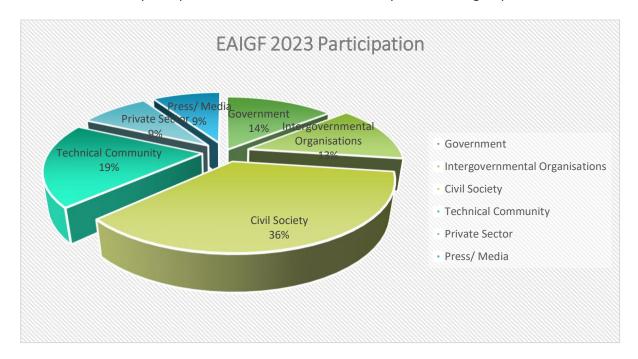**EAST AFRICA INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM REPORT 2023**

The 10th Edition of the East Africa Internet Governance Forum (EA-IGF) convened in Kigali, Rwanda on September 05, 2023. The forum was jointly hosted by the East Africa Community and the Rwanda Ministry of ICT and Innovation through the Rwanda Internet Community and Technology Alliance (RICTA). The Forum was convened under the theme: *The Internet We Want – Empowering All People in East Africa*. The theme is in line with the over-arching global Internet Governance Forum 2023 theme: *The Internet We Want*.

Main forum programme can be accessed here. Subthemes included: AI & Emerging Technologies; Avoiding Internet Fragmentation; Cybersecurity, Cybercrime & Online safety; Data Governance & Trust; Digital Divides & Inclusion; Human Rights & Freedoms.

The 10th EAIGF annual meeting gathered 202 onsite participants coming from all 7 EAC member states and 52 online participants. Below are the breakdowns by stakeholder groups.

Participation by gender Representation:
The 10th Edition of the East Africa Internet Governance Forum (EA-IGF) convened 156 male participants onsite, which is 77% of the total attendance and 46 female participants onsite which is 23% of the total participation.

The EAIGF is a platform for an inclusive multilateral, multi-stakeholder and multilingual discussion on issues pertinent to enhancing Internet development in East Africa and Internet Governance issues.

The 10th EAIGF was supported by the GIZ Digital transformation Center Rwanda, GIZ Digital Skills for an Innovative East African Industry Arusha, the Internet Society Foundation, ICANN, Team Wave, Liquid intelligent Technologies, Team Cymru and AOS Ltd.

Key Highlights

OPENING CEREMONY:

Speakers: CEO, RICTA; Grace Ingabire, Lillian Nalwoga, EAIGF convener; Mr. Adil Suleiman│ Senior Policy Officer, Telecom and ICT │ Department of Infrastructure and Energy │ African Union Commission Ms. Anja Gengo, NRI Initiative Coordinator, UN IGF; Mr. Peter Primus, Chargé d' Affair, Germany Embassy, Rwanda; Eng. Daniel Murenzi, Principal Information Technology Officer, East Africa Community.

Key highlights.

The Internet plays a fundamental role in our lives and shouldn't be a privilege but a fundamental right accessible to all. This requires a multistakeholder approach to work towards a common agenda in making the internet work for everyone.

Importance of Africa participation in regional, continental and global digital policies thus need to strengthen capacity of African stakeholders through multistakeholder approach.

The forum is a vital platform that plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of the internet in the East African region. The EAC is readying for the launch the Eastern Africa

> *"To shape the rules and the internet of tomorrow we need to bring all voices together, from academia, civil society, private sector and governments, and have them heard, and each of these stakeholders may have a different perspective and opinion on topics around Internet Governance. But this is a good thing, we need to listen, challenge and discuss with each other." Mr. Peter Primus, Chargé d' Affair, Germany Embassy, Rwanda*

Regional Digital Integration Project (EA-RDIP), a vital regional initiative that is set to transform and enhance the region's integration into the digital economy. The project is set to revolutionize the way the region connects, trades, and engages digitally. The project aligns with regional priorities, emphasizing the need to bridge the digital divide, reduce connectivity costs, and empower marginalized groups such as youth, persons with disabilities, and women. The project development objective to increase access to broadband and digital services, fostering the development and integration of digital markets in East Africa.

