7th National Internet Governance Forum (Hybrid Format), The Gambia

Communiqué

30th and 31st August 2021

Theme: "Digital Inclusion and Access for Resilient Gambia"

We, the participants at the 7th National Internet Governance Forum held at the Sir Dawda Kairaba Jawara Conference Centre, The Gambia on the **30th and 31st of August 2021** organized by the Gambia National Internet Governance Forum Steering Committee, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure, The Gambia (MOICI).

Recalling that this is the 7th session of the National Internet Governance Forum held in The Gambia.

Recalling that this is the fourth National Internet Governance Forum held in The Gambia after a 6 year hiatus.

Recalling that the 13th West African Internet Governance Forum in 2021 took place online from the 28th - 30th July 2021 under the theme '*Digital Inclusion and Access for a Resilient West Africa*', ahead of the Global Internet Governance forum to be held in Katowice, Poland in December 2021.

We the stakeholders at the Gambia 7th Internet Governance Forum agree to the following:

On Digital Inclusion and Access for Resilient Gambia, **WE AGREE:**

1. That there is a need to bridge the digital literacy gap to ensure equal and gender neutral accessibility

2. That there is a need to install a second submarine cable to serve as a backup and develop national backbones.

3. That more hubs/ free access points be created to help enhance accessibility to the internet.

4. There is a need for PURA to invest in more specialised tools to be used for network mapping in order to effectively identify gaps in mobile internet service delivery.

5. The Digital Divide in terms of accessibility to the internet between Rural and Urban Areas must be bridged.

6. There is need for the provision of adequate and reliable power/ electricity supply to promote internet accessibility.

7. MOICI and PURA should take steps to kickstart the Universal Access and Services (UAS) fund to provide internet accessibility in the areas where private ISPs cannot and/or do not reach.

8. A National Digital Literacy Policy is needed to develop digital skills amongst stakeholders and users of the internet.

9. There is a need to strengthen the legal and regulatory framework contained in the Information Communications Act of 2009.

On Improving Accessibility and Cost of the Internet, WE AGREE:

1. That there is a need for the government to engage and collaborate with professionals in the private sector in order to achieve accessibility and affordability.

2. In terms of accessibility and affordability, solutions may lie in mobile hotspots, which can be scaled to provide internet services to a greater proportion of people at cheaper costs.

3. That there is a need to review and revise taxes placed on service providers to ensure affordability.

4. Fiber network connections should be made available and accessible in every part of the country.

5. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) intervention is needed to advocate for access and affordability.

On The Role of the Internet in building a Digital Economy in the New Gambia in line with the National Development Plan (NDP), WE AGREE:

1. That every Gambian should have their health care records online from birth till death based on the small population size of the country.

2. There is a need to develop a national e-payment system to boost the potential growth in the country, and develop a digital economy.

3. There is a need for an interoperable mobile money system

4. There is a need to invest in Digital literacy in order to facilitate a digital economy.

5. Promote innovation among young people and developers to foster the digital economy.

6. E-governance must be promoted to ensure quality service delivery to the citizenry.

7. Data Centers must be installed, maintained and provided with adequate security.

On Data Protection, and privacy in the Gambia, **WE AGREE***:*

1. That there is a need for data localization in order to ensure privacy.

2. There is a need to develop the capacity of the general populace on privacy and data protection.

3. There is a need to call on Government to endorse, ratify, and domesticate the Malabo Convention (AU).

4. That the Ministry of Justice expedites the review of the Data Protection and Privacy Bill, and the Cybercrime Bill to be sent to the National Assembly.

5. Bills should align with International Data Protection Standards such as the ECOWAS Supplementary Act on Data Protection and the Malabo Convention (AU).

6. That there is a need for local content creation.

On Connecting the Unconnected, Collaboration and Community Networks, **WE AGREE:**

1. There is a need for the right policies and legal framework for better regulation.

2. The funding of ICT and the budget granted to the ICT sector should be bolstered and increased significantly to address the problems facing ICT development in The Gambia.

3. Capital expenditure and investment on ICT infrastructure by both the private and public sector should be increased.

4. Making smart devices more accessible and affordable.

Addendum

We, The stakeholders agree to participate fully in national, regional, pan African and global Internet governance fora to make the Gambia's position clearer and known worldwide in regards to issues on Internet Governance.

We the stakeholders, agree to maintain the multi stakeholder nature of the National Internet Governance Forum Steering Committee for subsequent National Internet Governance Fora ensuring a hybrid format is maintained to ensure an inclusive audience.

The National Steering Committee comprises of the following organizations and institutions:

1. Ministry of Information, Communication and Infrastructure (MOICI)
2. Information Technology Association of the Gambia (ITAG)
3. Gambia Press Union (GPU)
4. National Youth Council (NYC)
5. Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI)
6. Jokkolabs Banjul
7. Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA)
8. The Association of National Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO)
9. Internet Society Gambia Chapter
10. University of the Gambia (UTG)
11. GAMCHIX
12. Gambia Cyber Security Alliance
13. Ministry of Justice (MOJ)
14. Serekunda Internet Exchange Point
15. Give1 Project
16. National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

WE thank the Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure (MOICI), UNDP, PURA, YEP, JokkoLabs Banjul, ISOC The Gambia, ITAG, Alliance Francaise (Gamtech Project) and all stakeholders and participants for participating in this hybrid forum and look forward to seeing you participate in the 16th Global Internet Governance Forum that will be held in a hybrid format in December 2021 to be hosted by the Government of Poland. We look forward to the committed participation of all stakeholders in the subsequent IGF meetings.