
ICANN81 | AGM – Joint AFRALO-AfrICANN Session
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BRENDA BREWER: Thank you. Hello and welcome to the joint AFRALO-AfrICANN meeting. My name is Brenda Brewer. I am the remote participation manager for this session. Please note this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy. During this session, questions or comments will only be read aloud if submitted within the Q&A pod. Interpretation for this session include English and Arabic. Thank you. French and Arabic. Thank you.

If you would like to speak during this session, please raise your hand in Zoom. When called upon, virtual participants will be given permission to unmute in Zoom. On-site participants will use a physical microphone to speak. Please state your name for the record, the language you will speak, if speaking a language other than English, and speak at a reasonable pace. And I will now turn the floor over to Hadia Elminiawi, AFRALO chair. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Thank you so much. This is Hadia Elminiawi for the record. So welcome everyone to the ICANN81 AFRALO-AfrICANN meeting. We are delighted to have with us today Sally Costerton, ICANN president and CEO. Thank you, Sally, for always making time to join our meetings. We are also

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joined by two Board members from Africa, Mr. Alan Barrett and Dr. Catherine Adeya. Thank you, Alan and Catherine, for always being on the AFRALO-AfrICANN meetings. I would like as well to acknowledge and welcome Leon Sanchez, At-Large community Board representative on ICANN Board . Welcome, Leon.

We are also joined by stakeholder engagement team, Mr. Behar Esmat and Mr. Pierre Dandjinou. Welcome, Baher and Pierre. The statement was prepared by the AFRALO community and it discusses leveraging AI to enhance multilingualism within the African internet space. Any input provided will be incorporated into the statement before it is finalized and adopted. With that, I welcome everyone to the AFRALO-AfrICANN session and I give the floor to Sally. Sally, welcome and the floor is yours.

SALLY COSTERTON:

Thank you very much, Hadia. Bonjour tout le monde. It's wonderful to be with you. I'm Sally Costerton for the record. I'm very happy to be invited again to the 36th AFRALO-AfrICANN session, which is extraordinary. I can't believe it's so many, and congratulations since 2010. And thank you to the community present today in person and online for your active engagement in this meeting. I would like to congratulate you for your continued interest in the newest technological developments and their application in the DNS system.

We appreciate the set of recommendations and the call to action included in your statement to the ICANN organization and our stakeholders. In your statement, you've presented a set of

recommendations to the organization. You've highlighted the importance of multilingualism for Africa, home of more than 2,000 languages. And you've outlined key issues for the development of DNS infrastructure in Africa, including the use of artificial intelligence as a tool to enhance a multilingual African internet space. You also included a call to action to African governments, international and sub-regional organizations, the private sector, civil society and academia, as well as the organization.

The upcoming ICANN next round of new gTLDs will provide the opportunity to strengthen the availability of IDNs and local language content on the internet throughout Africa. I encourage all of you to work with AFRALO and my GSC Africa team, as with great partnership from my GSC regional lead here, Baher, so that we can make sure that we're raising awareness of the next round and particularly the applicant support program.

And I think everybody in this room probably has already been very actively involved, whether you work with my colleagues, whether you're part of the champions program with the champions toolkit, whether you're getting involved in helping through a pro bono advisory role around the applicant support program. There are so many ways to get involved in your African ICANN community and the wider internet community right out into governments and other groups, civil society, micro organizations and companies, community groups and so on.

We are very committed to the implementation of universal acceptance, working in collaboration with the UASG and all relevant stakeholders. I

understand that AFRALO has been very active in the past UA days. And we've seen many applications and many successful events in many different languages. And that you've submitted many proposals already for the 2025 UA day.

And it demonstrates that the AFRALO members are very active in raising the understanding more broadly of universal acceptance, which is not always easy by the way, but it's critical that benefit of a multilingual internet is understood by our stakeholders. And people don't take it for granted. They don't assume that it just happens by magic. It requires involvement of particular providers and partners to make sure that all our community members, all our citizens in this huge continent can benefit from global content.

And we know that you're great partners to us and we commit and we recommit to you to make sure that we do everything we can. We use the resources we have available to us to support your work. And please keep giving us feedback about how we can do that better as we go through the next few weeks and months. And with that, I wish you a very productive meeting, or I would say a continuation of a very productive meeting. And I really do thank you for your ongoing enthusiasm and commitment to ICANN and our mission. Thank you very much. Back to you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much, Sally. And I now give the floor to Jonathan.

