

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

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African Internet Governance Forum 2022: Africa Strives to Improve Digital Infrastructure, Close the Digital Divide, and Foster Resilience and Security

The African Union Commission (AUC) in collaboration with the Republic of Malawi and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) organised the 11th African Internet Governance Forum (AfIGF 2022) in Lilongwe, Malawi from 19th to 21st July 2022 under the theme *Digital Inclusion and Trust in Africa*.

The Forum brought together high-level officials, dignitaries, and participants drawn from African Union Commission, Member States, UN Organisations, the private sector, academia, and civil society to discuss digitalisation.

Speaking during the occasion, President of the Republic of Malawi H.E. Dr Lazarus Chakwera stated that his government attaches high priority to digitalization. “The vision for a “digital Africa” can only be realized if we invest in indigenous solutions and workforce to drive this transformation. Africa must be a leader in this revolution with its youthful population is already strategically positioned to create tailored made digital solutions for Africa’s problems”. Said the President.

On her part, the African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, H.E. Dr Amani Abou-Zeid said *“Since 2020, digital technologies have proven to be the lifeline that made our communications easy, our work going and businesses functioning.”* “We can’t go back as we need to ensure digitalization is deep-rooted in our economies since our ultimate goal is to create a single digital market for a united Africa”, she added.

According to Commissioner Abou-Zeid Africa is being impacted by the rapidly-changing global economic and political conditions apart from the Pandemic, shedding light on how the Russia-Ukraine Crisis is affecting the continent. *“I believe what matters the most now are two things: Resilience and Security. I can’t think of any other sectors that can have powerful impacts to foster resilience and address energy security than ‘digitalisation’ and ‘energy’ to ensure food and energy security for the future generation.”*

Briefing journalists on the sidelines of the Forum Commissioner Amani underlined the need for Africa to devise ways to keep pace with the increasing demand for digital infrastructure, bridge connectivity gaps, especially the urban-rural disparity and address the gender digital divide and create decent jobs for Africa's younger population. “We have a young population with about 65 per cent of working age. We do believe that Africa has all to offer to young people when it is integrated. I call upon regional and international partners to invest in the bankable and impactful projects under Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA) which packages regional and continental priorities in the energy, transport and digital sectors”.

The Forum was specifically tailored towards four major thematic areas including, affordable and meaningful access, cybersecurity, privacy and personal data protection, digital skills and human capacity development, and digital infrastructure and was preceded by three events: the School on Internet Governance, the Youth African IGF and a Parliamentary Symposium.

During the inaugural African Parliamentary Symposium held on the margins of the forum, Mr Adil Sulieman Senior Policy Officer with AUC Infrastructure and Energy Department emphasized that the increasingly digital and data-driven information society comes with new risks and challenges and therefore needs new rules that would generate trust, protect and secure data across the entire value chain, particularly for the vulnerable and marginalized groups including children, women, the elderly and the physically and mentally challenged people.

Honourable Gospel Kazaro, Minister of Information and Digitalisation of Malawi for his part noted that “Such forums are very important and serve as an opportunity for all of us in Africa and beyond to learn from each other on common issues in the digital space that demand policy interventions, coordination and collaboration.”

The African stakeholders present in this year's forum committed themselves to actively participating in the development and adoption of norms, regulations, policies, standards and protocols within Africa for data protection, privacy, cybersecurity and overall internet governance needs in Africa with special emphasis on the Malabo convention, the implementation African Union Digital Transformation strategy for Africa 2020 – 2030, the African Union Data Policy Framework and the digital imperatives of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)”.

Note to the editor:

About The African Internet Governance Forum

The African Internet Governance Forum is Africa's multistakeholder forum of Internet actors. Formally launched in Nairobi, during the global Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in 2011, it carries the voices and efforts of the African continent to the global agenda while ensuring the benefits of a viable information society accrue to every African citizen.

Learn more at: <https://afigf.africa/>

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