, noting that this suppression of free speech undermines the country's democratic principles.

The rise in violence, abductions, and harassment of bloggers and digital activists, such as the tragic death of Kenyan blogger Duke Nyabaro in 2024, underscores the urgent need to strengthen protections for freedom of expression online and the safety of those who use digital platforms for advocacy.

Drawing from global experiences and best practices, several key strategies that can help safeguard bloggers and digital activists, particularly in environments where freedom of speech is under threat were shared:

1. Digital Security Training and Tools

- **Use of VPNs:** Providing bloggers and activists with Virtual Private Networks (VPNs), as done by organizations like Article 19 Eastern Africa and Paradigm Initiative, is a key practice. VPNs help shield online activity from surveillance, ensuring activists can communicate securely and protect their identities.
- **Encryption:** Encouraging the use of encrypted messaging apps and platforms for communication (e.g., Signal, Telegram) enhances privacy and reduces the risk of being monitored by authorities.
- **Password Management:** Strong password practices, including the use of password managers, two-factor authentication (2FA), and regular updates, are essential to safeguarding online accounts from hacking attempts.
- **Digital Hygiene:** Regularly updating software and maintaining backups of content are essential for digital safety. Training bloggers to avoid phishing and malware attacks, common tactics used by hostile actors, is also crucial.

2. Legal and Policy Advocacy

- **Legal Protections for Bloggers:** Advocacy for comprehensive laws that protect freedom of expression and provide clear legal safeguards for bloggers and online activists is crucial. This can include lobbying for specific protections for digital activists in national constitutions or media laws.
- **Decriminalization of Online Expression:** Efforts should be made to reform laws that criminalize online speech, defamation, or the publication of critical opinions against government officials. A strong legal framework that guarantees the right to blog freely is essential to prevent arbitrary arrests and persecution.
- **Regional and International Pressure:** When national systems fail to protect bloggers, regional and international mechanisms, such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights or the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, can be leveraged to draw attention to violations and exert pressure on governments.

3. Support Networks and Solidarity

- **Safe Spaces for Bloggers:** Establishing networks and forums where bloggers and activists can share their experiences, seek advice, and get emotional and psychological support is essential. These networks can provide both physical and digital protection through collective strength.
- **Collaboration with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs):** Collaboration between digital activists and organizations such as the Bloggers Association of Kenya and international groups

like Amnesty International can amplify voices and bring attention to cases of harassment or violence against bloggers. These organizations often provide legal support and protection for bloggers at risk.

4. International Best Practices on Blogging Rights

- **European Standards on Digital Rights:** In Europe, the European Court of Human Rights has been instrumental in establishing case law that affirms the right to free expression online, including the right to blog. Countries can be encouraged to adopt similar legal protections that ensure a safe digital environment.

Global Initiatives for Free Expression: Initiatives such as the Global Network Initiative (GNI) bring together tech companies, human rights groups, and academics to protect free expression and privacy in the digital world. Their frameworks offer guidance on addressing threats to online activists while maintaining accountability.

5. Emergency Response Mechanisms

- **Hotlines for At-Risk Bloggers:** Emergency hotlines or legal aid services that bloggers can quickly access in case of imminent threats are a best practice. These services provide immediate support, including legal counsel, safe houses, or relocation assistance if needed.

Rapid Response Grants: Some international human rights organizations offer emergency grants to bloggers and activists facing threats. These grants can be used to improve physical or digital security, cover legal fees, or even fund temporary relocation to safety.

6. Data and Research on Blogger Safety

- **Comprehensive Research:** The report highlights the lack of accurate data on the insecurity faced by bloggers in Kenya. A key best practice is conducting thorough research to document cases of violence, abduction, and threats, and using this data to inform policies and advocacy efforts. Evidence-based advocacy is more effective in addressing systemic issues and promoting the safety of digital activists.
- **Digital Risk Assessments:** Conducting regular risk assessments for bloggers and digital activists to identify vulnerabilities and offer tailored support is critical for proactive security measures.