JONATHAN ZUCK:

Thanks. After Sally said everything that I want to say, that's no fair. Thanks everyone. Thanks for having me once again for this meeting. I'm always excited to participate in this meeting because the African region is a real land of opportunity for the Internet. We often talk about the 80-20 rule that the first 80% is the easy part and the last 20% is the hard part. And in many instances in Africa, we haven't even done the first 80% yet. And so there's a lot of low-hanging fruit and a lot of opportunity to bring about large-scale changes as opposed to a lot of the fine-tuning that's happening in other places in the world.

And so I think that the focus on artificial intelligence in this statement is very timely and very appropriate. I think that the use for AI in the context of multilingualism is particularly apt. And I thought that the text on that was quite convincing. I wasn't even aware about some of the linguistic challenges associated with building the models for AI. And so that's an interesting problem and one in which we need to do some advocacy out into, as you say, the academic communities and government communities to do the work to put together some of those linguistic structures to facilitate the training for these AI systems.

One thing that occurred to me is actually leveraging the grant program that ICANN has begun in that regard. It seems like it's something that could be a coordinated effort from Africa to coordinate grants either from academic institutions or other non-profits or civil society institutions whose goal specifically is to bring a particular language into a form that it can then be used for training of AI purposes. So this is sort of a multi-step activity that needs to happen so that the resources are

there to then be leveraged for these other activities that are proposed in the statement.

So I would really love to see some work done to avail ourselves of the grant program for these purposes because it might fall outside of ICANN's immediate remit, but the grant program can be used for that purpose to do things like building these large language models for some of these languages. I understand some of these languages aren't even written or written in a way that we're used to using in the context of artificial intelligence. So I think that's something that is a good first step for some of the languages.

As far as ICANN is concerned, I think that leveraging some of these partnerships is a good idea and there's things that ICANN itself can do to make what it's doing more available in more languages using artificial intelligence. In some instances, the challenge associated with that is a legal one, right? If I let AI translate a document, who is it that confirms that the translation is sufficiently accurate to be legal to the document that it was being translated? But I think that that's a manageable problem and well worth the effort on the part of ICANN to expand its language capabilities.

One of the areas we talked about that Sally mentioned is the applicant support program, and that's a perfect example of where ICANN has had to make choices about which languages to translate those materials into. And so if the language of your community is not included in them, but you have the same deadlines as everyone else, you're immediately

at a disadvantage if those materials aren't available in the language of your community.

And so how could artificial intelligence be used in the very near term to make sure that multi-language versions of the applicant support quick primer, I mean there's several documents that are meant to be consumed by potential applicants, and is there something that could be done to leverage artificial intelligence to make those available in more languages than ICANN could be expected to create itself?

And so that's something we might want to look at in the near term. Because absent that, everyone whose language is not one of the first set that are created is at a disadvantage in terms of the deadlines for applying for applicant support. So I think that's an interesting area to explore.

But so I don't want to go on and on. I'm the least qualified person to talk about Africa. But I still believe that it's an incredible opportunity. And every time we create opportunities for involvement of the African community and the messaging we're trying to get out with related to Universal Acceptance or other messages, it's always very enthusiastic, and so it feels like nothing but potential there.

And so I certainly want to reaffirm my commitment as the ALAC chair to make sure that we're putting sufficient emphasis on outreach and engagement into the African region to make sure that we're bringing along all the possible communities as the internet expands, as the DNS expands, and as opportunities for things like new gTLDs become

available. So that's my commitment to you. And again thank you for having me at this message. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much, Jonathan. Very useful insights indeed. And Alan, the floor is yours.

ALAN BARRETT:

Thank you, Hadia. This is Alan Barrett. It's always a pleasure to join this meeting that's organized by AFRALO and the AfrICANN community at most ICANN meetings. I do appreciate the invitation. I enjoy being here and speaking with you all.

There's very little that I can say that's not already in the statement, the draft statement that's available here, but I'll talk a little anyway. Africa is a very large and diverse continent. Depending on who you ask, there are between maybe 2,000 to 3,000 languages, and so there's a great need for translation, for materials to be available in multiple languages. And on the ICANN side, the next round of gTLDs, of course, has a focus on multilingual domain names using IDNs, and the Applicant Support Program, as Jonathan already mentioned, will make information available in multiple languages, but ICANN by itself can't do it all.