> *"The Eastern Africa Regional Digital Integration Project is in response to the discussions and recommendations of the 9th East Africa Internet Governance Forum and aims to drive digital market integration by expanding broadband connectivity and improving the digital service environment," Eng. Daniel Murenzi*

Keynote address:

The forum was officially opened by Mr. Yves Iradukunda, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of ICT and Innovation on behalf of the Minister. In his remarks, he retaireted the role of the Internet if facilitating East Africa's vision of transforming into a digital economy by employing a multi-stakeholder approach to ensure people within the region are empowered by the internet. He also called stakeholders to develop locally relevant content and applications that are useful to the local communities.

"As we develop locally relevant content, as sector experts and other stakeholders we must work together to push for development of global regulations that facilitate development of digital economies," added the Permanent Secretary.

He also urged participants to ensure that internet regulations and laws transcend national barriers and provide for a sustainable and safe digital sphere for all to use.

High Level Panel: The Internet We Want – Empowering All People in East Africa.

The High-Level Panel had five panelists namely; Christian Muhirwa, Chief Executive Officer, Broadband Systems Corporation Ltd; Dr. Martin Koyabe, Senior Project Manager for Africa Union Global Forum on Cyber Expertise; Eng. Daniel Murenzi, Principal Information Technology Officer, East African Community; Hon. Judge Dr. Eliamani Laltaika, High Court of Tanzania and Ms. Gloria Katuuku, Manager, planning strategy and performance, NITA-Uganda. It was moderated by Rosemary Kimwatu who currently serves as Chairperson of the Kenya Internet Governance Forum.

Session emphasized the internet we want in East Africa is one that is secure, affordable and accessible for all citizens in East Africa. Countries should consider addressing last mile connectivity to ensure that there is a decrease in rural-urban digital divide. East African nations need to have proper strategies for adoption of emerging technologies such as AI and also build capacities for adoption of these technologies.

Panelists called for the need for partnerships between broadband service providers and governments on infrastructure deployment. Initiatives such the Universal Access Funds are important to compliment the industry's efforts for deployment of the infrastructure in places where investment is not viable.

> *"despite the 95% 4G coverage in Rwanda, there are not as many users utilizing the network and therefore initiatives on digital literacy for citizens and affordability of the devices are key in realizing the Internet we want in East Africa."* Christina Muhirwa

On addressing cybersecurity, emphasis should be placed on the content layer of the internet as this is where most harms such as child pornography, misinformation, disinformation, and online hate crimes. Care must be given when regulating these harms without undermining freedom of expression.

Need to regulate emerging technology regionally centered approach on data protection as well as adopting enabling laws to ease investment in digital technology and respect digital rights.

All countries in east Africa have taken steps to secure the cyberspace by ensuring they have Cybersecurity Strategies in place such as implementing Computer Emergency Response Teams (CERTs).

East Africa need to understand needs to undern generative AI he said there are issues for the region to consider, which include understanding what the trends are, and ensuring policymakers are adequately informed about these trends.

Participants were urged to use regional meetings, forums and conferences to facilitate conversation on generative AI, so the region can adopt and realize its benefits while also addressing risks associated with generative AI.

The East Africa Community has established centers of excellence in different sectors within the partner states. This is to prepare EA citizens for capacity building, adoption and use of the emerging technologies such as AI, Blockchain, etc.

Session One: Generative AI In Media Hits Speed Bumps: Do Humans Have the Answers?

Session Speakers: Jonan Katende, Business Manager, Justice Chatbot Limited; David Indeje, Kenya ICT Action Network (KICTANet); Juma Saleita, Founder Transcend technologies; Joris Cyizere, GIZ Rwanda
Moderator: Winnie Kamau| Head, The Association of Freelance Journalists (AFJ)

Session Description:

This session was aimed at demystifying Artificial intelligence and what Generative and Predictive AI is and how it's being used across East Africa in various spheres including the Media space.

