

# **The West African Internet Governance Forum 2010: Report on the West African IGF participation at the 5<sup>th</sup> Internet Governance Forum, Vilnius, 14-17 September 2010**

**Report submitted to the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) by the Free and Open Source Software Foundation of Africa**

**Compiled by the Association for Progressive Communications**

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# 1 Introduction

The report covers the major workshops that were attended by West African IGF representatives at the fifth annual Internet Governance Forum held in Lithuania from the 14 – 17th of September 2010. Participants at the event were from government, civil society, academia, private sector and the internet community. With the theme “Developing the future together” the forum explored how the internet can benefit people worldwide and how Internet governance can be a means to achieve internationally agreed targets like the Millennium Development Goals. The gathering also discussed issues such as security, openness and privacy, access and diversity, Internet governance for development and critical Internet resources, the emerging issue of cloud computing and the way forward for internet governance.

The core consortium organisations provided the participants to the IGF and the people who were sponsored are:

- Katim Touray: FOSSFA
- Samer Azmy : FOSSFA
- Emilar Vushe: APC
- Lillian Sharpley: AfriNIC
- Animata Sy: ISOC Senegal
- Ben Akoh: IISD

The WAIGF representatives participated in various workshops at the forum and their personal accounts are found on the WAIGF website.

## 2 Regional perspectives<sup>1</sup>

### 2.1 Workshop description

A discussion on the various regional internet governance initiatives comparing similarities, differences and their respective priorities that emerged out the respective meetings. T

Moderator: Markus Kummer

Panelists

- Alice Munyua: East African IGF
- Valeria Betancourt: Latin American IGF
- Katim Touray: West African IGF
- Edmon Chung: Asia Pacific IGF
- Sebastian Muriel: European IGF
- Joseph Tabone: Commonwealth IGF

### 2.2 Discussion and main points raised

- Katim gave an overview of the WAIGF process, achievements, countries involved and the people behind the project
- He stated that a process like the WAIGF is important as it further entrenches democracy in Africa.
- He noted that many African countries are celebrating 50 years of independence from colonial rule

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<sup>1</sup> Transcript available here: <http://igf.wgig.org/cms/component/content/article/96-vilnius-2010-meeting-events/627-regional>

- Multi-stakeholder process such as the WAIGF further strengthens policy formulation and development.
- WAIGF is not an event but a process which is going to continue after the 5<sup>th</sup> IGF.
- Website for the West African initiative was launched [www.waigf.org](http://www.waigf.org)

### **2.3 Recommendations from panel and participants**

- Establish a more formal interaction between the regional and global meetings
- The IGF secretariat should prepare in advance a summary of the contributions from the preparatory events
- The IGF Secretariat should help the regional initiatives through inviting governments' participation in local events
- There is a need to look at the nomenclature of the Internet Governance Forum – because in some parts of Africa the word “governance ” is associated with corruption
- There is a need for cooperation and collaboration among the national and regional IGFs.
- We need to ensure the sustainability of the national and regional internet governance initiatives
- We need to tap more into local sources of funding for the national and regional initiatives
- There is a need to explore remote participation in national and regional initiatives to encourage more stakeholders to take part in the events

## **3. West African IGF merged with Central IGF**

### **3.1 Workshop description**

A discussion on the West African IGF and the Central IGF looking at the processes and activities of the initiatives and how best we can collaborate.

Panelists:

- Ben Akoh, Project Manager, IISD
- Adiel A. Akplogan, CEO, AfriNIC

### **3.2 Discussion and main points raised**

- Emilar Vushe gave a brief description of the WAIGF process was outlined
- Major points from the communique<sup>2</sup> were presented
- Ben Akoh gave a brief outline of the survey that IISD is carrying out
- Survey still ongoing and those interested to take part were invited to contact Ben Akoh
- Main aim of the research is to support policy through research
- Countries targeted by the research are diverse demographically as well as internet connectivity
- Interesting to see the differences of connectivity rates in the different West African countries
- More men than female responded to the survey (70%)
- Unclear whether this has anything to do with the distribution of the survey or internet usage
- One of the key findings was that there should more government involvement in internet policy discussions
- Governments are largely absent from internet governance policy discussions
- Dialogue mainly spearheaded by civil society

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.waigf.org/publications/article/waigf-communique-2010>

- Its not clear from the survey why governments are absent from the internet governance policy discussions
- Access remains a key challenge for West Africans
- Privacy and security also are major concerns of West Africans
- West Africans believe that there should be a broad-based approach to internet governance discussions
- How do we engage more? Linking the regional forums and the global processes – how best can we engage?
- We need to discuss further how we can involve governments in the process
- Internet Governance Forum is being perceived as a civil society driven process
- Very few African governments taking part in the IGF
- Africa does not hold to the level of participation of other continents, maybe there is no incentive to participate since the IGF has no decision-making mandate
- A lot can be learnt from the EAIGF but these two regions are totally different and what worked in East Africa might not work in West Africa
- Governments in Africa have other issues to deal with for example unemployment, hence internet governance does not become a priority
- To whom are the regional initiatives accountable to?
- Funding for the West African IGF hindered progress in holding of national IGFs
- Culture dictates that elders should not listen when the youth are talking – something we need to override
- Is a continental IGF feasible?
- Abbey John said he would like to host a school on internet governance
- Are we communicating with governments in a correct manner? Is a mailing list conducive to this kind of discussion with the government?
- People see government intervention as interference and that is misplaced
- AfriNIC set up a government working group and this provides them with direct contact with governments through governmental liason people
- AfriNIC has two events this year where they are hosting a ministerial meeting on ICTs – and they will have a round table on internet governance
- The term “Governance” means different things to to different people – maybe the term can be changed to Internet Development Forum

### **3.3 Recommendations from panel and participants**

- Involve governments right from the beginning of the discussions
- Collaborate with other regional initiatives e.g. the East African IGF, USA IGF etc – and learn from them
- Integrate governments priorities with internet governance issues
- Encourage the youths to engage with the governments/ civil society on internet governance and not let cultural barriers hinder them
- Strengthen national and regional IGFs
- Collaborate with the private sector – provide them with incentives for their involvement
- Formulate the right key messages on internet governance to governments
- Collaborate with other international companies e.g Google that are interested in internet governance issues
- Governments should have focus people that all stakeholders can approach on discussions on internet governance
- Define concrete steps towards a Continental IGF 2011
- Recommend that participants at the Kenyan IGF have an easy visa process