REPORT ON

GHANA INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM (IGF) 2019

THEME: "DIGITAL COMMUNITIES: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT."

ACCRA, GHANA.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is an annual forum that brings together the local Internet community and acts as a platform for candid and open discussions on the governance of the Internet. It brings together stakeholders to discuss relevant Internet related issues and includes government, the private sector, civil society, the technical and academic communities among others.

The IGF was established to fulfil one of the commitments laid down by the second World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which took place in Tunis in 2005. The inaugural meeting of the IGF took place in Athens in 2006 and the forum has been held in different countries every year since.

Local IGFs focus on issues that face a city, town or country and help people to bring solutions forward to a global level.

Background

On July 11, 2019, under the auspices of the Ministry of Communications, the Ghana Domain Name Registry (GDNR) and the Internet Society (ISOC) Ghana Chapter, co-convened the 4th Edition of the Ghana Internet Governance Forum at Kofi Annan Centre of Excellence in ICT (AITI-KACE).

The theme of the 2019 edition was "Digital Communities: Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders for Sustainable Development". The forum was held over two days. The first day was the Youth IGF which was followed by the main IGF on the second day.

The following were the sub-themes:

- Internet Freedom and Digital Rights in Africa

- Connecting and Enabling the Next Billion (Plenary)

- Data for Sustainable Development in Ghana

- Emerging Technology for Sustainable Growth

- Steering Technology Change in a Sustainable Direction, IOT, 5G, AI

- Local Internet Community and GDNR meeting

- Cybercrime and Cyber Security Issues in Ghana

Objectives of the IGF

The objectives for organising this year's forum were:
- Network with other colleagues in the Information Technology and Internet community.
- Gather Knowledge from the Forum and panel discussions, to promote Internet Governance in Ghana and beyond.

- Develop a communique that will be presented to the government for review and possible adoption.

Participation

The event was attended by participants from Academia, Government, Media, Regulators, Technical and non-profit communities.
The breakdown showed that the majority of participants came from the government and academia with their sectors being mainly ICT.

Sponsorship

The 2019 IGF was sponsored in different ways by various entities including the Government of Ghana, NITA, the Cybersecurity Centre, the NCA, Microsoft, Media Foundation for West Africa, IGF SA, Ecoband, MTN, MainOne and e-Crime Bureau.

Presentations and Sessions

The forum was divided into six different sessions to discuss various issues on Internet governance pertaining to Ghana.

Session 1: Internet Freedom and Digital Rights in Africa

The session started with a presentation by Felicia Antonio on Internet Freedom and Digital Rights in Africa. She discussed the common justifications given by governments for the shutdown of the Internet and recommended preventive methods.

The second part of this session was a panel discussion which had four (4) panelists to discuss Internet issues.

The panel discussion was anchored on these questions:

- Is it necessary to regulate the Internet?
- What can civil society organizations do so this does not occur in Ghana?
- Are Telcos to be held responsible for being in support of the government and therefore allowing shutdowns?

Session 2: Opening Ceremony

This session was the Opening Ceremony. The following personalities gave remarks.
- Mr. Kwasi Adu-Gyan, Director General, AITI-KACE
- Mr. Nana Kofi Asafu-Aidoo, Executive Director, Ghana Domain Name Registry
- Mr. Marcus Adomey, President of ISOC, Ghana Chapter
- Prof. Nii Quaynor, Father of the Internet in Africa
- Mr. Stephen Donkor, Rep from Youth IGF

Hon. Vincent Sowah Odotei, Deputy Minister of Communications gave the keynote address. He emphasized that since the development of the Internet protocol in the 1970s, the Internet had taken over the global communication landscape. He further observed that the Internet had revolutionized the communication world by setting the stage for the unprecedented integration of capabilities such as the telephone, radio and telegraph through services such as e-mails, video calls and instant messaging applications.

The Deputy Minister indicated that the Internet had gone a long way to make our lives easier and better. He enumerated some of the Internet related services that the government had initiated such as e-booking, e-passport among others.

The other speakers focused on the importance and relevance of the Internet and the need for stakeholders from diverse areas to include their input in the Internet governance dialogue.

Session 3: Connectivity, Cost & Digital Inclusion

This session had five panelists discussing issues around Connectivity, Cost & Digital Inclusion.

Some issues that emerged in this session were:

- The National Communication Authority has made it a requirement for Telcos operating in Ghana to provide Internet for citizens.
- GIFEC has structured over three hundred sites to provide mobile telecommunications to Ghanaians across the country.
- In addition, the Internet is a hub for job opportunities for young people. However, the Internet is constantly evolving and young people need to upgrade their skills to keep up with the ever-evolving trends.

Session 4: Data Governance/Balancing Data Privacy and National Security

This session was divided into two; a presentation on Data Governance (Overview of Data Production Systems/ Laws) in Ghana followed by a panel discussion.
Four panelists discussed the topic.
The following were some of the issues that emerged in this session:

- Ghana Statistical Service (GSS) have made their center open to all who require data of any magnitude for research purposes and Data creation must be a collective effort and it must be used to help solve problems in the society.

The panel also discussed the topic of Balancing Data Privacy and National Security. Three panelists discussed the topic and the following are some of the issues that emerged:

- There should be a structure in place to manage cybersecurity.
- Individuals should also play their role in achieving these goals and not depend entirely on government.