ICANN, I think, will make information available in the seven or so languages that we see at all ICANN meetings. But Africa has many more languages that are not included in that set. And if you want to help translate materials into your language or a language that you're familiar with, then there is an opportunity for that. If you look on the

ICANN webpages about the Applicant Support Program, you will find an FAQ, and in there will be information about translation. So, yeah, you can volunteer to help translate the materials for use in your languages. I think I'll stop there. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Thank you, Alan, and now I give the floor to Catherine. The floor is yours.

CATHERINE ADEYA: Thank you very much. I listened to Sally, Jonathan, Alan, and I was asking what else can I add. But as an African, I can't miss something to add. So, one of the things that I found very useful is how incremental the various statements have been. I look at the statement from the last time we met, and talking about multilingualism, and we talked about the UA, and now we've built it up with the artificial intelligence. So, as a member of the Board, based on what Alan has also said, Alan has talked about what you could do. We've talked about how the DNS has expanded to include new and longer TLDs and IDNs.

So, maybe I'll just fast track what I would have liked to say, and just add the opportunities there, especially the Coalition for Digital Africa. There is so much that's happening, and so many partners also doing very interesting things in this area, that speaks to, there was something in the statement, speaks to what is in the proposed statement. The rapid advancement of AI technologies presents an unprecedented

opportunity to enhance multilingualism across the African internet space.

So, when I think, I don't know if our partners Smart Africa are here. Smart Africa already way back in 2021 had created a blueprint for AI, and under that blueprint, there were challenging governments, and they were able to step down and even have an AI working group. That AI working group has been inspirational in academia. So, I can tell you, I know the work that IDRC and ACTS and a few other people have done to ensure that the right skills are being developed for AI in Africa.

As we're talking about languages, I wanted to give one example. There are quite a few initiatives, but sometimes it's-- right now everybody likes the word AI, and please take me, I think you understand what I'm saying. And so, you'll find everything has, there's an AI Excellence Institute, literally. I don't know how many there are in Africa right now. But my point is just seeing what is it that people are doing.

So, for example, I think I was looking at the Lelapa AI, which says they've launched the first Africa's first AI large language model, but even in doing that, they said they could not be able to get all the African languages. So, they've started with the bigger languages, and it's the usual suspects, whether it's Xhosa, Swahili, and then others will always feel like we are being cut out, but either way, these are opportunities.

I mentioned about the work IDRC is doing, I know they've helped. There's a new center that has been set up. They've started their work. And they call themselves the Africa Institute for, it's like an Excellence Center for Artificial Intelligence. I have the work that they're doing, but

they were saying they're really working on responsible AI and making sure that Africa is going in the right direction from a centralized point.

So, what IDRC is doing, one of the things-- not IDRC, but something that speaks to this statement is just improvement of AI research in Africa, and just making sure that that research speaks to some of the things we are talking about, like attracting an African community of native speakers to be able to do more in the AI space.

So, I'll start that introductory, so in the sense that I said I'll build up on what my colleagues are saying, but more from an examples base, because sitting in Africa, I keep meeting these examples. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAMI:

Thank you so much, Dr. Catherine. And Leon, the floor is yours now.

LEON SÁNCHEZ:

Thank you very much, Hadia. And thank you everyone again for having me and inviting me. It's always a pleasure to be back to what I consider my second home. And well, as usual, I've gone through the statement that you drafted. And it's not a surprise that it's very forward-looking and very relevant in terms of how you put and how you suggest that AI should be incorporated into the digital space, and how it could enhance the way that the DNS is managed, the way that multilingualism could be handled, and could be fostered towards achieving a more diverse and more inclusive domain name system and a more inclusive digital ecosystem.

I think that my colleagues and the previous speakers have pretty much said everything that there was to say. So I will keep it short and just wish you a very successful and fruitful discussion. And I will thank you again for being so committed to continuing and furthering ICANN's mission with such innovative propositions and such innovative ideas that you put forward. And once the Board receives this statement, as we usually do, I am sure that it will catch my colleagues' interest, and it will surely be something that we will be following up and commenting upon.

So, thank you very much for all your work and for your commitment to furthering ICANN's mission.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much, Leon. And now the floor goes to Baher Ismat, VP, Stakeholder Engagement, Middle East and Managing Director (MEA).

BAHER ESMAT:

Thank you, Hadia, and good afternoon, everyone. I'm very pleased to be here with you today, and I think it's always a great opportunity to engage with the African community. Indeed, the topic of the statement today is an important one, particularly in relation to inclusion and multilingualism for a region and community for a region like the African region and the African community.

