

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

The 9th West African Internet Governance Forum was held at Golden Tulip diplomat in Cotonou, Benin. The two (2) days event attracted stakeholders across the nations for dialog on digital security for socio economic 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 was done by the Minister for Ministry of Digital Economy and Commission (MENC), Benin.

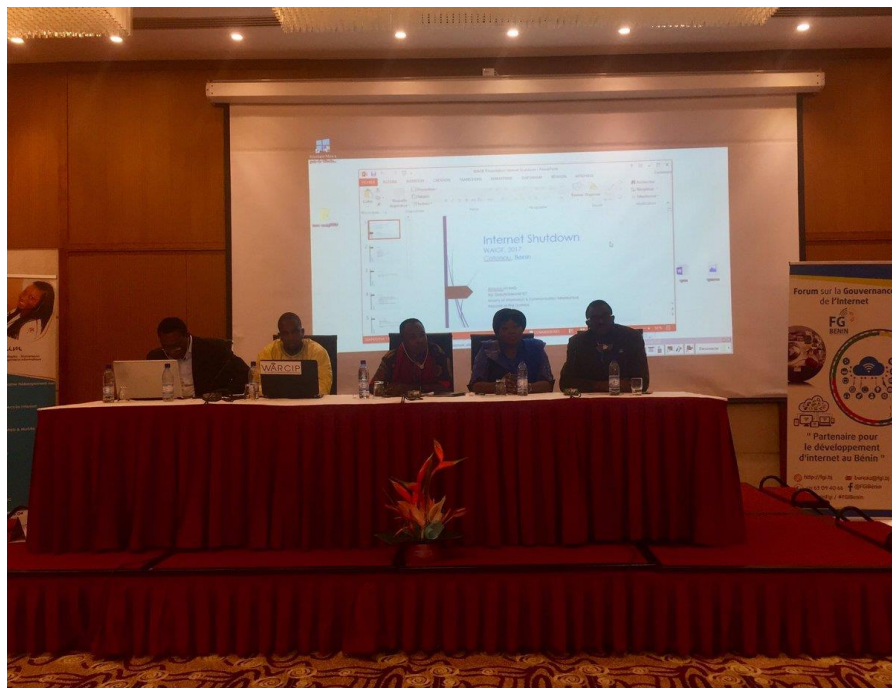


The conference also witnessed the report from the Internet Governance Forum(IGF) countries representatives such as Nigeria, Benin, Chad, Gambia, Togo, Niger, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, etc

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 shutdown 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 Republic of Benin in the fight to protect the users and users information while Sunday Afolayan, AFRINIC President gave a definition of digital security to be a process. He shifted the discussion on digital security from 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 shutdown 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 internet was shutdown in the Gambia and the cost to the Gambia economics. Remmy Nweke, who is the Vice President of African Civil Society on the Information Society (ACSIS) condemned shutdowns of internet and its services as this act have adverse effect on the economic 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 Webfoundation said that internet is for everyone. She further stressed that this exercise affect financing institutions 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 is 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 unknown that makes the government to shut down the internet or its services.

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

Electronic Commerce session was moderated by Ibrahima Nour Diagne, GAINDE, Sengal. 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 inter Africa trade transactions should be encourage and effective payment system with low cost of transaction. And also the free movement of goods to makes ecommerce thrive within ECOWAS.

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 cybercriminals.



Lessons learnt from the 9th West African Internet Governance forum, republic of Benin was that of core rider of African Civil Society on the Information Society (ACSIS); inclusive society, which can't be achieve by abusing the internet through shutdown.

ICTs is the engine for our regional integration, and is the key to communication and development. Also, that public policy for trust is very paramount, safeguard the right to access and making sure there is secure online payment.

[ACSIS] Presentation Summary - Internet Shutdown: A new toga for African States by Remmy Nweke, ACSIS Vice President

Preamble: Of late, there has been a new form of clamp down on the society advocates and citizens, particularly in the sub-Saharan Africa, on of such crackdowns was on the people of Cameroun leaving some 5 million people in the dominantly inaccessible, whilst the government shuts down the Internet.

This, among others attracted global outcry leading to series of petitions across the globe to the government of Cameroun led by Mr. Paul Biya, to listen to the voice or reasoning, culminating the civil rights community of activists realizing that the shutdown style of governance may be assuming another dimension in the leadership of Africa.

More evidently, Internet shut down often occur during the election year and or period for of intense demand for good governance, given the kind of access to information people now have due to the availability of Internet access.

Therefore, it became pertinent for this august occasion of the West African Internet Governance Forum (WAIGF) 2017 to re-assess the access to information and adaptability as Africa yearns for more adoption.

We also recognize the fact that Internet shut down has become a fundamental question on human rights of the citizenry, thus any Internet shut down is a violation of human rights of the Internet users in that country or community.

And given the objective of the African Civil Society for the Information Society (ACSIS) it is important to stress this important which we are confident will arouse some further discussion and solution on how to mitigate this trend for the good and betterment of the continent of Africa.

INTERNET STOP: New Discovery by Akinremi Peter Taiwo African Civil Society for the Information Society (ACSIS, West Africa Coordinator) During 9th West African Internet Governance Forum.

Could we say government does not recognize the impacts of internet shutdowns to the economy and to the common man? Report from Brookings Institute as of 2016 internet shutdowns cost 2.4 billion dollars globally.

And from Global Network Initiative research shows the average per day impacts of a temporary internet shut down and its services to be 23.6 million dollars per 10 million population.

In the fight to prevent blackouts or kill switches that hinder access to application services and internet access, there is a need for clear specification of “who play what” and “who does what” at this 10th West Africa Internet Governance Forum.

The activities and factors that precede, during and after the shutdown should serve as a guide to dialogue towards implementing measures against internet service disruption in the West Africa regions and other parts of Africa e.g The Gambia, Niger, Burundi, Ethiopia, Uganda, Egypt, Sudan, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon.

Internet stop as a new discovery has become a robust tool in the hands of the government bodies to deprive, disrupt and abused users’ right, which is clearly a violation of human right as declared by United Nations Human Rights Council.

Shutdowns of access to the internet and its services should not be categorized as a sudden event, but rather a long term planned event. It’s indeed a discovery which would always be relevant and useful if no objection by the cyber-right and community activists curtail the discovery.

Condemnation and education to the actors behind internet shutdowns is always after the ugly event has occurred. A clear indication of measures absenteeism to prevent shutdown or digital curfew.

Active prevention rather than passive approach to prevent the occurrence of internet shutdown in the West African Countries is a high calling for.