

# **The 9<sup>th</sup> African Virtual Internet Governance Forum (vAfIGF2020)**

## **Day 1 Plenary Session 2 Report**

*(Please avoid reporting in bullet points; report in narrative form is mandatory)*

**Session Title: Unlocking The Digital Potentials of The DLDC**

**Date & Time: Thursday, November 26, 2020| 9:40am GMT**

**Moderator: Jimson Olufuye, PhD**, Founder and fmr Chairman of AfICTA, CEO Kontemporary Consulting

**Online Moderator: Tola Sogbesan**, CEO Axiom Consulting

**Rapporteurs: Kayode Oyeyemi**, SPO, Africa ICT Alliance - AfICTA  
**Dada Samuel**, PO, Africa ICT Alliance - AfICTA

### **Names of panelists:**

**Abdul-Hakeem Ajijola (AhA)**

Chair, Consultancy Support Services Ltd

**Lily Ednam**

Community Engagement, Hacklab Foundation

**Dr. Kossi AMESSINOU**

Ministry of Planning and Development, Benin

**Dr. Nnenna Ifeanyi-Ajufo**

Senior Lecturer in Law and Technology, African Union Cyber Security Experts Group (AUSCEG)/Swansea University

**Mr. Jerry Shikule**

Enterprise Sales Lead, Africa, Craft Silicon, Kenya

### **Questions:**

1. Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic which has led to the shutdown of many countries in Africa, an important and on-going discussion is how to build a more robust and resilient African economy. a. How do we ensure that all stakeholder groups collaborate, prioritize, and invest in the needed digital infrastructure and skills? b. What strategies and policies need to be articulated and implemented to proactively prepare DLDC in the case of a similar recurrence and how do we mitigate the adverse effects through a more resilient supply chain in a digital economy?
2. How can the DLDC evolve digital cooperation initiatives that encompass the industry 4 technologies and related methods such as smart manufacturing, Internet of Things, and environmental sustainability for the benefit of its citizens in the area of job creation and economic survivability?