I don't have a specific comment regarding the statement, but I look forward to the discussion and to hearing the different perspectives. I just want to note that, as the head of the regional office, ICANN regional office for Middle East and Africa, our team here in Istanbul works closely

with the African engagement team on various initiatives and projects in Africa, such as the UA Day, the Coalition for Digital Africa, under which there are several activities related to the issue of multilingualism and inclusion. So, again, it's an important topic indeed, and I look forward to the discussion. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAMI: Thank you, Behar. And now the floor goes to Pierre Dandjinou, Vice President for Africa.

PIERRE DANDJINOU: Thank you very much, Hadia. I'll just focus on what we as GSE Africa has been doing in the continent, and then highlight a few points where we really, of course, need that contribution and that participation with AFRALO. Of course, you already know, as far as this next round of gTLD project is concerned, there are a few things that we've been doing, and I'm so happy also that we've been actually discussing this already with AFRALO specifically.

I think since yesterday, we did have two or three sort of different meetings to be talking about this, to be strategizing on how best to outreach within Africa on this. And I would like to really point out that we need your support on the ground, so that they would be passed over, and so that there is much more interest on this new gTLD program.

And we also have, as you all know, these CDA initiatives. We have eight initiatives that are ongoing. But the good thing with the CDA, this Coalition for Digital Africa, is this is one of the first time that ICANN really

for that. We might be partnering with other institutions to do a few things. Of course, strengthening the DNS architecture, but also infrastructure, but also promote what we are calling meaningful connectivity. And of course, what you are, I mean, your statements, speaking about inclusiveness, multilingualism, in fact, all of that for Africa is about meaningful participation. How do you do that?

You are talking about languages, definitely, in terms of UA. We've been doing a few things, and I'm happy to see that well. AFRALO is also involved in the UA Day, which is quite good. You should also know that, as per our partnership with the Association of African Universities, we've delivered a few workshops on capacity development on UA, and we were able to have, I mean, 400 universities make sure that their information system are at par with UA, which is quite important.

Of course, we need now to get into the lack of IDN. So far, we succeeded in Ethiopia, and we would like to be having more and more kind of country languages, but that one is your choice. This is not ICANN's choice to which language you really want to work on and generate the appropriate scripts. It's up to the different countries.

Let me also quickly, and I think Sally already said it, that we are committed, actually, to contribute to this meaningful participation and also meaningful accessibility to the Internet. And that's why we actually are partnering with our colleague. We do have different projects. I would like to say, I mean, the like of ISOC, for instance, where the ISP project is ongoing. We have partnership with Smart Africa, and you might probably know that we'll be signing an MOU with Smart Africa in

one hour's time. They are here for that. It's quite important that we are there.

But of course, and I would like to finish with that one, ICANN's mission, as you know, is to ensure the stability and security of the operation of the Internet's unique identifiers. And of course, that's why we need participation. We are happy to be seeing more and more Africans coming to the ICANN meeting. It's important. It's also important that you contribute as we said, meaningfully, that you participate. And I would like to recognize that, yes, your kind of work, especially your work on artificial intelligence, last time we did have also one on artificial intelligence, but you were actually addressing this to ICANN, what ICANN should be doing and supporting countries on that.

You got the response from us that, well, while ICANN is observing whatever is happening with artificial intelligence, ICANN is not definitely in it. We just follow this. As long as we can use that to facilitate stability of the DNS, that's fine. So, we are really, I would say, curious about your, of course, your statements and what possibly one can do with that. And of course, as usual, ICANN will be promoting, will be supporting whatever happens. So, thanks very much for these efforts of yours and always happy to be with you. Thanks.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much, Pierre. And we are always looking forward to collaborate with you and work with you in order to advance multilingualism or the outreach program or any other initiatives you are on for the benefit of the community. And we would like to move to the

statement itself and the introduction of the topic. And I don't know who's with us now online to go ahead, Patrick or Mutegeki.

MUTEGEKI CLIFF: Hello, Hadia, I will do the introduction.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Please go ahead.

MUTEGEKI CLIFF: Jambo, salam, merahu, sawubona, marhaban. I could go on and on, but allow me just to dive into giving just a brief introduction to our statement. But before that, I want us to imagine a world where Africa's 2000 languages are not only present.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Mutegeki, just allow me to mention that this is Mutegeki Cliff. Thank you, go ahead.

