

DYNAMIC COALITION OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES IN THE INTERNET ECONOMY

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Presented by DC-SIDS co-Chairs:
Maureen Hilyard, Cook Islands, and Tracy Hackshaw, Trinidad & Tobago

Pacific Report to The Dynamic Coalition of Small Island Developing States in The Internet Economy.

Maureen Hilyard: President, Cook Islands Internet Action Group; Chair, At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC, ICANN); Chair, DotAsia Board of Directors; Member, Pacific Islands Chapter of the Internet Society (PICISOC); Member of the Public Interest Registry (.org) Advisory Committee (PIRAC); Diplo Foundation IG Graduate.

Pacific DC-SIDS reported to the DC-SIDS session of the VIRTUAL Global IGF, 6 November 2020.

1. COVID-19 forced many in the Pacific and no doubt other SIDS to adapt to working from home and using the Internet more than they have done before for both work and general communication. The PICISOC mailing list became very much more a means of connecting with others across the Pacific
2. The only face to face activities took place in Melbourne in February. They included the AGM of the APTLD with whom PICISOC signed an MOU during their meeting. Other events occurring in Melbourne at the same time and attended by other Pacific members were the APRICOT/APNIC meeting and the meeting of the Oceania Cyber Security Centre. Following on from this latter gathering, Cherie Lagakali was appointed to the Advisory Committee of the Global Forum of Cyber Expertise (GFCE) and is developing a regional hub in the Pacific.
3. Security was also raised as an issue within Vanuatu especially in the areas of data protection, the security framework and cybersecurity legislation. Discussion related to these issues have also included high government involvement. The COVID-19 situation also encouraged the importance of government priority for connecting the unconnected and focusing on education and the need for enabling remote connections for students with their teachers.
4. Preparations were initiated by PICISOC and APTLD at their Melbourne meeting, in collaboration with InternetNZ, APNIC, ICANN, Internet Society and other regional partners, for a Pacific IGF to be held in Fiji in September 2021.
5. There was good participation from the Pacific in the first Virtual APRIGF held in September, and originally planned for Kathmandu, Nepal. The theme was “Internet Governance for Good” although the impact of covid-19 was a feature of many of the sessions. A major output of the APRIGF is a Synthesis Document which contains thoughts by those who attended the APRIGF related to the main theme and other related sub-themes. The Synthesis Document will be presented to the IGF Secretariat.
6. Other regional PICISOC initiatives have included
 - a. a webinar series (e-Talanoa) discussing issues of interest to the Pacific – there have been three sessions during 2020 The topics have included Open Source Software, Cybersecurity and Education, coordinated by former Board member, Will Tibben.
 - b. The formation of a Pacific Women in ICT group that now has 60+ members who discuss IT-related issues of interest to women in the Pacific. There have been two zoom sessions and numerous interactions on the mailing list.
 - c. A collaboration between the Pacific Disability Forum and the DC Accessibility was coordinated by PICISOC Board member, Georgina Naigulevu and the executive officers of the DC Accessibility.

- d. The establishment of a PICISOC Education Special Interest Group (SIG) which is being coordinated by PICISOC member, Andrew Erbs.
7. ICANN related activities – as well as notifications and newsletters, Pacific participants have been encouraged to participate in online learning via ICANN Learn and the Virtual School of Internet Governance to learn more about engaging with ICANN and IG initiatives, as well as capacity building webinars which explain more about policy issues.
8. Successes of SIDS members in leadership roles were mentioned to demonstrate that the voice of SIDS in forums such as ICANN can lead to leadership positions within it - notably from the At-Large community after the ICANN AGM 2020:
 - a. Maureen Hilyard – ALAC Chair (Cook Islands) for third year
 - b. Pua Hunter – Vice Chair GAC (Cook Islands) for second year
9. Another significant development in the Pacific was the installation of a fibre-optic cable connection between French Polynesia (Tahiti) to Samoa, but also connecting the main islands of the Cook Islands (Rarotonga and Aitutaki) and Niue along the way. The Cook Islands and Niue, along with the Tokelau Islands, are territories of New Zealand who provided a considerable grant towards the cost of the cable connection. The newly connected islands’ internet users await the connection of the “last mile”.
10. With the passing of the Cook Islands Telecommunications Act 2019 and the arrival of the Telecommunications Regulator, four more ISPs were granted licenses to operate during November 2020. This finally breaks decades of monopoly ISP delivery and no competition. Already internet users are being offered a range of options for internet access and other new services.
11. The Internet Society’s Community Network Exchange (CNX APAC) which was held over 6 days from Nov 20 – Dec 4 involved Pacific participants from Fiji, Vanuatu, Cook Islands and Niue. The sessions they participated in as presenters or moderators included: Policy and Regulation for Mass Adoption of Community Network; Gender Sensitive Community Networking; Connecting Indigenous Communities; and Partnerships and Collaborations for Community Networks



Some of the DC-SIDS speakers and participants at the virtual IGF 2020

Caribbean Report to the Dynamic Coalition of Small Island Developing States in the Internet Economy.