The panelists went ahead to define Artificial intelligence as the ability to allow machines to model and improve upon the capabilities of the human mind. It is said that the early adopters of the AI will reap a part of the 100-billion-dollar market of the Artificial Intelligence. It was also noted that AI improves with numbers. Generative AI: Both generative AI and AI to use machine learning algorithm to obtain their results. However, they have different goals and purposes. Generative AI" is intended toto create new content in the form of text, image and sound

Key Highlights

Generative AI has a lot of potential. Rwanda in place foundation policies and now shifting towards specific application that can be used to create value in Agriculture, healthcare, transportation and other economic and social values.

Rwanda has invested in AI to manage and monitor traffic with automated fine systems, they have also leveraged on Generative AI in healthcare to reduce access to information, improve efficiency in community workers and translation to local languages as well as in supply of blood to local and rural areas through the use of a drone service. They have also implemented AI in other sectors such as education and agriculture where they help farmers with information and support.

Use of chatbot and Generative AI in the media. Legal information and Emerging Tech to facilitate social transformation through access to information. Justice Bot was founded on the premise that home is not home without justice. It allows communities to decipher information about law, and make it accessible and transparent through chatbot where it answers questions about the law in 24hrs.

Journalism and AI is all about data, algorithms and decision making. Data journalism is a big conversation. The data is used to inform trends, patterns, etc. to understand patterns, be it on food productions, healthcare, weather etc. This data compliments the work that the journalists do. AI is used to increase efficiency and reporting accuracy.

> *"The future holds for efficiency and convenience, hence the need for automation for fast and efficient service delivery"*
> **Jonan Katende, Business Manager, Justice Chatbot Limited**

AI reduce information overload by presenting to you what is relevant information. Telcos are now creating adverts fully powered by AI.

There is need to put in place appropriate harmonized policies and regulations across the region while also ensuring that there is no over regulation to stifle innovation.

Need to democratize AI in Africa as AI generates new content on existing data. Africa needs to focus on shifting from being consumers of content created in Europe to being creators of content and technology.

Session two: Unlocking the Future of Data Protection in East Africa: Strategies for Effective Implementation

Session speakers: Eraste Rurangwa, Head of Data Protection and Privacy Office Unit, NCSA; Fulgence Massawe, Director of Advocacy and Reforms at Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC), Tanzania; Mr. GITINYWA A. Louis, Senior Partner, Kigali Attorneys; Dr. Margret Nyambura, Digital Innovations and Policy Specialist; Mr. Ben Ruhinda Senior Systems Officer, IUECA.

Session sought to analyze the current state of data protection in East Africa and identify key challenges and opportunities in their implementation; Examine best practices and lessons learned from global data protection frameworks and implementations; Discuss strategies for effective implementation of data protection laws in Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Kenya; Explore the role of government, regulatory bodies, businesses, and civil society in ensuring compliance and enforcement of data protection regulations; and foster collaboration and knowledge sharing among stakeholders to establish a harmonized approach to data protection in East Africa.

Key highlights

National, legal, and regulatory frameworks may have gaps at the national level, requiring integration of laws addressing competition, digital trade, and taxation at both national and regional levels. The African Continental Free Trade Area presents opportunities for interconnected markets and start-ups, but implementation is crucial for mutual benefits. Policy initiatives like the data policy framework, which has been borrowed by some countries, aim to harmonize national and continental levels. Notably, the framework consists of seven comprehensive high-level guiding principles. Cooperation, integration, fairness, inclusiveness, trust, safety, accountability, sovereignty, comprehensiveness, forward-lookingness, integrity, and justice are the key principles that developing countries can borrow from. They can do by integrating these principles into their national data policies, harmonization becomes easier.