As the situation in Kenya highlights, the increasing threats to bloggers and digital activists necessitate a multifaceted approach. By adopting best practices, such as providing digital security tools, advocating for legal protections, fostering support networks, and collecting accurate data on threats, countries can create safer environments for those advocating for transparency and accountability online. The experiences of Kenyan activists facing violence, abduction, and harassment serve as a call to action for civil society, governments, and international bodies to ensure that the right to free expression is protected both in Kenya and beyond.



Main Session:

Strengthening Cybersecurity and Data Governance

Speakers: **Mrs. Olga Kavira Kinyamusitu** (Director of Data Régulation and Applications, Ministry of Post, Telecoms and Digital Affairs of the DRC); **Mr. Henry Owera** (Deputy Director, ICT Policy and Strategy, Ministry of ICT and Postal Services, South Sudan); **Mutheu Khimulu** (Board Member, African Centre for Security (ACS) Resilience, Science & Technology); **Ms. Lucrezia Biteete** (D4D Hub Senior Expert, GIZ Uganda); **Sarah Muyonga** (Public Policy Manager, East and Horn of Africa, Meta)

Moderator: **Theoneste Ngiruwonsanga** (Project Manager, Cybersecurity & Data Privacy, Smart Africa)

The rapid digitalization in Africa has sparked an increasing frequency of cyber threats and risks across the continent. Despite the abundance of legislation, the UNECA study on cybersecurity highlights gaps in laws and enforcement. Collaboration, funding, and awareness are critical aspects that need to be addressed in Africa. The East Africa Cybersecurity landscape is on a positive trajectory, encompassing a cybersecurity bill, cybersecurity diplomacy, and cybercrime initiatives. Awareness-building efforts have been made in East Africa, leading to remarkable achievements for the region. The African Center for Security Capacity Building, along with telecoms, governments, and all stakeholders, is fundamental in streamlining cybersecurity policy in the African context. The African internet infrastructure needs to be established to ensure resilience and robust government engagement, effectively securing our digital space as we embrace Agenda 2063 on digital transformation.

Cybersecurity and data privacy are crucial, and the governance component must involve the regulation of data use and collection. The GDPR has become a benchmark for global regions, making it important for African countries to develop locally generated policies tailored to their specific challenges. Many of these guidelines are necessary for member states to dialogue and share insights on reducing cybercrime and enhancing data protection. Somalia's Data Protection Authority has joined stakeholders in the region and has complemented efforts to strengthen data protection in their countries.



Efforts by EAC members have led to the implementation of cybersecurity frameworks and policies in ICT. However, it is important to note that South Sudan has not ratified the Malabo Convention on Data Protection. The EAC has made attempts to align its cybersecurity frameworks with the global agenda. Civil organizations in South Sudan have developed policies on cybersecurity but have yet to share them with the government.

As a region, we need to comply with the AU Regulation on Data Protection and Privacy. Strengthening coordination and communication among the few member states can help safeguard digital transformation initiatives and support nations that are still lacking national efforts in cybersecurity.

The DRC has already made efforts to support cybersecurity. It has ensured that its online transactions are well managed to limit cybersecurity risks. This led to the establishment of a ministry and encouraged other Francophone nations to enact data protection laws and regulations for electronic transactions, which is vital for ensuring DRC's compliance with the Malabo Convention. The head of state has enhanced data protection and cybersecurity by creating an Economic Intelligence Department under the president. These efforts will go a long way in establishing mechanisms that allow interoperability for Congolese citizens to have unique identifiers that promote development and participation in the AU Agenda 2063 (Critical Information Centre).