MUTEGEKI CLIFF: Thank you so much. I want us to imagine a world, a digital world where Africa's 2000 languages are not only present, but they thrive online. And imagine a space where every language, every dialect, every voice can be heard. Today, that feels just beyond our reach as much of Africa's linguistic diversity remains offline, leaving millions unable to access and engage meaningfully in the digital landscape. But we are on the

brink of digital transformation and we believe that artificial intelligence is stepping in as a powerful ally to bring this vision to life.

Now, whenever you talk about anything artificial, the human element is behind that. And we as digital citizens are responsible for framing this. Now, AI is a tool for change and through technologies like natural language processing, machine translation and voice recognition, AI can create a digital environment that will come into all languages, not just a select few. Now, if you could go ahead to imagine a student in rural Tanzania accessing educational resources in Kiswahili or a student in Uganda accessing resources in Luganda or a farmer in Ghana connecting with peers in their native tree language. Now, imagine if all that was made possible by AI power tools.

Now, this is a promise of AI for enhancing multilingualism in Africa's internet space. Now, in this statement, AFRALO calls on ICANN and our global partners to champion this cause, integrating AI-driven multilingual tools into internet policy and infrastructure. And by doing so, we don't just break down the barriers, we open doors to digital literacy, we preserve cultural identities and empower communities across the continent. And by us working together to build a digital space where Africa's language can flourish, ensuring an internet that reflects Africa's full, diverse voice. Now, I would like to invite Kiza to put in some additions to this.

HADIA ELMINIAMI:

Thank you, Mutegeki and Patrick. So maybe we can move to Abdeljalil Bachar Bong AFRALO Secretary for the presentation of the statement.

And then we can give the floor to Patrick when he's able to speak.
Thank you.

ABDELJALIL BACHAR BONG: Thank you so much. I will read it in French. This statement is much longer than usual, so we are not going to read the complete version. The theme, the topic is the artificial intelligence for enhancing multilingualism in the African internet space, an ICANN initiative. We need to understand the importance of AI in the socio-economic development of Africa. We have the need to promote multilingualism in the African internet space to enhance the cultural and linguistic diversity of the continent. And then we also have to consider that AI offers unprecedented opportunities to overcome challenges related to access to information and communication in African languages. We need to take into account ICANN initiatives to promote local languages in the domain name system.

For this, AI must be accepted as a tool to enhance multilingual African internet space. We have the linguistic inclusivity. We talked about the preservation of cultural identity. We also talk about the enhancement of multilingualism in the domain name system. AI is very important when it comes to-- we have to talk about UA. We have to talk about enhancing the acceptance of domain names and EAI with AI, we have capacity building. And of course, we have collaboration and policy framework. These are essential recommendation, especially the engagement of stakeholders, the political deciders.

And we also have a part for the recommendation. And under this part, we have four essential points. We have AI-driven multilingualism, DNS solution. We have a recommendation on capacity building and knowledge sharing. We also have a point on the promotion of linguistic diversity in internet governance. The fourth point is the recommendation for the investment in the research and development of AI.

And when it comes to the call of action, as we described here, we have a call to action. We urged all stakeholders to join forces in advancing AI on DNS implementation and management in order to improve the availability of linguistic diversity internet content across Africa. We have here a call to action for African government in order, an international and sub-regional organization, a call to action of the private sector, call to action of civil society and academia, and a call to action for ICANN together. We want a future, an inclusive future for Africa.

In our conclusion, I can read it actually. AI technology integration for multilingualism enhancement represents a revolution in the African internet space by addressing language barriers. ICANN can contribute to a more inclusive internet that reflects Africa's rich linguistic diversity. As AI continues to evolve, ICANN's leadership in fostering partnerships, supporting innovation, and promoting policies that advance multilingualism, and this will be essential for empowering African communities and securing their full participation in the digital future.

Furthermore, a commitment to ethical and responsible AI development and cultural sensitivity, and that will ensure that these technologies serve not only as tools for communication, but also as vehicles for preserving and celebrating Africa's unique cultural heritage of the continent. And also, we need to have a dynamic collaboration with these diverse stakeholders that includes local communities, linguist experts. In that way, ICANN can create a sustainable framework for linguistic inclusivity that champions the voice of all Africans in the digital realm.

