

UNECA's Submission to the IGF2024 2nd Open Consultations & MAG Meeting

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Distinguished delegates, esteemed colleagues, IGF secretariat team, and global participants, I extend a warm greeting to you all, regardless of your current time zone.

My name is Sorene Assefa, and I am honored to share with you the internet governance-related initiatives undertaken by UNECA in the Africa region in early 2024, as well as our upcoming plans and initiatives.

Introduction:

UNECA is dedicated to championing inclusive and transparent internet governance across Africa, with a primary objective of amplifying the continent's voice in the global digital agenda. Our commitment is to ensure that all Africans have access to the benefits of sustainable digital transformation, thereby contributing to the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Our mission is built around addressing key challenges, including:

- Tackling digital infrastructure disparities
- Bridging gaps in gender, data, innovation, and governance of emerging technologies
- Cultivating talent capable of responding to technological advancements
- Fostering capacity development for a fair and equitable digital evolution

By tackling these challenges, we aim to create a more inclusive and sustainable digital landscape for all Africans.

UNECA's Initiatives:

In 2024, UNECA spearheaded significant internet governance initiatives through collaborative efforts with diverse stakeholders, addressing pressing issues such as: Global Digital Governance, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and safeguards, Gender digital divide, AI, Blockchain, Cybersecurity, Digital rights and among others.

1. **Reaffirmation of Commitment:** UNECA reaffirms its commitment to inclusive internet governance processes, supporting IGF at regional and global levels, and contributing to UNGIS, WSIS, and the WSIS+20 Review process, aligning efforts with the Global Digital Compact
2. Notably, UNECA facilitated the development of an **African policy declaration for the Global Digital Compact** through a regional review meeting, engaging OSET, the Government of South Africa, UN Regional Coordinator Office, and UNDP. This underscores Africa's pivotal role in shaping the Global Digital Compact and ensures active participation in determining its digital future.

In the spirit of **unifying the African voice** and **establishing a cohesive position on the GDC negotiations**, UNECA, has conducted regional multistakeholder open consultations and Deep dives, including: Regional open consultation on the GDC Zero Draft, the GDC Data Deep Dive, and the GDC Deep Dive: African Private sector. Additionally, UNECA is organizing engagement sessions for African media and youth stakeholders to expand its reach.

Further Initiatives in 2024:

In the coming months, UNECA will:

3. **WSIS +20 Review:** Facilitate the regional WSIS +20 Review in collaboration with the Government of Zimbabwe in September.
4. **Digital Governance Forum:** host South and East Africa Digital Governance Forum (SEADGov) in Pretoria South Africa in collaboration with UNU-EGOV.
5. **African IGF Secretariat:** Continue to host and facilitate the African IGF Secretariat, building an inclusive, people-centered, and development-oriented IGF ecosystem in Africa.

We extend a warm invitation to all stakeholders to collaborate and partner with us for this year's African IGF. Your participation and support are crucial to the success of this event and the development of a resilient IG ecosystem.

Capacity Building:

5. Leading initiatives in Digital ID and Interoperability, Addressing the Gender Digital Divide through the Connected African Girls initiative, Establishing Centers of Excellence, such as the STEAM Center in Rwanda and the African Center for Research in Artificial Intelligence (CARIA) in Congo Brazzaville.
6. Conduct **comprehensive training programs** for various stakeholders, including: Women, Youth, Government officials, Law enforcement officials, African parliamentarians and Permanent ambassadors - **on digital governance, cyber diplomacy, cybersecurity, information integrity, and content responsibility.**
7. UNECA is also collaborating with the Giga initiative to connect every African school to the internet by 2030, **addressing one of the continent's key priorities** - the digital divide.

In Conclusion:

UNECA urges collective action in shaping the internet we want. We stress the importance of: Breaking down silos, Sharing information and Engaging all stakeholders to build an open, free, and secure multistakeholder digital future for all.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this discussion.

Sincerely,
Sorene