**Dr Jimson Olufuye** opened the session introducing all the speakers before posing the first question to all the panel.



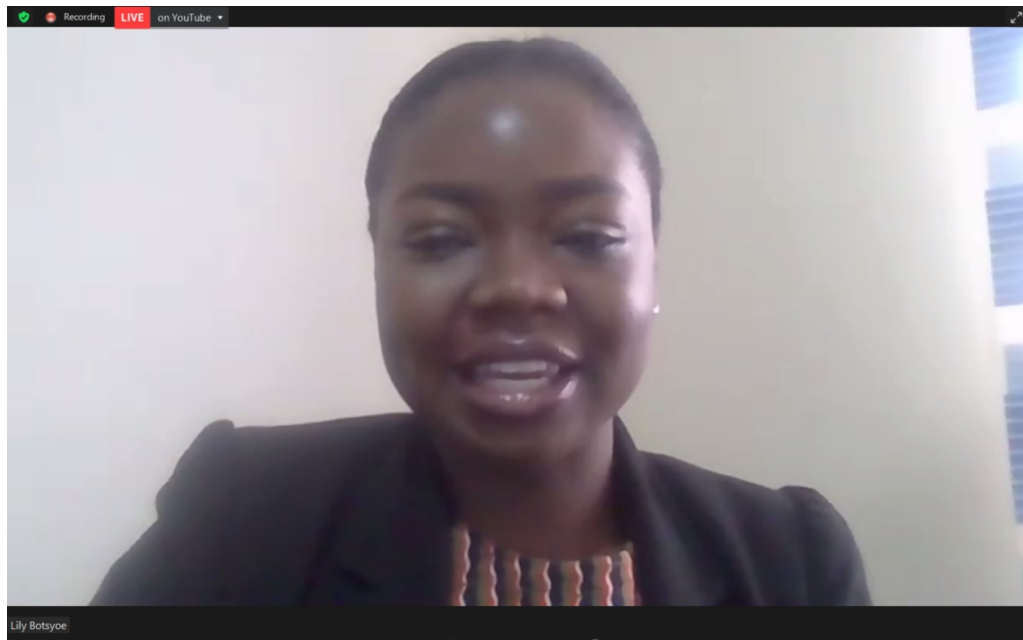
**Mr Abdul-Hakeem Ajijola:**



Nations in Africa can not afford to squander 50% of its population (the women), so, we need to mobilize that demographic and within the other 50%, we can argue that 47% constitutes the youth which has been underutilized so far in the continent. As Africans, we need to have a paradigm shift in the way we view the necessity for capacity building. Firstly, we need to begin to see cybersecurity itself as a profit center and revenue generating sector as opposed to an organization counter measure cost center. It is noteworthy to mention that the African Cybersecurity solutions market is estimated at 2.3 Billion dollars in 2020 and is expected to grow to about 4.6 billion by 2025 hence, indicating the massive potentials for jobs creation, wealth creation and in turn tax revenue streams for the Government. Cybersecurity also provides an opportunity to establish sustainable local and indigenous solutions for SMEs driven primarily by youth. "It would be in our best interest to ensure that the good enterprises out

recruit the bad actors in the cyberspace”.

**Ms Lily Ednam:**



Ensuring that ideas thrive digitally in the 4th industrial revolutions, the 2nd specific objective of African Digital strategy 2020-2030 comes to mind - <https://www.aftld.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Digital-Transformation-Strategy-for-Africa.pdf>. Perhaps the most interesting outcome of this objective is its plan to take Africa from the consumer-oriented mindset of ICT and technology to a more Provider-oriented mindset that sets us at the forefront of innovation and local content creation on the continent.

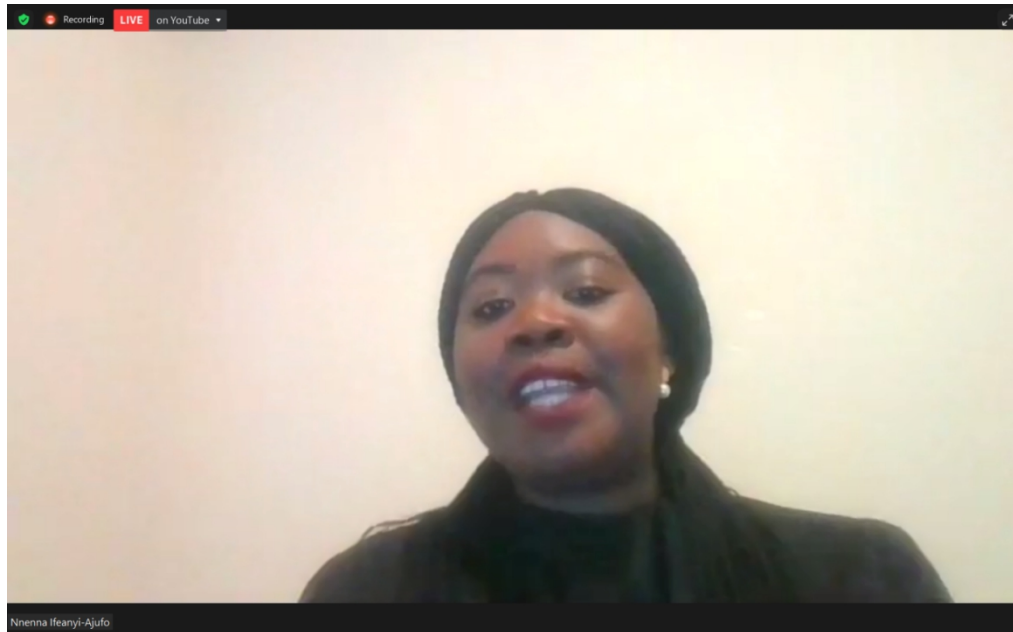
We need to look at how to make stakeholders collaborate more to further the objective of digital growth and help the continent thrive digitally in the face of the pandemic. Its imperative that we focus on the:- low level investments in Research & Development, low enrollment rates in higher education, limited skilled labour and inadequate policy frameworks that promote progress, because these factors play major roles in the low creativity and innovation we are facing amongst the youth in Africa. Tackling the problem of low investments in the right digital infrastructure would require better access to information has to be prioritized, open data access policies need to be adopted across the continents to achieve this. The greater the investment in R & D the broader the scope for innovation which drives economic growth of the DLDC. To build a resilient structure chain in the Internet space, we need not only focus on the infrastructure, but also building capacity that well equipped to handle the infrastructure. A multi-stakeholder cooperation strategy needs to be implemented in this regard to avoid reinventing wheels and for better multi-stakeholder implementation. We must ensure we communicate the information to all relevant stakeholders the right way. Finally, in our strides at improving digitally, data affordability has to be tackled to ensure complete inclusion across the continent.

