

## DECLARATION ON INTERNET GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA'S DIGITAL ECONOMY

**WE**, the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, meeting at the 30<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the AU Assembly in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 28 to 29 January 2018;

**Acknowledging** that the Internet is an essential tool and a dynamic force for economic, social and cultural development, and recalling in that regard Resolution 26/13 of the Human Rights Council;

**Also acknowledging** that Africa's voice in Internet Governance is critical to the development of Africa's economy and enabling Africa to contribute more effectively to the global economy (and that Africa's economy needs to be significantly extended);

**Recalling** the commitments made during the Geneva and Tunis World Summits on the Information Society in respect of a shared vision of Internet Governance (IG), which led to the adoption of a Declaration of Principles and a working definition of IG;

**Taking into account** the concerns raised by allegations of mass surveillance and violations of the right to privacy in the digital environment and **reaffirming** the commitments made in UN General Assembly resolutions 68/167 and 69/166 to respect and protect the right to privacy, including in the context of digital communication;

**Noting with concern** that less than 20% of Africans are online, that the majority of those not connected are in the rural areas, notably women and the poor, and that the average cost of fixed line and mobile internet exceeds 50% of average per capita income;

**Reaffirming** our commitment to the need for stability, for the safety of citizens and enterprises, confidentiality of online data security, through the AU Convention on Cybersecurity and Personal Data Protection, and taking into account the scalability of Africa's Internet infrastructure;

**Recalling** the commitment of Member States to promote and protect fundamental freedoms, especially the right to freedom of expression and access to information (on and offline), and human and peoples' rights enunciated in instruments of the African Union and of the United Nations **and recognizing** that these rights must be upheld online as well as offline;

**Noting with appreciation** the efforts of the AU, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and civil society organizations, to strengthen the participation of African countries in global Internet Governance and related public policy discussions, which led to the creation of the African Internet Governance Forum;

**Acknowledging** the need for localizing Internet Governance discussions and related public policy matters to enable, develop and support local Internet/Digital economy;

**Noting with satisfaction** the renewal, on 16 December 2015, of the mandate of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), by the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly which had, in addition, welcomed the Internet Governance Forum's role, as a multiparty forum for discussions on these issues and called for the implementation of the recommendations of the Working Group established for the purpose of proposing improvements to the forum (Document A/67/65-E/2012/48 and Corr.1) and the implementation of the texts of the World Summit on the Information Society;

**Recognizing** that multi-stakeholder processes have become an essential and unique approach to engagement in addressing Internet and other policy development processes and to tackling complex issues;

**Conscious** that Internet Governance principles should exemplify and uphold the basic tenets of an open, accessible, resilient, inter-operable Internet, which led to its remarkable success today, and that they should also form the foundation for any future engagements of all stakeholders in national, regional and international Internet-related policy making efforts;

**We Hereby:**

#### **On Internet Governance Principles**

1. **REAFFIRM** that Internet Governance should be inclusive, transparent and accessible to all;
2. **INVITE** all stakeholders to harness the potential of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to help in achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as adopted by the United Nations on 25 September 2015;
3. **ACKNOWLEDGE** the importance of maintaining an open Internet based on open standards development processes, as key enablers for inclusive knowledge and information societies;
4. **REMAIN** committed to facilitating a resilient, unique, universal and interoperable Internet that is accessible to all and will strive to ensure universal and affordable Internet access for all African citizens including people with specific needs;
5. **UPHOLD** the spirit of multi-stakeholder Internet Governance in the Tunis Agenda and **COMMIT** to advance multi-stakeholder approaches that are open, participatory, inclusive, transparent, collaborative, consensus-driven, and that respect cultural, gender and linguistic diversity and which seek to promote

accountability and full participation of governments, the private sector, civil society, the technical community and users. **FURTHER RECOGNIZE** that the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders can vary depending on the issue under consideration;

6. **REQUEST** the Regional Economic Communities (RECs), regional and international organizations involved in Internet and ICT development and regional offices of ECA to play a leading role in, and facilitate, national and regional IGFs in their respective regions;
7. **INVITE** the Commission to reach out to all stakeholders and provide a framework to ensure the active participation of governments, private sector, civil society, and the technical community on a shared footing to Internet Public Policy and Governance related processes/discussions for decision-making.