This was drafted by a team, and you have the name, the three names are listed on this declaration. Thank you so much. And I will give the floor back to Hadia.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much for introducing the statement. And now we will start the discussion. I know Bram will not be able to speak. So I will be moderating the discussion. So the floor is open. So Chokri, please go ahead.

CHOKRI BEN ROMDHANE:

Okay, thank you very much, Hadia. Can you hear me?

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

We hear you, Chokri, please go ahead.

CHOKRI BEN ROMDHANE: Yes, thank you very much. I'm really happy to be part of this draft team that have elaborated this statement. And the question that I have in mind is not for the draft team, but for the ICANN. So the statement proposed to integrate the artificial intelligence tools in order to advance IDN and AI. Is ICANN ready to move to this step? Or should we wait for other stage in order to see the integration of artificial intelligence tools in universal access to the functionality? Thank you very much.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Thank you, Chokri, for your question. And I'm not sure who's-- Behar, do you want to answer that question?

BAHER ESMAT: Hadia, what was the question?

HADIA ELMINIAWI: It's related to how ready ICANN is to integrate or use tools like AI for multilingualism or universal acceptance adoption to leverage AI in advancing those areas.

BAHER ESMAT: I'm afraid I'm not the right person to answer this question.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: I see, Sarmad, I don't know, could you answer this question? Thank you.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Thank you, Hadia. This is Sarmad for the record. So I think it would be great to get specific recommendations on how you would suggest applying AI techniques to UA. And we'd be more than happy to follow up and look into it, thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Okay, so the statement actually does point out some steps and so maybe you can take a look and tell us what's realistic in there and what's not actually realistic. Thank you.

SARMAD HUSSAIN: Certainly, of course, thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Thank you. Any other thoughts or discussion points? So maybe, Sarmad, I could go ahead and point what's there in here for ICANN in relation to linguistic diversity. So there is promotion of linguistic diversity in internet governance. ICANN should advocate for the inclusion of African languages in global internet governance discussions, ensuring that multilingualism is recognized as a key driver of digital transformation, inclusion and sustainability.

There is also investing in the research and development of AI, whether it's-- so Africa is a fertile ground for artificial intelligence applications. We can create digital tools and services that reflect the continent cultural plurality and are accessible to all by investing in AI research and development. There is also some capacity building and knowledge sharing. ICANN should partner with local stakeholders to create AI focused capacity building initiatives.

These programs should prioritize skills development in AI technologies related to language processing and aim to increase the participation of African developers in AI and internet governance spaces, AI workshops that educate the technical community about how to leverage AI tools to foster the presence in the internet space. And then ICANN investing in AI research and development to advance the adoption of universal acceptance.

So it says AI can play a crucial role in universal acceptance adoption and supporting African languages in IDNs. Security issues must also be addressed to maintain robust and secure systems as UA adoption grows. AI stakeholders collaboration. So that would be collaboration between ICANN, African governments, linguistic experts and technology industry. Policy frameworks that support AI development in multilingual context ensuring that AI systems are developed in an ethical and culturally sensitive manner. So I don't know if you can respond to any of those points. Yes.

CATHERINE ADEYA:

Yeah, because I think I've had the benefit of reading the statement. I don't want to speak completely for the Org, but to some extent some of these are already being addressed. It's just how they can be enhanced. So for example, when you speak of AI, when you speak of capacity building and knowledge sharing, I've given examples of some of the partnerships that they have even in coalition for Digital Africa. I know for example, there's Lawyers Hub. Lawyers Hub is big on working on artificial intelligence and I've seen ICANN involved. So I guess it's just to what level the involvement could be done.

I don't see how ICANN for example, but I'll tell you a way can invest in research and development. But which partner does ICANN have? AAU, the universities. And within the university's ecosystem, they're already doing research on AI. That's why I gave you an example of about, I think there were 13 or 14 PhDs that were graduated, went back to their countries, and I sit in another advisory and I asked, so like this one has gone back to Tanzania. What are they doing? Oh, they're advising the government. On what?

So you're having a lot of governments also trying to do AI frameworks and things like that. So the opportunities are there and ICANN is already approaching some of these things in the correct way. We don't have the resources and capacity to try and do these things on our own. That's where partnership comes in. So this statement, honestly is quite well thought out, even in terms of the recommendations. It's just maybe taking some of this and saying who can we work with and where there's a gap and things ICANN cannot do, the discussion can be got in there.