The AU Data Policy framework aims to create a stable and predictable regulatory environment that considers global developments. Collaboration between countries, sectors, institutions, and stakeholders is crucial in creating an enabling environment. It is important to assess the integration and alignment of institutions within a country to national development goals. Mapping regulatory instruments, governance, and standards in accordance with the African Union Data Policy framework is also necessary. Countries should therefore need identify opportunities and policy windows at the national and regional levels for coordination and participation in data governance.

There's need to adopt gender-responsive laws and policies in order to address gender barriers in data governance.

Call to raise awareness about the importance of data and its impact on people. Emphasis was given to the need for businesses to need to assess their current systems and implement or improve security measures in light of the growing trust and secure data processing activities between institutions.

Calls for more transparency and adoption of a multistakeholder approach in developing policies with more emphasis on improved consultations among stakeholders and the legal fraternity.

Data localization and security measures are crucial for ensuring data safety across the continent. Collaboration among different countries and inter-border trade is essential for addressing these issues. Prioritizing contextualization and data governance is key, as is ensuring cyber hygiene at the household level. This includes data policies, laws, and sharing practices. It is essential to create awareness and educate people about the potential risks associated with data sharing, ensuring that data is not shared for an indefinite period. This will help protect future generations from potential cyber threats.

In terms of establishing best strategies for implementing data protection, panelists observed that the implementation and enforcement of new data protection laws and a shift towards compliance are complex processes that require institutional capacity building, raising awareness about data subjects' rights, and promoting compliance by informing data controllers and processes. Partnerships, are essential for capacity development and monitoring compliance in specific sectors. E.g. Rwanda's data protection and privacy law requires authorization for data sharing outside Rwanda, and data processing is necessary for privacy. Crowd hosting, a technical term, requires physical servers for data processing, while Rwanda's data protection and privacy role require permission to host personal data outside Rwanda.

Further, it's important to have inter-regulatory alignments in financial services, for example that the KCB Group has implemented data sharing agreements, updated terms and conditions, and policies across the region, which is a good strategy for countries without data protection laws.

East African countries should collaborate to harmonize data protection standards and practices across the region by adopting the guidelines in the African Union data policy framework that provide guidelines for setting minimum standards for businesses, including taxation, e-payment, and other aspects. By implementing these guidelines, countries can harmonize and develop their own strategies at the national level, ensuring they adhere to the framework's basic principles for conducting business within the ecosystem.

Policy harmonization will also beneficial for cross boarder data sharing, hence the need for increased awareness of data sharing processes within the region

The East African Community needs interoperability mechanisms for data protection laws, as there is an increase in adoption of data protection and privacy laws in the region. This would allow for the agreement on privacy principles that can be adopted by all member states. It would also help classify personal data, distinguishing between sensitive and critical types. This would help in determining safeguards and conditions for data sharing or processing.

The importance of local expertise in data protection law was emphasized with calls for collaboration amongst various stakeholders. Further, calls to contextualize the local context and engage with the young generation to ensure effective implementation and success was made.

Session three: Local to Regional: Sharing Perspectives and lessons of Coalitions approach towards Content Moderation and promotion of freedom of expression in digital spaces in Africa

This panel discussion session, organized under UNESCO EU funded project Social Media 4 Peace, aimed to share the lessons of the piloting of multistakeholder coalition on content moderation and freedom of expression in Kenya with the East Africa Region. The session sought to highlight and address the key challenges of content governance and moderation in relation to the disconnect between standards of platforms at global level and the local realities; to present the initiatives and outcomes of the Social Media 4 Peace project, particularly the establishment of a national multi-stakeholder coalition on content moderation and freedom of expression; and to explore and share existing opportunities and best practices for effective content moderation that can be adapted and applied in east African countries.