### **On Africa's Participation in Internet Governance**

8. **REQUEST** the Commission, the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA) and ECA to increase the participation of Member States, Specialized Institutions and RECs in Internet Governance discussions and related public policy processes, including but not limited to those taking place at the UN, AU, ITU, ICANN, IETF, HRC, AFRINIC, ISOC, AfTLD, IGF, Africa IGF, regional and national IGFs;
9. **REQUEST** Member States, Specialized Institutions and RECs to develop in cooperation with NPCA and the Commission mechanisms and channels that allow global debate on Internet Governance to be translated and interpreted into local context and **ENCOURAGE** active and open local and sub-regional contributions from all stakeholders;
10. **ALSO REQUEST** the Commission and NPCA to develop coordination mechanisms with relevant continental institutions such as AFRINIC, AfNOG, AfREN, AfrISPA on matters related to Internet Governance and cyberspace;
11. **ENCOURAGE** Member States to support and encourage the participation of all stakeholders in national and Regional IGFs, which form the foundation stones of the African IGF;
12. **URGE** the Commission and ECA to support the establishment of an Africa Internet Development & Governance Observatory and to put in place mechanisms to track and follow-up on recommendations from the regional and global IGFs and to provide periodic reports to Member States;
13. **URGE** Member States to contribute effectively and take the lead in the establishment of national and regional IGFs and to fully participate in regional IGFs as well as in the African Internet Governance Forum (AfIGF).

### On development of Africa's Digital Economy

14. **UNDERTAKE** to ensure legal and regulatory environments that will enable growth of Africa's Digital economy through innovative applications and services, making the Internet central to Africa's development agenda;
15. **PROMOTE** local content and put in place the necessary mechanisms to ensure equitable distribution of Internet revenues;
16. **FOSTER** partnerships to stimulate investment in ICT and Internet infrastructure;
17. **UNDERTAKE** to ratify the Malabo Convention to combat cybercrimes while promoting personal data protection and respecting human rights within appropriate legal frameworks. In so doing, we will preserve the integrity and reliability of the regional Internet Infrastructure as well as local users' trust and reliance on the Internet for secure electronic transactions;
18. **REQUEST** the Commission and NPCA, in collaboration with other key stakeholders, to assess Africa's digital economy to determine areas that need strengthening or development of new policies in line with stimulating the growth of Africa's Digital economy;
19. **PLEDGE** to work together in the fight against the inappropriate use of ICTs in a bid to reach a consensus, in the medium term, on the best cyber security mechanisms and practices in Africa;
20. **REQUEST** the Commission to work with Member States, partners and stakeholders to enhance Africa's future participation in new gTLDs rounds by examining the factors hampering participation, facilitating the development of business models relevant to Africa and engaging ICANN to lower the barriers to entry for African stakeholders';
21. **ALSO REQUEST** the Commission to work with Member States, the private sector, and other partners to ensure that Africa develops a robust infrastructure to enable effective participation in the global Internet, particularly DNS, the hosting industry, and ensure that Africans are custodians of their data and information;
22. **FURTHER REQUEST** the Commission to work with relevant stakeholders to develop a common African Program of Action on Internet Governance, which will ensure that the rights of Africans on the Internet are promoted and upheld, and that African concerns are recognized in the global Internet Governance regime;

### On Management of Domain Names

23. **UNDERTAKE** to promote the use of country code Top-Level Domains (ccTLDs) as elements of national and continental branding and to ensure that ccTLD registries are operated as public-benefit institutions that can create, nurture and support local critical infrastructure and a local community able to attract investments;
24. **UNDERTAKE** to continue promoting the adoption of IPv6 and to lead by example through its adoption and deployment of IPv6 by ccTLD registries, as well as public departments and agencies' network infrastructures;
25. **REQUEST** the Commission to work in collaboration with concerned institutions to reach agreements with ccTLD registries operated by private individuals or operated by entities outside of national jurisdiction to transfer the registries and enable them to operate as public benefit bodies;
26. **FURTHER REQUEST** the Commission to act as a Clearing House for best practices in the management of ccTLD registries in Africa, and to encourage and facilitate the sharing of lessons learned by Member States in securing national ownership of the operation of their ccTLD registries.

### On Global Internet Governance

27. **URGE** the international community to transform the non-global institutions into more inclusive global institutions that represent all citizens of the world, taking into account the concerns and needs of Africa and other developing countries, while advocating for their continued role as the core of the global Internet governance ecosystem;
28. **REQUEST** the Commission, working through Member States GAC representatives and other stakeholders, to monitor the process of improving IANA adopted in Marrakesh in March 2016;
29. **REAFFIRM** our commitment to work with these organisations and with all partners so that these institutions become more global in their nature.

2018-07-01

# Decision on the dates and venues of the first mid-year coordination meeting of the African Union and the Regional Economic Communities (RECS), the 35th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council and the 38th Ordinary Session of the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC)

African union

African Union

---

<https://archives.au.int/handle/123456789/8151>

*Downloaded from African Union Common Repository*