

## **9<sup>TH</sup> WEST AFRICAN INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM, JULY 27<sup>TH</sup> AND 28<sup>TH</sup>, 2017, COTONOU, BENIN: Digital security for socio-economic development and peace in West Africa**

The 9<sup>th</sup> West African Internet Governance Forum was held at Golden Tulip diplomat in Cotonou, Benin. The two (2) day event attracted stakeholders across the nations for dialog on digital security for socioeconomic development. The event recorded 418 participants with full house at the closing session

The conference was opened by stakeholders with beautiful welcome addresses. But the opening remarks were made by the Minister for Ministry of Digital Economy and Commission (MENC), Benin.

The conference also witnessed the report from the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) countries' representatives such as Nigeria, Benin, Chad, Gambia, Togo, Niger, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, etc.

Sessions on Security, Openness and Privacy was moderated by Jacques Hougbo, FGI Bénin. Jacques gave a brief importance of security in the digital world, the privacy of users on the net and data transparency. He then proceeded to the panelists to share their expert views.

Salieu Mansaray, MCIT, Sierra Leone who was the first speaker shared the states of digital security in Sierra Leone and how they mitigate online threat. That in online security, Africa is highly vulnerable and we all need to take responsibilities for the security of Africa Digital Ecosystem. He furthered said that the Government of Siera Leone shut down the internet in order to prevent false spread of information posted on the social media platforms as regards Ebola outbreak. Quanilo Medegan, AdN, Benin the second speaker also shared the progress of the Republic of Benin in the fight to protect the users and user information while Sunday Afolayan, AFRINIC President gave a definition of digital security to be a process. He shifted the discussion on digital security for the protection of infrastructures to protection of Africa Identity, heritage and mind while securing our right, youths and infrastructure. He further cleared the air by saying that the danger is not always outside but more of inside.

Session on Cyber Security and Trust was moderated by Jacques Hougbo, FGI Bénin. This session looked into how to promote cybersecurity and trust in the West African Region since businesses now operate in an interconnected way. So securing data, transactions and operations across the West African Region was discussed by a group of panelist, which includes Raphael Koffi, CEDEAO, Mme Thiam Ndeye Fatou, Senegal, Nicaise Dangnibo and Richard Gbaguidi , (CTTIC MENC)

Session on Internet Shutdowns was moderated by Taiwo Peter Akinremi, West Africa Coordinator of ACSIS. Peter gave a preamble on internet shut down as a new discovery by the government and its impact on the economics as well as on a common man. Amadou Nyang who is from MICT, Gambia shared the reason why the internet was shut down in the Gambia and the cost to the Gambia economy. Remy Nweke, who is the Vice President of African Civil Society on the Information Society (AC SIS) condemned shutdowns of the internet and its services as this act have an adverse effect on the economy and the people who leverage on the internet for business relation and productivity. Poncelet, Ileleji from YMCA, Gambia also disagree with the stands that internet shutdown is not a way to go for the government. Nnenna Nwakanma from Web foundation, said that the internet is for everyone. She further stressed that this exercise affects financing institution in conducting business, downward in the human right ranking,

hindering social interaction, soaring business confidence, affect productivity, limit ecommerce growth, reduces access to market information and limit free speech.

From this session, some of the government representatives argued that internet shutdowns are necessary to control and fight cyber criminals, but we saw that the reasons why government should not shutdown internet outweigh the reasons to shut down the internet. Sunday Afolayan said that it's the fear of the unknown that makes the government to shut down the internet or its services.

We learnt from this session that the government should always stay online and find alternative ways to resolving problem than shut down internet access and its services.

The Electronic Commerce session was moderated by Ibrahima Nour Diagne, GAINDE, Senegal. The session looked at the low eCommerce business in the West Africa Region and as well as the Africa continent. The ecommerce activities in the Africa region or digital inter-trade among the African countries is not encouraging at all; that, most of ecommerce platforms transactions are intentional based. There was a call that intra African trade transactions should be encourage and effective payment system with low cost of the transaction. And also the free movement of goods to make ecommerce thrive within ECOWAS.

A Law Enforcement session, which happened to be the last panel session was moderated by Mary Uduma, WAIGF. The session looked into the roles of law enforcement agencies in the security of the digital ecosystem with stakeholders sharing country best practices in the fight against cybercrime.

Lessons learnt from the 9<sup>th</sup> West African Internet Governance forum, Republic of Benin was that ICTs is the engine for our regional integration, and is the key to communication and development. Also, that public policy in trust is very paramount, safeguard the right to access and making sure there is secure online payment.

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