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Twelfth Internet Governance Forum in Benin (BENIN IGF 2023)

Theme: “Affordable internet availability for all uses anywhere in Benin”

FINAL STATEMENT

Date: September 09, 2023

Venue : Azalaï Hôtel Cotonou

We, the participants of the twelfth National Forum on Internet Governance in Benin (IGF Benin 2023), in collaboration with all other stakeholders, would like to remind the following facts:

Reminder:

- The core values underpinning the Internet Governance Forum are openness, transparency, inclusion, ascendancy of decision-making mechanisms, non-commerciality and multi-stakeholderism,
- The positions and decisions taken, the recommendations made here, are the emanation of consensual discussions,
- On September 09, 2023, we held the 12th National Forum on Internet Governance in Benin,

We hereby consent to the following recommendations:

❖ For the Government

- Improve coverage in rural areas: Pursue initiatives aimed at extending Internet availability in rural areas, by accelerating the deployment of fiber optics.
- Revise the regulatory framework: Actively work to improve the national legal framework governing Internet availability, considering stakeholder recommendations.
- Use MTTRs to measure availability: Encourage the adoption of MTTRs as key indicators to assess Internet availability more accurately on a consistent basis.
- Produce regular, detailed reports: Inform Internet ecosystem stakeholders on a regular basis through regular reports on Internet availability. This will provide accurate, up-to-date data to guide decision-making.
- Promote collaboration between players: Encourage cooperation between Internet service providers, government, civil society, and other stakeholders to work towards improving Internet accessibility.

- Educate and raise awareness: Raise public awareness of the importance of the Internet and its benefits, while promoting the responsible and productive use of technology.
- Diversify funding sources: Explore innovative funding mechanisms to support connectivity extension projects, involving all stakeholders.
- Establish regular monitoring: Set up a system for continuous monitoring of Internet availability to assess progress and adjust as necessary.
- Reduce digital taxation: Review the taxation of the digital sector to attract entrepreneurs and investors and stimulate the rise of digital companies and startups.
- Improve rural coverage: It is essential to continue efforts to achieve full coverage within the country, especially in rural areas, by accelerating the deployment of fiber optics and other related infrastructures.
- Strengthen the regulatory framework: Continue working to improve the national legal framework in line with Internet availability. This must take account of users' expectations and needs in terms of regulation, transparency, and fairness.

❖ **For civil society**

- Strengthen digital trust: Train, raise awareness, educate about online security and digital trust mechanisms, to reduce cybercrime.
- Promote collaboration between all stakeholders: Encourage active collaboration between government, industry, academia, and civil society, etc., to develop solutions to the challenges of an affordable internet.
- Promote the creation of local content: Train users to create content in local languages to strengthen Benin's digital identity, with a focus on educational purposes, while promoting the concept of digital identity.
- Turning recommendations into concrete action: Work with all stakeholders to translate recommendations into concrete actions and set up a mechanism to monitor and evaluate progress. This will enable us to make the necessary adjustments as we move forward.

❖ **For the private sector**

- Work to steer social network uses towards profitable goals: We need to educate users to make profitable use of social media - including - taking actions to mitigate their negative impacts. Awareness campaigns are also needed to promote such responsible use.
- Promote the production of local content: Encourage the creation of quality digital content in local languages to raise awareness and direct usage towards topics relevant to Beninese society.

❖ **To the technical community**

- Improve connectivity infrastructures: Develop new infrastructures that meet international standards and ensure fast, reliable Internet access for all uses and in all regions of the country.
- Balance supply and demand: Explore ways of balancing the number of subscribers with the coverage rate to ensure that more Beninese have access to the Internet.

- Stimulate collaboration: Create synergy between Internet service providers, Internet access providers, government, civil society organizations and other stakeholders to ensure Internet accessibility and affordability.
- Ongoing monitoring: Establish regular monitoring of Internet availability to assess progress and adjust strategies accordingly.

❖ **To the academic community**

- Invest in training: We need to generalize training in technological sciences, especially for young people, to develop skills to effectively meet the needs of the growing digital economy.
- Education and training: Implement training programs to develop digital skills at the citizen level, particularly among young people, by modifying curricula to integrate local realities.
- Diversification of funding sources: Explore innovative funding mechanisms involving the private sector and financing institutions to support projects to extend Internet connectivity.

We would like to thank the organizations that provided advice, technical, financial, and logistical support for the holding of this twelfth edition of the National Forum on Internet Governance in Benin:

- Ministry of Digitalization
- United Nations in Benin
- ISOCEL Benin
- JENY SAS
- SBIN SA
- ASIN
- ARCEP Benin
- APDP
- Internet Society Benin Chapter
- ABC-PN
- **IGF SA**
- IGF
- NGO Women Be Free
- University of Abomey Calavi
- AUF

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Cotonou, September 09, 2023