**Dr Kossi AMESSINOU:**



COVID-19 really showed the importance of the Internet considering the adverse effect it had on the operation of most economies. As such, the governance of the Internet becomes a very critical subject. It is highly significant that we ensure that Internet access is never impeded because it is essential to countries in the continent. I recommend we also endorse the inter-network synergy approach developed by researchers in all policy framework designs that permits technical operators at the infrastructure level to be included in the policy regulation map up of any sector in the economy. As government entities, we need to ensure viable collaborations with all the stakeholder groups that are participants to the cyberspace and Internet market and guarantee their voices count, most especially the private sector who are more informed to the advantages of the Internet and how to better serve the interests of the consumer(the people). African countries also need to adopt the inter-network synergy strategy at a national level for knowledge sharing purposes in the continent.

## Dr. Nnenna Ifeanyi-Ajufo:



The preparedness of DLDC for the post COVID-19 era hinges on the increased diffusion of digital infrastructure and skills which entails 2 factors: the technological factor and the regulatory factors. The extent to which the agenda of the digital diffusion can be pushed is dependent on the multi-stakeholder support through both international & regional cooperation and measures which enables the advancement of effective policies and strategies.

Countries in Africa need to engage with multiple stakeholders in a manner that produces a ripple that transforms into effective policies and strategies. It will be illusory to state that we are lacking in policies in Africa but to expand on the discussion of policies, is the lack of the conceptual clarity on the implementation plans for these policies. We need to realign and revise our policies to prioritize digital transformation in terms on our contemporary reality and the new norm.

The COVID 19 pandemic shows that we need to replace our short sighted unprepared approaches with sustainable development plans to prevent a bleak digital future. In order to address digital inclusion, we need to develop regional access & service policies which ensure the availability of digital infrastructure and skills on equal footing for everyone. The regional policy would focus on 3 main points: **a.** Basic connection:- redefining what constitutes basic Internet connection and how its is easily accessible to all people in Africa. **b.** Value of Public information through digital technology:- which would include government information, vital community information, services, health information (just like the COVID-19 highlighted) etc. **c.** Compulsory digital Education.

**Policies on National jurisdiction:** Governments need to go back to table to put into consideration, the right to development and approach conceptions and issues related to the digital economy from the standpoint of a fundamental human right which is binding.

**Legislation & Regulation:** often times, governments in Africa don't to understand the dynamics of digital economy and therefore fail to understand the effect of the legislation they draft. We



need to begin to see the correlation between policies on data regulation and cybersecurity and how they affect our digital transformation plans and strategies.

**Market Regulation & Liberalization:** The regulation of digital markets can't continue to persist as they tend to beget monopolistic digital markets that hinder competitiveness and innovation hence stunts digital growth. Government should ensure that all stakeholders - ISP, ICT providers not only provide affordable and competitive prices for services but also feed into the regulatory process.