- Government must lead policy wise in ensuring the right practices start from government circles.

Session 5.1: Emerging Technologies IOT, 5G, AI

The following were the issues that emerged in this session;
- 5G internet will bring efficiency in the delivery of internet related services for consumers.
- Instead of being comfortable with the prospects of the 5G internet, participants were challenged to produce and innovate hardware devices that will need this 5G internet like the Asians have done.
- Artificial intelligence and IOT have always existed, but Ghanaians have failed to capitalize on them.
- We must be innovative and constantly try our hands on developing, this is an assured way of growth else, we will continually import inferior goods when we have engineers who can do better.
- Technology developers and those willing to innovate must bear in mind the people they are developing these products. Products must not be abstract but valuable and useful to the consumers.

Session 5.2: Local Internet Community GDNR Meeting

There was a presentation on Ghana Domain Name Registry GDNR/Local Community Meeting. The speaker Nana Kofi Asafu-Aidoo, raised the need for an amicable Registry transfer from Ghana Dot Com to GDNR as well as the processes of operation of the Registry once it becomes operationalized.

The business opportunities in selling domains in the reseller business were also discussed, as well as the training of registrars. The following were some of the issues that emerged in this session to make the GDNR operational;
- Complete re-delegation process at International Corporation for Assigned Names and Number (ICANN).
- Change the sponsoring organization from Ghana.com to GDNR.

- Publish expression of interest and open market for registrars.
- Embark on marketing and awareness creation on the existence of the Registry and its benefits.
- Registry to work with the registrars to come out with policies to build a thriving profitable business model to generate revenue for the Ghanaian economy.

Consultation was done with stakeholders at the IGF. The roadmap was presented and agreed by stakeholders at the IGF.

Section 6.1: Cybercrime and Cyber Security Issues in Ghana

This session had two separate panel discussions. The panelists on this session discussed Cybercrime and Cyber Security Issues in Ghana. They discussed the findings, key vulnerabilities in Ghana, implication of cyber-attacks and key national concerns.

Session 6.2 'Children and Women Safety Online'

There was a presentation on the safety of Children and Women online by Mrs Awo Aidam Amenya followed by a panel discussion.

Some recommendations made were:

- Education on safety measures for both parents and children is key
- Parents and guardians should not expose their children on social media without taking precautionary measures.
- Parents and guardians should be responsible and build trust of children so that they can confide in them rather than friends online.
- The use of TV and radio stations should be used as a platform to educate illiterate mothers and women in the marketplaces.
- Journalists to be sensitive in their reportage taking into consideration the rights of children.

Lessons Learnt

Lessons for improving IGF organization

- On the issue of protecting children online, there is the need to protect children against cyber threats and related activities on the Internet as it is becoming an emerging issue in Ghana. The forum needs to bring more stakeholders especially content developers and child welfare policy makers to dialogue more on protecting children online. It should not only be an issue for cybersecurity experts.

- The publicity of the next IGF should start about 3 months before the event. Social media awareness building and advertising need to be intensified to encourage stakeholders from other professions to participate. This will increase the number of participants in discussion to help draft policy guidelines that are more representative of the Internet community in Ghana.

- The IGF event could be organized as a semi-annual event for southern and northern part of the country.

- Engage the various community groups in the country to enable them participate in the event.

- Seek more sponsorship to enable the duration of the main event to be increased to have fuller sessions to engage participants.

- The coordinators of the two events engaged participants and speakers which resulted in a positive feedback from the audience.

Lessons from discussions

- Communities need to be created to make more digital jobs available so that people can get more involved in emerging technologies. This would help build up their digital knowledge and improve our digital economy. It will also help individuals in the communities to get more familiar and build more trust.

- Original local content should be created.

- The importance of digital technology to enhance jobs and create more opportunities in the digital economy should be stressed.

- Policies should be created to guide and protect individuals involved in digital jobs by government and the necessary regulatory bodies.

- Youth should join communities and engage in volunteer work in these communities to increase their knowledge and sharpen their skills.

Way Forward

Internet shutdowns

Internet Freedom and Digital Rights in Africa should focus on self-regulation, find ways in the governance process to engage government and stakeholders on issues so that Internet shutdowns do not occur. Use the right approach and inclusiveness in policy formulation on shutdowns.

Advocacy and Education

Civil Society organizations and the media must engage in advocacy and educate the public on their rights and how to use legal options to prevent possible shutdowns. Best practices and guidelines for shutdowns should be adopted and enforced. Rights and responsibilities of Internet users must be balanced. Discussions with National Security to determine what constitutes national security breaches for which there should be a shutdown.

Choice of Venue

The venue for the event limited the sponsors in showcasing the products and services to the participants. The next event will be at a location where sponsors will have direct access to participants before they enter the event hall to enable them engage with the participants better.

Conclusion

The 2019 National Internet Governance Forum, urge the Ministry of Communications to continue supporting the Ghana IGF and Internet related discussions. We appreciate the efforts of the Ghana IGF Planning committee, the Ghana Domain

Name Registry and the Internet Society Ghana Chapter for convening this forum as well as the partners that provided material and financial resources.

The outcome of the Ghana IGF was a successful one and a communique was generated during the event and has been attached for your kind information.