Panelists: Muthuri Kathure - Senior Program Officer| ARTICLE 19 (Kenya); Kampire Nadine Temba-Cofounder and Associate Editor| AFIA-AMANI Grands-Lacs (DRC); Louis Gitinywa- Senior Partner, Kigali Attorneys (Rwanda)

Moderator: Ruth Omar- Freelance Journalist (DRC)

<u>Key highlights:</u>

The East African community comprises seven countries with varying political and socioeconomic structures. Challenges in online platforms vary across these countries. For instance, in Rwanda, where online platforms are active, political issues cannot be heard due to self-censored individuals. However, the context and mindset of Rwandans must be considered. In Burundi and DRC, social media interactions depend on the country's context and social, political and economic factors. In Rwanda, open communication may not always be accepted due to cultural or personal barriers.

Despite these differences, there are some similarities when it comes to challenges faced as a region. Lack of awareness in understanding what entails digital rights, digital and information literacy, over regulation on digital space.

Tech companies' discriminatory business models prioritize the US and Canada over Europe, Asia Pacific, and Africa and Latin America. Content moderation practices are also failing, with Meta's regional office in Nairobi causing issues. In Kenya, for instance, there are nearly five laws limiting freedom of expression, including the Constitution, the Computer, Mises, and Cybercrime Act, the National Ethics Act, the Penal Court, and the Kenya Information and Communication Act. However, there is a lack of laws promoting freedom of expression and regulating harmful online content. Digital information literacy is lacking, and good mannerism is needed when exercising freedom of expression in online spaces.

Hate speech is also one of the challenges mentioned. For instance, panelists shared that, the recent conflict between Congo and Rwanda has led to an increase in hate speeches on social media platforms. Organizations have conducted investigations into these cases, and testimonies have been shared. A strategy to regulate these spaces for disinformation and hate speeches is needed, as instability in one country in the East African region affects the rest of the countries and raises stereotypes among the people. This can negatively impact social life and the stability of the East African region.

Citizen-led strategies such as fact-checking, awareness creation, training, and digital literacy would go hand in hand in addressing these challenges. Further emphasis on the importance of ensuring responsible usage of social media platforms for the protection of users' rights.

Additionally, panelists called for the need to create awareness for existing legislations and government transparency in implementing the same. Citing that the lack of awareness of how government is addressing conflicts and pandemics in the region also contributes to disinformation and hate speech propagation. The government's failure to address these issues highlights the need for understanding and addressing the underlying issues, rather than solely focusing on regulating digital content.

The lack of a single legislation for East Africa to regulate digital spaces and combat hate speech and disinformation was also cited as a shortfall in combating the vice.

Panelists cited the Social Media for Peace campaign, a coalition effort to promote freedom of expression and combat misinformation. It involves stakeholders such as regulators, government, tech companies, civil society, academia, journalists, and activists. The campaign has been successful in encouraging content creators in Kenya to create their own code of conduct, encouraging them to take responsibility for their actions. It has also improved engagement with tech companies and increased legitimacy. The campaign is currently in its third year and is being implemented with UNESCO. The coalition is working towards a more inclusive and effective approach to digital rights. The campaign continues to be a significant step towards promoting digital rights and promoting freedom of expression.

A solution to combating fake news, Dr. Koyabe suggested that researchers should consider solutions that trace back the originator of content, which could be self-defining within this context. He suggested that regulators should have punitive measures when evidence of false information is found, acting as a deterrent. He alsoemphasized the need for a solution that can both authenticate the sender and sanitize the news that is out there.

Panelists observed the perpetuation of gender-based violence online specifically focusing on young women's online expression calling for adoption of legislation to address this issue in addition to existing legislation. Theimportance of building the resilience of women, particularly journalists, politicians, and human rights defenders, who are often targeted by technology-assisted violence was also emphasized.