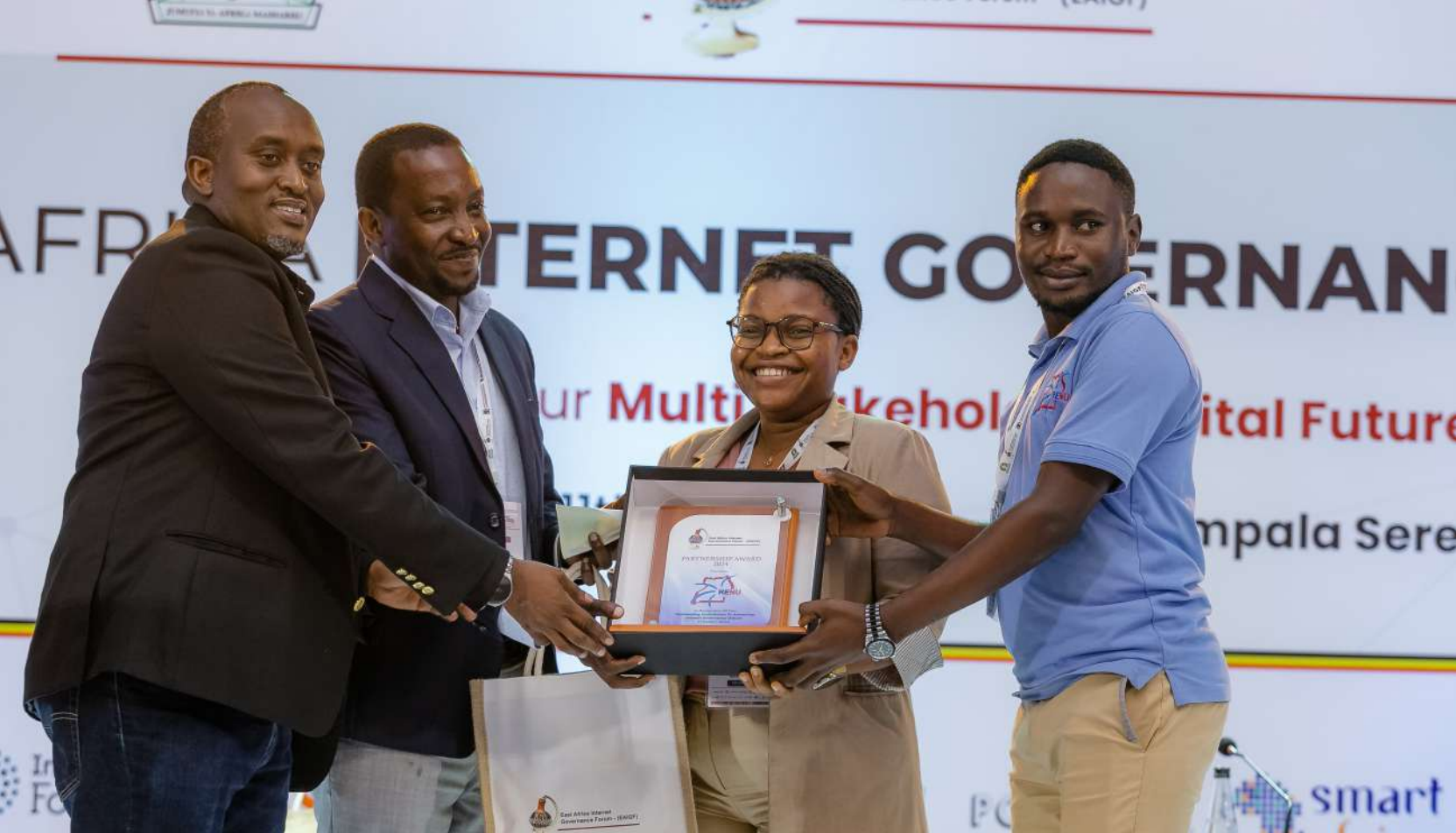
Strengthening online safety and protecting user data is a pivotal role for META, as people use these platforms for business and connecting with family. Therefore, online safety is essential, and serious investments are made to protect this data through META's policies, technologies, and resources, as well as by enhancing skills through various tools that promote these partnerships. Digital literacy programs are implemented in collaboration with partners to design and conduct targeted workshops for all users and organizations. Local authorities, data protection offices, and government agencies (such as Computer Incident Reporting (CIR)) play a crucial role in this effort. META has dedicated teams and strongly believes in multinational approaches with tech partners to improve best practices in cybersecurity and data governance.

The risks and threats to online safety include regulatory movements and pushbacks from governments, as well as limited cybersecurity infrastructure to combat cyber threats, making us vulnerable to cybercrimes. Ransomware attacks targeting businesses and social engineering tactics have been on the rise, where individuals exploit online presences of people, institutions, and

state-sponsored attacks on sensitive infrastructure, particularly from those in the dark web. META continues to monitor and mitigate these challenges, and with the increasing prevalence of AI in the next three years, machine learning attacks could evade various algorithms, posing a significant threat to online users.