Finally, governments also need to review existing laws and policies for better preparation for a re-occurrence and mitigating adverse effects of a pandemic in the future.

### **Mr Jerry Shikule:**



Although utilization of digital channels in Africa has increased, the lack of Internet penetration suppresses the benefits and potentials for digital transformation on a large scale. Infrastructure and content go hand-in-hand. For example, Internet penetration across Africa is still quite low and to improve this, Government need to partner with the private sector. The most viable partnership ,is one with the Telcos because they have found ways to reach the last mile which is the end users.

To grow consumption of content, we need transition from the traditional USSD content to digital content on smart phones. Increasing the smart phone penetration creates avenues for exploitation of digital resources and content. Increase in consumption consequentially increases the creation of local content and reduce the consumption of external providers. The pandemic provide may opportunities including; provision of revenue generating streams on the Internet as people spend more time on the Internet now., with the provision for consumption comes the need for data regulation just like the policy enacted in Kenya that provides protection for consumers data from private companies who tend to abuse this information.

Beyond data regulation and control, we also see opportunities for creation of hubs for new entrance into the employment market so that they can develop data and solutions that can be used in the fin-tech sector, telecommunications sector & agricultural sector.

**Dr Jimson Olufuye** posed the 2<sup>nd</sup> question on the topic to the panelists.

**Mr Abdul-Hakeem Ajijola:**

Perspectives and framing is key when we talk about co-operation. For instance, cybersecurity can be viewed from a national security standpoint or a digital economy risk management standpoint. These antithetical perspectives pose the question of leadership on the issue at hand. The leadership on digital cooperation is very important, because it determines how we interact with other parts of the world in term of industry 4 technologies, IOT etc. When different perspectives are brought forward in the interactions for adopting initiatives for industry 4 technologies say the national security lens vs an an development opportunity and economic lens which most potential partners tend to see it from, then we risk having a mismatch for digital cooperation strategies.

We also need to address legislation whose primary function by the way is to empower the technical regulators due to the fact that regulators have more flexible and nuanced insight. Often, we see cyberspace as an infinite endless landscapes for end users and bad actors but legislators are still bound by boarder jurisdiction and laws. Its important that African legislators understand that legislation should principally be able to empower regulators. Taking Nigeria as a case study, we have a data protection policy drafted by the legislators but they deliberately devolved enforcement of the regulation to the Private sector which has thereby created a sustainable private sector ecosystem that creates thousands of job for Nigerians. So, the method we employ in developing legislation, empowering regulators and enforcing the regulation largely determines and enables our cooperation on Internet 4 technologies and IOT. Government and legislators need to look at how to empower good actors because we tend to over regulate in Africa and it stifles development.

**Lily Ednam:**

Around the world, people are working to make their Internet spaces a large extension of who they are, and so they try to mimic right and regulations offline to the online environment. Regulations has to give more room for innovation so long as they don't breach digital rights. Pertaining to the discussion around evolution in the industry 4 era, Africa needs to begin pivoting, yes, pivoting in the sense that we need to not only make people digitally empowered and skilled but also literate so they not only understand the benefits and use of digital technologies to make things easier for themselves but also empower themselves and create jobs.

At Hacklabs Foundations Labs, we have hackathons and during these code competitions, we saw a lot of solutions developed by young Africans, this was largely due to fact that they saw people who inspired them to solve those problems and also inform them on solutions that are specific to critical needs in Africa rather than shelved futuristic ideas.

**Dr Kossi AMMESSINOU:**

Its not only important to look at initiatives for cooperation on emerging technologies but also look at management of data. From a governmental perspective, cooperation is important hence the need for liberalization but for liberalization to be sustainable, we need good legislation on data. We need to have policy makers on the same table with private sector, civil society etc so all ideas can be heard to better advice decisions of the government. For instance, in the e-commerce, what trust can be built for online payments when we don't have geolocalization of customers correctly. So, we, the government, need collaboration with start-ups working on these solutions that help build trust and privacy of citizens to inform us on the right policies to

protect customers.

