

# **THE AFRICAN UNION OPEN FORUM 2019**

**April 2019**

# I. Background

The African Internet Governance Forum (AfIGF) was formally launched by the African Union and the UN Economic Commission for Africa on 30 September 2011 during the 6<sup>th</sup> Internet Governance Forum, held in Nairobi, Kenya. From that date, AfIGF has been organized successfully every year.

Experience gained during the various AfIGF conferences, demonstrated that in order to translate the recommendations of AfIGF into concrete actions by African member States and other regional stakeholders, it was necessary that diplomatic leverage be applied to the African Union political leadership to further advance the African stakeholders' ambitions and aspirations. This prompted the 4<sup>th</sup> ordinary session of the African Union Conference of Ministers in charge of Communication and Information Technologies (CITMC-4) held in Sudan in September 2012 to request Member States ‘*to support the establishment of national IGF to create dialogue between all stakeholders on ICT for development issues and facilitate the countries' participation in the regional and African IGF processes as well as in the global IGF*’.

The Khartoum declaration led to the stepping up of IGFs at all levels on the continent while at the same time underlining the geopolitical and strategic importance of the process, which prompted preparation by all stakeholders of the Declaration on Internet Governance and the African Digital Economy, adopted by the African Union Head of States in their January 2018 Summit. This declaration is seen as a means to strengthen the Internet Governance processes in Africa and involvement of the African Union in IG processes globally.

## II. African IGF Open Forum 2017

The African Union organized the African IGF Open Forum on 20 December 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland. It was attended by 95 participants.

The main aim of the Open Forum was to facilitate exchange of good practices between African sub-regional IGFs (Central Africa, North Africa, and West Africa), on their

processes, especially the successes and failures and the way forward, taking into account the multistakeholder dimension of IGF and to share the Key achievements of the 6<sup>th</sup> African IGF, held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, under the theme “*Enabling an Inclusive Digital Transformation of Africa*”.

The Forum was also used to discuss implementation of the African IGF Charter, the African Union Declaration on Internet Governance and the African Union project on IG Capacity Building.

In view of the success of the 2017 Open Forum, the African Union organized an Open Forum in 2018.

### **III. African Union Open Forum 2018**

The African Union Open Forum 2018 was held on 13 November 2018 from 15H00-16H00 in Paris, France, at UNESCO, Room VIII. The room was full and potential participants could not enter and were kindly requested by the Security Officers to leave.

The main objectives of the forum were to discuss implementation of the African IGF Charter, including the AfIGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group (AFIGF-MAG); discuss implementation of the African Union Declaration on Internet Governance and; secure views of participants on the exchange of information, including use of the African IGF e-platform.

The key issues discussed were as follows:

- High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation to take into account the views and needs of the African stakeholders and to cooperate closely with the African Union to organize African consultations.
- Setting up of the engendering process of panels during the African IGF annual meetings.
- Setting up of a digital week during the annual African IGF
- Production of a yearly report of African Internet Connectivity.

## **IV. African IGF Open Forum 2019**

The African Union plans to convene the 8<sup>th</sup> African Internet Governance Forum in October 2018. The annual conference will be followed by the African Union Open Forum 2019 to be held in Berlin in the framework of the global IGF.

The AU Open Forum aims at discussing digital inclusion in order to review accomplishments of the African IGF 2019, especially the segments related to Community Network; Access; and Economic Development. The Forum will also discuss the Internet Governance Capacity Building activities of the AU-EU Project entitled Policy and Regulatory Initiative for Digital Africa (PRIDA), which focuses on digital inclusion. The Forum will be linked to the SDGs, especially Goals 8, 9, 10 and 17.

Like in 2018, the African Union Open Forum is expected to be attended by a broad stakeholders' representation across government, private sector, academia, technical communities, civil society, media, regional and international organizations.

Panelists will be derived from: AfIGF 2019 host country, the African Union Commission (Moctar Yedaly & Adil Sulieman), the secretariat of the African IGF (Makane Faye), the AfIGF-MAG (Mary Uduma, Aicha Chebbi Jeridi, Lilian Nalwoga), African sub-regional IGFs, etc.

At the end of the Forum it is expected that the voices of all stakeholders on IG issues will be heard and that the way forward to the African IGF 2020 and the global IGF is drawn.