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.

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- Ministry of Digitalization
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- JENY SAS
- SBIN SA
- ASIN
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- 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