Multistakeholderism in the Internet Governance Ecosystem
(Terms of Reference)

Background and rationale

Since many of the problems faced by the world are global, we need an overarching structure at all levels that can help moderate the risks, balance the benefits and respect the right of every individual and group of persons to take an active role in shaping the policies that affect everyone. This calls for a mechanism that embodies the principles of inclusiveness, accountability and transparency, which was translated into multistakeholderism or multistakeholder approach. Multistakeholderism is now used in many areas as an accepted international norm. In the Internet area, the multistakeholder approach is widely accepted as the optimal way to make policy decisions for a globally distributed network. Multistakeholderism is reflected in many UN decisions and resolutions such as in The Monterrey Consensus and The Doha Declaration as well as in what is most relevant for WAIGF, the WSIS Declaration of Principles where a specific vision was set out for a ‘people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented information Society’ in which ‘.... all stakeholders should work together to: improve access to information and communication infrastructure and technologies as well as to information and knowledge; build capacity; increase confidence and security in the use of ICTs; create an enabling environment at all levels; develop and widen ICT applications; foster and respect cultural diversity; recognize the role of the media; address the ethical dimensions of the Information Society...’

Furthermore, using a multidisciplinary approach, there is need to include in the Internet Governance Forum process, other stakeholder groups based on subject matter. In this context, the UN Secretary General recommended during IGF 2018 incorporation of “contributions from diverse fields”, hence expanding the multistakeholder model to all disciplines and subjects in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Relevance of the sub-theme to WAIGF

While discussing ‘Shared responsibilities of stakeholders’ we must adhere to the WSIS principles because not only the Internet Governance process was born out of the WSIS but the WISIS provides guidance on how to move forward with multistakeholderism while managing the Internet ecosystem. Paragraph 49 of the Declaration calls for the involvement of all stakeholders: government, private sector, academia, civil society, intergovernmental organizations etc. Accordingly it is of paramount importance that the stakeholders involved in the IG ecosystem define and reaffirm their respective roles in critical areas in the growth of the digital economy, taking into account the SDGs. Also, no relevant subject should be left behind and any subject expert willing to contribute should be encouraged.

Main objective

The ability to innovate and create has been at the heart of the rapid growth of the Internet and it has brought great value to the society. For the preservation of its dynamism, Internet governance must continue to allow innovation through an enabling environment while ensuring respect of privacy, diversity and the rule of law. Moreover, as the Internet is evolving, and the digital economies and societies that rely on it, the multistakeholder approach must adapt to meet
new challenges. In this context, the main objective is to discuss the respective roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the Internet Governance ecosystem in relation to the needs of West Africa and evolution of IG and see how each stakeholder group fits in the main theme providing a pre-taste of the work ahead in the other panels.

**Specific objectives**

Selected stakeholder groups will:

- discuss their respective roles in the Internet governance ecosystem in the ECOWAS region vis a vis other stakeholders;
- provide concrete examples on how the stakeholder group intervenes in one of the following areas: data governance, media, infrastructure development and digital rights; and
- present the way forward for the stakeholder group’s involvement in the Internet governance ecosystem in ECOWAS.

**Expected results**

- A good understanding of the multistakeholder models and approaches
- Examples of involvement of selected stakeholder groups in selected areas of the Internet governance ecosystem in the ECOWAS region to delineate responsibilities of each group, taking into account the relevant SDG(s).

**Methodology**

As the sub-theme deals with all stakeholder groups, it covers all the SDGs. The discussions will be carried out in form of a panel. The Moderator will introduce the topic followed by three presentations of 15 minutes each by the panelists; then the floor will be given to participants, with ample time, for contribution and discussion. All the presentations will be uploaded on the WAIGF website at least two weeks before the start of the event.

**Date and venue**

The panel will be organized in the framework of the West African IGF to be held from 25 to 26 July 2019 in Banjul, The Gambia. Exact location will be announced in due course.

**Panelists**

The panelists will be derived from the following three stakeholder groups, taking into account a multidisciplinary approach:

- Civil Society: Poncelet Ileleji, The Gambia
- Government / intergovernmental organizations
- Youth, Academia or Private Sector
Sub-Theme Coordinator
Makane Faye
Chairperson, WAIGF Planning Committee
Email: makanefa@gmail.com
Tel: +221 77 347 5258