SUMMARY REPORT

WEST AFRICA IGF 2024

Regional Parliamentary Track

AUGUST 2

West Africa IGF 2024

Disruptive Technologies: How Far, Thus Far?

The West African IGF (WAIGF) is a regional Internet Governance Frum (IGF) initiative dedicated to fostering exchanges within the region on relevant digital policy topics.

The IGF is further strengthening Parliamentarian's involvement in discussions around digital public policy issues by expanding its regional activities. In line with this goal, parliamentarians from across West Africa were invited to participate at the 16th edition of the WAIGF taking place from 10 to 12 July 2024 in Dakar, Senegal, around the overarching theme "Disruptive Technologies: How Far, Thus Far".

Dedicated sessions for Parliamentarians were organized throughout the Forum, including activities around topics of:

- Building a Multistakeholder Digital Cooperation
- Content Policies and Moderation
- Digital Platforms in Digital Economies - Evaluation, Value and Regulation

The regional Parliamentary Track saw the creation of the West Africa Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance (WAPNIG), a network dedicated to promoting exchange and best practices of digital policies and regulations throughout the West African region.

> *"We are committed to working together as parliamentarians across different ECOWAS states on policies and programmes that will ensure that the Internet is open and accessible to all"*
>
> Sen. Shuaib Afolabi Salisu, convener of WAPNIG

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

This summary report will highlight the key takeaways from discussions.

The programme is available on the WAIGF 2024 website.

Contact : info@waigf.org

SESSION 1: Building a Multistakeholder Digital Cooperation

Date: 11-07-2024

Duration: 9:30am-10:30am

Moderator: Hon. Alhagie Mbow, Mariam Jobe, Celine Bal

Rapporteur: Amina Ramallan

- **Panelists:**

Gbenga Sesan, Executive Director, Paradigm Initiative

Cedrick Adrien Mbeyet, Stakeholder Development Manager, AFRINIC

Kadotien Alassane Soro, Head of the West Africa Business, Yango

Sen. Shuaibu Afolabi Salisu, Senator, Republic of Nigeria

- **Session Summary:**

The session began with a brief introduction by moderators **Miss Mariam Jobe and Hon. Alhagie Mbow** from The Gambia. Miss Mariam Jobe outlined the session's key objectives, expected discussions, outcomes and introduced the panelists. She acknowledged Hon. Shuaibu Afolabi Salisu, a Nigerian Senator, for his significant role in organizing the session.

Hon. Mamadou Niang from the Senegalese National Assembly expressed his delight to have fellow parliamentarians at the West Africa IGF, being hosted by the Senegalese Government.

Miss Celine Bal emphasized the importance of this inaugural parliamentary track for West Africa and stressed the need for its continuation.

In his opening remarks, **Hon Shuaibu Afolabi Salisu** expressed gratitude to the Senegalese Government for hosting the event and highlighted the significance of regional cooperation in policymaking to ensure a conducive environment for the internet. He emphasized the importance of inclusive policies, to ensure youth and women are involved in advancing Africa's development. He concluded by noting the historical significance of the maiden West Africa Parliamentary track in promoting

internet-based democracy and regional unity, referencing the ongoing efforts for a single currency.

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

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

His intervention wrapped up with urging parliamentarians to support executive efforts in passing relevant bills for digital cooperation.

Mr. Kadotien Alassane Soro gave a brief of Yango, stating that it is beyond just an e-haling taxi platform but also a solution-driven company that improves users' lives and creates economic opportunities. He appreciated the openness of member states' governments in facilitating innovation and transparency in services.

Mr. Cedrick Adrien Mbeyet explained the basics of internet routing and its importance in enabling services like Yango. He highlighted the unequal distribution of resources among global registries, with Africa having the lowest and the need for more collaboration to ensure the numbers are improved. He rounded up by emphasizing that AFRINIC exists as a result of African collaboration, thus, the importance of continued cooperation cannot be overstated.

