



IGF 2019: African Union Open Forum (OF #3)

Date: IGF Day 1, Tuesday 26 November 2019
Time: 12H00-13H00
Venue: "Convention Hall I - D", Estrel Congress Center, Berlin
Theme: Digital Inclusion
Convener: The African Union Commission

Description:

The AU Open Forum aims at discussing accomplishments of the African IGF 2019 in relation to digital inclusion. After a brief presentation of the African IGF 2019, which was held in Ndjamen, Chad, the Forum will focus on the PRIDA Internet Governance Implementation Strategy whose pillars are streamlining IGFs across the continent and Internet Governance Capacity Building activities. Policy and Regulatory Initiative for Digital Africa (PRIDA) is an AU-EU Project which largely deals with capacity building for digital inclusion at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.

Speakers:

1. Mr. Adil Sulieman, Senior Policy Officer, African Union Commission
2. H.E Idriss Saleh Bachar, Minister of Communication, Chad
3. Ms. Halime Assadya Ali, Chair, African IGF 2019 National Organizing Committee, Chad
4. Ms. Mary Uduma, Chair, African IGF-MAG
5. Mr. Makane Faye, Secretary, African Internet Governance Forum
6. Ms. Margaret Nyambura Ndung'u, Technical Assistant, PRIDA

Online Moderator:

Mr. Salyou Fanny, Cote d'Ivoire

Statements and Presentations

The Open Forum was attended by over 200 participants, including three African ministers and over twenty African MPs. Following an opening statement from the African Union Commission (Adil Sulieman), a statement was made by the Minister of Communication of Chad (Bachar Saleh). This was followed by three presentations

(Halime Assadiya Ali, Mary Uduma & Makane Faye) on the African IGF 2019 outcome using figures and facts, discussing lessons learnt and the way forward. The major role played by PRIDA in the African IGF process at several levels was also highlighted by Margaret Nyambura. The presentations sparked observations and discussions from the floor from all stakeholder groups.

On the African IGF 2019

The following positive elements were widely acknowledged by participants: high profile opening and closing ceremony; large number of participants; hosting of the first African Youth Forum and active engagement of youth (62%) which outnumbered by far the other age groups; hosting of a caucus of elders, delivering of an African IGF Award. Participants recommended that this trend in supporting youth be escalated in the next African IGFs and that the forums continue to be opened and closed by very high level officials and hosted in 5 stars hotels.

On the other hand, many participants questioned the low number of female participants (22%). Also some wondered if the African IGF had a policy in favor of the disabled and why its website did not include tools for the blind. The secretariat promised to consult with some of the disabled leaders in order to craft guidelines on access for the disabled. One participant provided information on dot Africa implementation.

On PRIDA

In the Q&A several participants queried the project's objective and it was noted that PRIDA aimed at streamlining the IG structures and processes at all levels; and building the capacities of AU Member States in the IG space. Several MPs underlined the need for involvement of legislators in the IG process and presented achievements and plans ahead in their respective countries and in ECOWAS. It was agreed that the Harmonization of national, regional and continental IGFs would be the way forward in streamlining the IG processes while the various capacity building tools which were developed and are being translated to French and put online would be useful for policymakers and parliamentarians. Use of the Pan African Parliament was underlined by one participant who also suggested a way of increasing women participation. The role of PRIDA in empowering women in the IG space was also raised. On the way forward, participants requested support of PRIDA to other IG related activities, which are of capacity building nature but not in the national IGF as well as provision of support to youth, women and elders participation in the global IGF, ICANN and GAC processes, as part of the learning dimension of the project.

Policy Recommendations

One unanimous observation was the need for IGF to make available interpreters in English and French to be hired by session organizers to make sure that the diversity and language dimensions are adhered to in line with the IGF principles, hence making better use of time allocated and available intellectual resources.

Need to take into account the situation of the disabled in the African IGF process and on the use of its website and in the PRIDA strategy and outputs.

Need to increase women participation in IG process and sustain the trend in youth involvement.

Empowering policymakers, diplomats and legislators to be able to take full part in the IG process, to understand IG policy issues and enact the right policies and laws.

Estimated Participation

Over 200 participants took part in the Forum, including three Ministers and over 20 Parliamentarians.

Reflection to Gender Issues

Gender issues were discussed by several participants who raised concern on the low level of women participants in the 8th African IGF held in Ndjamena, Chad from 10-12 September 2019. One suggestion was to make mandatory inclusion of at least one woman in any delegation to the African IGF. Another was to promote application of females while looking for fellows to take part in the African IGF. It was also suggested to reserve a quota for women when fellowships are available and one selecting candidates.

Session Outputs

The following outputs are posted on: www.afigf.africa:

1. Facts and Figures - The African Internet Governance Forum 2019
2. PRIDA Internet Governance Implementation Strategy and Planned Activities
3. Report of the African Union Open Forum 2019