Session four: 2023 National IGF reports highlights

Tanzania IGF: Tanzani IGF took place on the August 31, 2023, under the theme "An empowered internet for all Tanzanians." The forum was supported by the IGFSA, META, and Digital Africa. The forum was preceded by the Tanzania School on Internet Governance which took place on August 30, 2023 and attracted 60 fellows. The forum focused on addressing the digital agenda gap, AI, blockchain technology integration in agricultural supply chains, and digital accessibility. Tanzania Youth IGF aims to bridge young people into internet governance by building capacity for them to engage in public policy discussions on internet governance and development. The event will take place in Kilimanjaro and Zanzibar, Tanzania, with a focus on internet governance and development. Read more about the TzIGF here

Uganda IGF: The Uganda IGF was held on August 24 and preceded by the Uganda Youth IGF held on 23rd, 2023. The UIGF placed emphasis on the importance of digital empowerment for Uganda,

including women, youth, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities. The forum acted as a launch pad for Enable Uganda's project - Digital Rights for Girls and Women, which aims to skill girls and women in ICTs for better daily life and employment and Poliicy's Game Booth, "Where is my data?", which seeks to help understand data privacy and security issues. The forum highlighted the need for increased investment in internet infrastructure and technologies to bridge digital divides. The forum also emphasizes the importance of skilling the public and youth in AI through training and model development, as AI relies heavily on data. Local content should be used to power local-known AI. The forum also emphasizes the need for more research on the impact of emerging technologies and better governance. The principle is to avoid over-legislation but focus on principles for dealing with emerging technologies. Detailed report can be accessed here.

Kenya IGF: The Kenya IGF was hosted on June 22 under the theme "The Internet we Want-Empowering all Kenyan People" and was preceded by the Kenya School on Internet Governance, Children IGF, the Kenya Youth IGF.

Main discussion topics were: Enhancing Cybersecurity, Combating Cybercrime & Ensuring Online Safety; Promoting Data Governance & Trust; Promoting Human Rights and Freedoms and Tackling Harmful Content Online; Bridging the Digital Divides and Promoting Inclusion; Harnessing the Power of AI & Emerging Technologies The 8th edition of Kenyan School of Internet Governance emphaised the importance of youth's voices in shaping the future of the internet and attracted over 70 participants from diverse stakeholder groups, including the technical community, civil society and academia. Detailed report can be accessed here.

Rwanda IGF: The Rwanda Internet Governance Forum for 2023, held on August 3rd, 2023, focused on empowering all people through the internet. Key topics included internet access, affordability, digital services, and empowerment, Emerging technologies, online security, and child online protection, The AI policy for Rwanda and draft Rwanda data protection law. Detailed report can be accessed here

Closing remarks

The closing remarks was given by the Minister of State in Charge of East African Community, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Republic of Rwanda, Hon. Prof. Nshuti Manasseh.

He noted that the development of digital frameworks and platforms that include everyone, including East Africa and the continent, is essential for the region's future.

He called on participants to implement key action points emerging from the forum. Particularly, he called for the forum and EAC to community leaders to implement agreed-upon policies to ensure the digital world benefits all citizens. This includes involving internet providers and engaging regional and international policymakers to develop policies that allow all citizens to benefit from the digital world.

> *"Africa, particularly East Africa, has missed many revolutions and must participate in this one to avoid a loss of generations. Policymakers and decision-makers can count on support to ensure this is realized. Issues such as artificial intelligence, emerging technologies, internet fragmentation, cyber security, cybercrime, online security, data governance, trust, and a digital divide must be addressed. Everyone should be included in the digital revolution, and sustainable and stable practices must be ensured". Hon. Prof. Nshuti*

He encouraged leaders to ensure connectivity becomes universal, affordable, and accessible, making it a necessity rather than a luxury. Further emphasizing that the internet should be seen as a necessity, not a luxury, and everyone should see it as such.

Media coverage

- https://dailynews.co.tz/eac-urged-to-establish-strategic-partners/
- https://kenyanwallstreet.com/eac-gears-for-launch-of-regional-digital-integration-project/
- https://www.kbc.co.ke/eac-partner-states-urged-to-establish-partnerships-collaboration-in-developing-the-internet-we-want/
- https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/east-africa-news/internet-to-drive-eac-digital-economy-4366136