Session recommendations

- Session called for strengthening cybersecurity and data governance noting that The AU Cybersecurity Centre emphasizes that multistakeholderism and harmonization are key components. Intelligence chiefs from around the region met in Kenya earlier this year to discuss their priorities regarding infrastructure for digital forensics, and more initiatives need to be established in this area. These hubs can facilitate the tracking and prosecution of online perpetrators, although this can be expensive. Creating a cybersecurity curriculum has played a vital role in enhancing cyber hygiene, and all end users must be engaged to achieve cybersecurity empowerment.
- Bridging the gender gap is essential. Many incidents occur not because individuals intentionally share information, but because hackers and scammers use phishing links to obtain it. It is important to reach out to more young women through organizations and collaborate closely with schools. Creating an environment of trust where women feel safe to voice their concerns will enable meaningful engagement in all online spaces.
- There are areas that require more consideration at the regional, continental, and national levels to align all member states with the policies and strategies on cybersecurity. In Uganda, while there are numerous regulatory frameworks, as is the case in the region, we need to harness this potential by implementing these policies effectively.
- Parliamentarians at the regional level need to network and engage in collaborative efforts. National governments should prioritize the cybersecurity component and exchange critical resources and expertise to facilitate knowledge sharing. Creating Digital Access Ambassadors at all levels can significantly enhance outreach to local communities in East Africa.
- The nexus of cybersecurity involves not only protecting infrastructure but also ensuring the security of the data within these infrastructures and safeguarding the rights of individual data owners as well as the economy. We need to scale up cybersecurity efforts in sectors like the military, education, and healthcare, which will help protect ongoing initiatives in other regions. These collective strategies lead to better outcomes and demonstrate that data can be shared responsibly. Moreover, it is essential to promote the implementation of conventions, such as the Malabo Convention, at both regional and national levels.
- It is important for the region to work towards shared policies, ensuring collaboration with the private sector, as governments often lack sufficient resources. Establishing effective public-private partnerships (PPPs) with experienced infrastructure companies is vital for achieving flexibility and harmonization across all regions.



Closing Ceremony and Recognition of Regional ICT Partners

The East African Internet Governance Forum (EAIGF) 2024, held in Kampala, Uganda, concluded with a renewed commitment to fostering a safe, inclusive, and resilient digital environment across the region. The forum emphasized the need for stronger collaboration between governments, civil society, and the private sector in addressing challenges like cybersecurity, data privacy, and digital inclusion. Discussions highlighted the importance of youth engagement in shaping Internet policies and underscored the critical role of regional cooperation in combating cyber threats.

Key takeaways included the call for harmonized policies across East Africa to ensure equitable access to the internet and the promotion of digital literacy. As the region continues to evolve digitally, the EAIGF 2024 reaffirmed that multi-stakeholder dialogue is essential to realizing the full potential of the internet for socio-economic development. Several partners were recognised and awarded for their continued support and invaluable contribution towards Internet Governance in East Africa.



Meeting Links: [Event programme](#) | [Live stream](#) | [Photos](#)

Media links:

- [East Africa holds 11th internet governance forum, focus on digital transformation.](#) - UBC Television Uganda.

- [Shaping East Africa's Digital Future: Key Insights from EAIGF 2024.](#) - Nicodemus Nyakundi, Digital Accessibility for PWDs Program Officer at KICTANet.

- [EAIGF 2024: Building a Digital Future: East Africa's Call to Action.](#) - David Indeje.

- [East African youth schooled on proper use of the internet.](#) - Godfrey Lugaaju, Daily Monitor.
Vision.

- [Data privacy: EAC govts told to break barriers to data sharing.](#) - Steven Denis Matege, New Vision

- [EAC: Uganda to host 11th East Africa internet governance forum.](#) - The Independent.

- [Huawei wins Eastern Africa Cybersecurity innovation award.](#) - Kenneth Kazibwe, Nile Post.

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