Hon Shuaibu Afolabi Salisu concluded by highlighting the misunderstood roles of the legislative arm in governance, urging stakeholders to clearly communicate their needs to parliamentarians during capacity-building sessions. Thus, parliamentarians will also have the opportunity to educate stakeholders on the steps to developing and signing bills and laws. He further encouraged parliamentarians to educate their colleagues about internet governance to garner support for proposed bills.

- **Keys Takeaways:**

- o The maiden edition of the West Africa Parliamentary track is history in the making, towards having an internet that becomes the platform for democracy in West Africa.

- o There is a need to ensure the youth and women are not left behind in the journey to Africa's advancement.

- o Parliamentarians play a key role in assist the executive to ensure bills passed will direct the region towards building a multistakeholder digital cooperation.

- o Ongoing collaboration and clear communication between parliamentarians and stakeholders are critical to enhance internet governance and foster digital development in West Africa.

- **Recommended actions:**

  - o Efforts need to be put in place to ensure we understand how to keep our sovereignty in place in light of the internet's evolution.

  - o Parliamentarians should look into developing bills and acts that will protect data in light of the internet's evolution.

  - o There is a need to review or eliminate laws that are no longer relevant in order to be part of the digital revolution, because Africa has no need for archaic laws.

SESSION 2: Content Policies and Moderation

Date: 11-07-2024

Duration: 10:30am-11:30am

Moderator: Celine Bal, Mariam Jobe

Rapporteur: Amina Ramallan

- **Panelists:**

Miss Olivia Tchamba Public Policy Manager for Francophone Africa

Miss Emilar Gandhi, Team Lead, Stakeholder Engagement at Meta

- **Session Summary:**

The session was initiated by **Miss Olivia Tchamba**, Policy Manager for Francophone Africa at Meta. She outlined the focus of the session on Meta's current efforts in content policies, content moderation, and the process of developing and applying rules for content moderation. Miss Olivia Tchamba provided an overview of Meta's mission, which balances giving users a voice while ensuring platform security. She highlighted Meta's reach, with 3.8 billion users globally and 204 million users in Africa and discussed the security tools available to help users stay safe. Emphasizing the importance of user feedback, she invited parliamentarians to suggest actions that should be prohibited online, and responses included pedophilia, piracy, violence, and fraud, which Miss Olivia Tchamba confirmed are already addressed in Meta's standards.

Miss Olivia Tchamba then introduced Miss Emilar Gandhi, Team Lead, Stakeholder Engagement at Meta, who elaborated on the development of community standards. She noted that Meta consults external stakeholders to incorporate user insights into community standards, addressing issues such as hate speech, bullying, violence, nudity, and harassment etc. Also, she added that the content policy team collaborates with the global operational team to develop technology for effective content moderation and that despite some regional misalignments, community standards are explained for global understanding.

Additionally, **Miss Emilar Gandhi** highlighted the positive causes users achieve through Meta platforms and reiterated the inclusion of stakeholders in policy development discussions. She added that Meta employs AI technology to detect and moderate

content that violates community standards, with users having the ability to also report such content. She mentioned that in-depth sessions could be arranged for parliamentarians, to enable deeper understanding on specific Meta content policies and moderation initiatives.

Miss Emilar Gandhi concluded with noting Meta's global engagement with parliamentarians on regulation and user contributions to address key risks, emphasizing the importance of African voices in strengthening community standards.

Upon conclusion of the intervention, the floor was open for comments and questions. A member of parliament called the attention of Meta representatives to channeling revenue made from Meta's operations in Africa, to improving and advancing Africa towards the digital revolution. Additionally, another member of parliament raised concerns on possible exposure when data leaves the continent and it was then noted that developing Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) is crucial to ensure data remains local, minimizing the need for data to leave the region before returning.

Miss Olivia Tchamba concluded the session by highlighting Meta's ongoing engagement with parliamentarians worldwide to discuss regulation and the usage of Meta platforms, ensuring that contributions from users help address key risks. She reiterated the significance of African voices in ensuring robust community standards.

Deep Dive Sessions: Arranging more detailed discussions on specific content moderation topics.