Tracy Hackshaw, Director, Trinidad and Tobago Multistakeholder Advisory Group (TTMAG); Chair-Elect, ICANN Nominating Committee (2020-2021); Research and Teaching Faculty - Diplo Foundation (Internet & Digital Policy, Internet Governance; Founding Vice Chair (2011-2017) and Chair (2017-2019), Internet Society Trinidad & Tobago Chapter.

In the Caribbean, [as with other SIDS](#), 2020 proved to be an extraordinarily challenging year due to the health impacts of the pandemic, and the resulting economic fallout within the tourism-dependent islands of the region.

Prior to the full onset of the pandemic, Trinidad and Tobago held a successful in person [2020 Trinidad and Tobago Internet Governance Forum \(TTIGF\)](#) on Friday January 31 2020 at the Naparima College Auditorium, San Fernando from 9am to 5pm. The theme of #TTIGF2020 was **“The Internet & YOU: Ensuring the Internet’s future”**.

#TTIGF2020 consisted of an introductory session which featured remarks from Vint Cerf, Chief Internet Evangelist, Google, Anriette Esterhuysen, Chair, United Nations Internet Governance Forum’s Multistakeholder Advisory Group and Senator the Honourable Allyson West, Minister of Public Administration, Ministry of Public Administration along with two panel sessions, a youth-led Collaborative Exchange on “The Future of the Internet” and an Open Forum.

The two panel sessions featured healthy discussions on “Fake News & its Impact on YOU”, and “Data Hosting: Locally or Internationally?” while the youth-led Collaborative Exchange, “The Future of the Internet”, covered key topics which were selected by and facilitated by youth:

- The GOOD, the BAD and the POTENTIAL of Online Communities
- Big Tech
- Internet Pollution
- Encrypting Data
- IT for Clean Energy
- Social Media and YOU

Unfortunately, not long following this event, on 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) [declared that COVID-19 was a pandemic](#), with [cases appearing in several countries in the Caribbean](#) during the month of March 2020. This effectively put a brake on a planned schedule of activities in the region, first diverting attention away from what might be termed the “traditional” trajectory of Internet Governance related discussions and global participation, towards more critical issues of using technology to facilitate critical issues such as remote work, online learning, telehealth/telemedicine, and increasingly, digital commerce and digital business/entrepreneurship. However, the long festering challenges that the region continues to face did not take long to make its presence felt, by way of access, infrastructure, inclusion and digital literacy.

Among the increasing avalanche of online meetings, webinars, conferences and discussions that accompanied the pandemic-induced restrictions on movement, the [2020 Caribbean Internet Governance Forum \(CIGF\)](#) was held online from 26-28 August 2020 and it sought to tackle these very issues head-on with the theme **“Accelerating Digital Transformation – Internet Governance Matters!”**.

#CIGF2020 was attended by more than 72 registered participants from the Government, private sector, civil society, academia and technical community stakeholder groups. These participants hailed from at least 10

Caribbean territories as well as the United States of America, Canada and the United Kingdom and addressed topics such as:

- The impact of COVID-19 on Regional and Global Internet Governance
- Accelerating e-Government – Rapidly Transitioning Government Services Online – Trials, Successes and Lessons
- Accelerating Electronic Commerce – e-Payments, e-Money and Online Transactions
- Clouds in the Caribbean Sky – Data Sovereignty, Security and Privacy for Local Online Services
- Sun, Sea and Masks – IG & Caribbean Tourism in the New Normal

At #CIGF2020, it was noted that countries, organizations and end-users have all had to rely more heavily on digital services as COVID-19-related public health and social distancing requirements catalysed adoption of remote working methods. No sector has escaped impact. The role of ICTs has therefore never been more important, and the need for effective, locally relevant Internet governance never more urgent.

Despite the enormous challenges faced by SIDS in the Caribbean in 2020, members of the DC-SIDS were still able to carve out time to participate in a series of virtual regional activities including, but not limited to:

- The ARIN/CARIBNOG Webinar Series - [COVID-19 & the Caribbean Internet](#)
- The ARIN/CTU Webinar Series (July 2020) - [Accelerating 21st Century Government in the Caribbean](#)
- The [CANTO Conversations Webinar Series](#)
- The [2020 Virtual Island Summit](#) in September 2020
- [CANTO Connect](#) in September 2020 (a virtual event for the Telecommunications sector replacing CANTO 2020, the traditional Annual major Conference & Exhibition which was scheduled to be held in Miami, USA)

These, in addition to the virtual events held by ICANN and of course, the United Nations Internet Governance Forum, at the end of 2020.