



REPORT

FIRST NATIONAL INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM - TOGO

THEME: « Internet in Togo: Which Impact? How to get the best benefit from it? »

April 18, 2011

CEDEAO Conference Room, CASEF, Lomé

Organized by the Togolese coordination of the West Africa Internet Governance Forum

In partnership with OSIWA FOSSFA APC WAIGF ISOC-TOGO ATULL OPIM-TOGO

1. FOREWORD

The Togolese coordination of the West Africa Internet Governance Forum (WAIGF), with support from OSIWA, FOSSFA, APC, WAIGF, ISOC-TOGO, OPIM-TOGO, organized the first ever Internet Forum in Togo on April 18, 2011 in Lomé.

The event brought together sixty people from students and youth organizations, local NGOs representatives working for Human Rights and Environment advocacy, the local Internet technical community, representatives from ISPs and media professionals.

The forum aimed to create a framework to discuss and reflect on Internet development issues in Togo, identified relevant stakeholders, and collect ideas and recommendations from the Network users' perspective to strengthen the dialogue process among all involved stakeholders.

This report shade some light on topics brought onto the discussion table and the preliminary conclusions.

2. OPENING CEREMONY

The forum was opened at 9:00' by Nahmsath Yabouri, WAIGF National Coordinator. In his opening remarks, he talked about the history of the Internet Governance Forum established in 2005 during the second phase of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis. The National Coordinator further exposed topics discussed from Athena (Greece) in 2006 to Vilnius (Lithuania) in 2010, and stressed on the recommendations from the last West Africa Internet Governance Forum held in August 2010 in Dakar which encourage the organization of a national forum in Togo. The goal of the forum was recalled and participants were informed about the importance of opening and sustaining a discussion space on Internet related issues, thus help make the Internet a tool for the development of the Togolese society.

The National Coordinator took the opportunity to acknowledge the financial support and the important role OSIWA is playing in West Africa for the advent of open societies through the advocacy of adequate and efficient participation in public affairs. He further emphasized the emerging cooperation with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) through the participation of their Global Connectivity Project Manager, M. Ben Akoh, who brought in his technical support for the success of the event. The National Coordinator concluded his address expressing hope to see the forum being a rich discussions platform among stakeholders of Internet matters.

3. THE FORUM

Under the facilitation of M. Wilfried Toussiné AKAKPO, a young and talented web entrepreneur, the following items were developed during the forum:

1. Setting the scene: the objectives of the forum
2. Trends of IG in West Africa

3. Findings from a recent survey on the perception of the Internet by Togolese
4. Panel discussions with distinguished guests around specific topics like ***Internet Critical Resources Management, Security and Privacy, Social Networks, ICT Journalism and online Citizenship***
5. Workshops followed by plenary discussions
6. Harmonization of recommendations

The first communication was delivered by Nahmsath Yabouri who addressed the current trends of Internet Governance in West Africa, based on recent findings from research conducted by IISD during the third quarter of the year 2010 in five (5) West African countries. The main conclusion was on ***the crucial need to open a public debate on Internet development issues*** in West Africa and in Togo.

The second communication delivered by Ben Akoh from IISD, presented the raw findings from a survey conducted from April 06 to 17, to deepen the understanding of the Internet Governance issues in Togo. From the eighty (80) respondents' opinion, the following was recorded:

1. Access cost seems very high for education institutions and companies
2. Broad band Internet is not available for the majority in Togo
3. A majority of respondents seems to be concerned by security issues related to business on the Internet
4. Government and public authorities should play a vital role in the development of policies related to the Internet
5. Respondents seem to agree on the need of public and multistakeholder consultations on the decision making process that should lead the Internet development in Togo.