Ongoing Engagement: Continuing dialogue between Meta and parliamentarians to refine content policies and moderation practices.

- **Keys Takeaways:**

    o   Meta has, 3.8 billion users globally connected to one or more devices and 204 million within Africa.

    o   Meta provides security tools on its platforms to help users stay safe.

    o   Meta always engages with external stakeholders when developing community standards to ensure user insights are noted.

    o   Meta recourses to AI technology when it comes to content moderation, which helps to detect content that is against community standard with the help of algorithms.

o Meta should look into channeling some of the revenue made in Africa towards Africa's improvement.

- **Recommended actions:**

    o There is a need for continuing dialogue between Meta and the West African Parliamentarian Network on Internet Governance (WAPNIG) to refine content policies and moderation practices.

    o Member states should look into developing or making use of available Internet Exchange Points (IXPs), to ensure data remains local, minimizing the need for data to leave the region before returning.

    o Meta should be consulted for more in depth capacity building sessions for parliamentarians to enable more insight when passing bills, laws, and regulations.

SESSION 3: Digital Platforms in Digital Economies - Evaluation, Value and Regulation

Date: 12-07-2024

Duration: 09:30am-10:30am

Moderator: Zanyiwe Asare

- **Panelists:**

Mr. Roma Snetskoi, Antitrust Manager, Yango

Miss Zanyiwe Asare, Vice President and Head of Public Policy, Africa Region, Yango

The presentation is available here.

SESSION 4: Parliamentary Collaboration for Advancing Internet Governance in West Africa

Date: 12-07-2024

Duration: 10:30am-11:30am

Moderator: Celine Bal

Rapporteur: Celine Bal

- **Panelist:**

Sen. Shuaibu Afolabi Salisu, Senator, Republic of Nigeria

- **Session Summary:**

This open discussion aimed at setting up the West African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance (WAPNIG) and launching the network.

Each onsite member of parliament (MP) introduced themselves and took the opportunity to share their areas of concern, which will be addressed during dedicated activities of the network (please see below under 'key takeaways').

The WAPNIG structure was formed, ensuring gender balance and geographical distribution:

Chair: Senator Shuaib Afolabi Salisu, Nigeria

Co-Chair: Hon. Mamadou Niang, Senegal

Coordinator: Hon. Alhagie Mbow, The Gambia

Deputy Coordinator: Hon. Yao Yao Lazare, Cote d'Ivoire

Treasurer: Hon. Lydia Akanvariba, Ghana

Deputy Treasurer: Hon. Gerard, Benin

Public Relations: Hon. Fatou Ba, Senegal

Secretariat: Mr. Benjamin Ikibah and Miss Mariam Jobe

Draft Terms of Reference, framing among other memberships and responsibilities, will be shared with MPs for their review and comments.

- **Keys Takeaways:**

Members of parliament shared following areas of concern:

  o Capacity building activities to teach MPs how to best use the Internet and related digital technologies,
  o General Internet governance, as well as legislation around digital taxation (tax rules for the digital economy),
  o How to address the loss and shift of employment related to the development and adoption of digital technologies,
  o Digital inclusion of vulnerable groups (e.g., elderly, persons with disabilities, youth),
  o Digitization of parliaments,
  o Data governance and protection,
  o Artificial intelligence and emerging technologies,
  o Exchange and implementation of best practices.

It was also highlighted that MPs should share country reports with WAPNIG on current practices and legislations in each ECOWAS country.

- **Recommended actions:**

  o MPs were asked to inform via an official communique their Heads of Parliament.

  o The convener of WAPNIG, Sen. Shuaib Afolabi Salisu from Nigeria, will write to the ECOWAS Parliament and meet the ECOWAS commissioner.

  o The secretariat of WAPNIG will draft Terms of Reference, which will be shared with MPs for their review.

  o The secretariat of WAPNIG will develop a calendar of activities for 2024 based on the areas of concerns previously highlighted by MPs. In addition, a survey can be shared amongst the network to collect additional input. Activities would include online workshops and capacity building activities with interested partners, as well as IGF-related activities.