**Dr Nnenna Ifeanyi-Ajufo:**

The problem in Africa is not an over regulatory system but rather a problem of Accountability and Transparency. If regulation empowers technology regulators then its the same regulation that should be used to hold them accountable. There is a lack of conceptual understanding of the operative framework and a gap in accountability.

Africa is the only region where the right to development is binding. Job creation, economic survivability all fall under the purview of rights to development. What have we done with the right to development declaration so far? Have we held all government and countries accountable to the section that details the need for co-operation which is instrumental to digital transformation. Articles 4, 5 all clearly state the need for cooperation but the question what have we done with it?

In 1970, during the New world information and communication order, African states were already talking of cooperation and specifically they requested for greater access to scientific and technological information but we are yet to hold our leaders accountable to this legislation. Lets advance from regulations to a people-centred and human rights based approach solely building on accountability. We need to incorporate a human rights based approach to these legislation because it tends to let state actors move on partnership focused on digital inclusion that is non-hierarchical.

**Key Issues Raised:** (maximum ½ page):

**Abdul-Hakeem Ajijola:** There is a problem with data affordability in Africa and I see this as a function of demand and supply. To tackle this issue, we need to increase supply, be it from a regulatory perspective or an infrastructure perspective. Once there is greater supply, then naturally, cost drops.

There is also a problem of inconsistencies in implementation and regulation we face in Africa. The intent of policies is to be well implemented so we shouldn't make it too ambiguous for all stakeholders to understand. So, government and legislators need to drafts policies that are easily understandable.

**Other Issues discussed (if any)**

**Dr Jimson Olufuye:** We see that the problem with our government isn't necessarily regulation because we do have flexible regulations, but an issue with accountability and compliance. What are you doing to hold the government accountable in our different regions?

Matthew T Roberts:

What approach Africa had taken on data collection from end-user by device manufacturers away from Africa that exposes personal information without user consent?

What is Africa doing about personal data breaches that occurs daily from companies based on disclaimers that actually based on third party control between the end user and companies through the used of Internet cookie that results to cookie scam resulting to end user being the loser?

**Dr Nnenna Ifeanyi-Ajufo:**

In as much as we talk data sovereignty, jurisdictions over the cyberspace is not fixed or



geographically proximate to any locations now. The Malabo convention gives African countries the basis to design data protection laws that are favourable to them. Regarding policy ambiguity, it may be that the representatives employed to draft these legislation are not competent or even fully grasp the concept of these policies. On accountability, advocacy groups such as the African Digital Right Initiatives amongst others are doing well to hold states accountable to regulations.

Anonymous:

Can the divides in Africa enable economic viability in the continent? What approach is needed for contents to be very Africa based to reflect Africa's context?

**Dr Jimson Olufuye:** There is beauty in diversity and we are working toward optimizing our diversity for the best outcomes for the people. In this regard, we appreciate the effort of the African Union and ECA to give opportunities to rub minds on these issues. We only hope the government are more proactive and involved in the multi-stakeholder forums.

**Actions recommended and implementable:** (maximum ½ page in narrative form; for each action, please identify the targeted implementer and the time frame for implementation)

Some countries in west Africa have implemented geolocalization. In view of the need for more south-south collaboration, we wish to make a call for collaboration on the west coast of Africa, to develop digital identities for all of west Africa. - West African Nations.

There needs to be an e-Government Masterplan that DLDC needs to follow to ensure transparency and accountability.

There is a need for North - South Partnership based on the bench-marking strategy for best practices just like the Digital Innovation Group used in Kenya for facilitating government policies in generating digital revenue tax. - African countries

Call for a National day of Coding in African countries just like at HackLabs Foundations to improve digital literacy in Africa on the Industry 4 technologies and emerging technologies. AU and HackLab Foundations