The pertaining discussions raised the issues of *lack of consistent rules and regulation on the use of Internet services in Togo, high access cost, weak throughput (bandwidth) of the network, lack of advocacy on the benefits to be online, specific needs of different stakeholders.*

The forum continued through a panel around the following specific topics:

1. Internet Critical Resources Management,
2. Security and Privacy on the Internet
3. Social Networks and ICT Journalism
4. Social Networks and online citizenship

The following distinguished guests from the Togolese Internet community took part of the panel:

- M. Gerry TAAMA, writer and blogger (www.gerrytaama.net)
- M. Noël TADEGNON, journalist and blogger (www.tadegnon.info)
- M. Fabrice K. Danam BAGOLIBE, Vice President ISOC Togo (www.isoc.tg)
- M. Alain Patrick AINA, Special Project Manager, AfriNIC (www.afrinic.net)

During the panel, questions were asked mainly on the following:

1. the average percentage of Togolese that have access to the Internet (5% according to ITU 2010 sources);
2. the benefits of Internet for Journalists;
3. the perception of the Internet by the average user and the risks to which he is exposed;
4. critical internet resources (IP addresses and .tg ccTLD) and their management in Togo;
5. challenges faced by local telecommunication operators and ISPs;
6. the quality of services;
7. the regulation on the use of the Internet;
8. major challenges to sustain the development of the Internet in the country;
9. the vision of stakeholders for the future of Internet in Togo.

A the end of the panel, some participants had the opportunity to make inputs or ask clarifying questions.

BRIEF SYNTHESIS OF THE PANEL DISCUSSIONS

- ***Togo lack legal instruments to rule the use of the Internet***
- ***High access cost and weak telecom infrastructure prevent access to the majority***
- ***Internet seems a luxury in the collective mind for the majority of Togolese***
- ***There is no existing consultation mechanism for stakeholders on Internet issues***
- ***Internet scares some stakeholders (parents, politics, religious leaders)***
- ***Connectivity equipments remain expensive (computers, electricity)***
- ***The use of mobile phone to access Internet remains weak and insignificant***
- ***Public authorities must invest in the improvement of infrastructure related to the Internet***

Further, participants were asked to reflect on the future of the Internet in Togo through a scenario-based exercise using the following pattern:

- 1- **What is your vision of the Internet in the best-case scenario for the next 10 years?**
- 2- **What are the worst-case scenarios of the Internet for the next 10 years?**
- 3- **How do you envisage the Internet led by the Market for the next 10 years?**
- 4- **How do you see the Internet led by Government for the next 10 years?**

The wealthy discussions generated by this exercise resulted in interesting outputs submitted for analysis to four groups expressly formed in situ to bring tentative recommendations that will be consolidated in a separate document to enlighten further the IG process in Togo.

4. CLOSING THE FORUM AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The forum ended around 1:30 PM by a closing remark from the National Coordinator and a vote of thanks to the partners and the participants for their commitment. The National Coordinator expressed hope to see the discussions continue online on WAIGF-Togo mailing list hosted at <https://lists.waigf.org/mailman/listinfo.cgi/waigf-togo> and then **mark the beginning of a permanent discussions space on Internet issues in Togo**. The Forum websites www.fgi-togo.tg and www.waigf.org were also advertised.

While Minister of Telecommunication representatives did not attend the forum for unforeseen reasons, it is worth noting that **CAFE Informatique** (www.cafe.tg), the first ever ISP which brought Internet to Togolese for the first time in 1997, was represented by its CEO in persona, M. Jean-Marie NOUAGBODJI who expressed his availability to support the consultation process in Togo. However, the report of the event was shared with the Cabinet of the Minister of Telecommunication, and the proceedings are being finalized to serve as a reference document and for wide dissemination.

*It is also an opportunity to thank media professional who covered widely the event, specifically the national TV (TVT: www.tvt.tg) and the national newspaper (Togo Presse) through a two (2) minutes features broadcasted twice in the evening of April 18, 2011, and a quarter paper report in the newspaper N°8521 of April 20, 2011 respectively. The National Coordinator was also the special guest at a thirty (30) minutes TV programme called "**Chronique des Nouvelles Technologies**" on the following Saturday of the event. We further acknowledge the commitment of the facebook group "ETTIC" (Espace Togolais pour les TICs) which advertised widely the facebook event of the Forum (<http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=143400425725254>) and lively participated in the remote discussions.*