But these four that you've read, look at Coalition for Digital Africa, look at some of the things that ICANN is doing, there's bits and pieces in there already. So that's where I was going to assist. But I'm speaking as a Board member. Org will do it. They're already doing it, sorry. Thank you. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much, Catherine. And I think, yes, it is really important to identify where the gaps are, what's actually being now implemented, and what actually can we do and what can't we do? And what can be done in collaboration with whom?

CATHERINE ADEYA:

And that's what I'm saying. That would be a bit difficult to discuss in a meeting like this. I think that's something you can take on further because there's already-- if I sat, for example, I don't want to talk as Org. But as somebody who's been a researcher or somebody who's been in the IT space in Africa for a long time, I can map. And you can map and see who is doing what. Whether they're doing research in this particular area, like I told you, the Lelapa Initiative doing on languages, but they're doing Corsica, Swahili, and Yoruba, and a few other languages, where are the gaps?

Maybe there's somebody somewhere who might want to partner with them. So I'm saying if I was to start doing this, there'd be some kind of mapping exercise, which may be already there, to see where the gaps are. And using those gaps to see where can ICANN really play a role and

where can the partners who are around this room play a role. So that's why I'm saying I cannot answer substantively. And I want to be cautious because I don't want to be like, I'm rubber stamping something. I'm giving advice.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

And great advice, indeed, a great recommendation. And I will note another part about preserving cultural identity in the statement. And it talks about AI-driven technologies can support the documentation, translation, digital preservation of endangered African languages, ensuring that they're not lost in the digital age. And I think also, it was mentioned before that could we use actually AI in order to determine, for example, the applicant book? So which languages should it be translated to? So we know there are the UN official languages, but what else?

So I stop here and I don't know who wants to pick it. Okay, so I will give the floor to Patrick first and then Chokri. Patrick, we are not able to hear you. So can I give the floor to Chokri and then we'll come back to you. Chokri, please go ahead.

CHOKRI BEN ROMDHANE:

Just a quick comment on what Dr. Catherine had mentioned. I think that in relation with the universal acceptance, the gap is clear. It's clear that we are using some ASCII technique in order to solve IDN and IA. It's time, in my opinion and my humble opinion, that we move to other

technique. I think that artificial intelligence can do the job better.
Thank you very much.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Thank you, Chokri. Patrick, do you want to try again before I give the floor to Aziz?

PATRICK KIIZA: Yes, I hope you can hear me now.

HADIA ELMINIAWI: Yes, we hear you well.

PATRICK KIIZA: Oh, okay. Thank you. I'm sorry for the glitch. Once again, I'm Patrick Kiiza, ISOC Uganda and a member. My question or probably my request to the pre-current speaker, who happens also to be the Board member, say that most of these strategies are already there. For example, like the association of lawyers and all. So in light of the UA and the current topic at hand, maybe as a team, we would look at publicizing these mechanisms so that the people in the internet space or in the ecosystem be able to get them so that we best push the agenda and we ensure that.

Because we see that at least in most of the African countries, there is an emergence of use of AI. And to the framers of the topic, we'd actually had envisioned that if we incorporate AI in the day-to-day operations of

the internet ecosystem, we would best see positive results, not considering probably the few glitches of which would be cupped with a set processes and procedures to have this be a reality. Over.

HADIA ELMINIAMI:

Thank you, Patrick. And we have one minute left, and I have Aziz and Abraham. So Aziz, would you like in a few seconds point out?

AZIZ HILALI:

I just wanted to support what Catherine said. And it's not just to be content with copying software that are already happening with artificial intelligence. When we do those statements, sometimes we have to be very clear. Sometimes we talk to the ICANN, sometimes we talk to our governments, our decision takers. So scientific research is extremely important and we have to support it with those PhDs you talked about that are done in Africa and very useful. And I will be very brief.

The language is extremely important in new technologies because it depends on culture. It's your culture. It's linked to your culture. And you see among ourselves, when we speak French or we speak English, sometimes we lose some elements. So the cultural aspect is extremely important, even in scientific research. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAMI:

Thank you so much, Aziz. I will move to Abraham and then I will come back to you. Okay. Abraham, please go ahead.

ABRAHAM SELBY:

Okay. All right. Thank you very much. And I'm very happy about the conversation going on. And what I want to share is that as the Board member was also saying, Catherine was saying about the lawyers have in terms of their AI policy. I think that enhancing multilingualism in Africa doesn't even come only in AI, because currently even the digital literacy, whilst Africa is talking about even the AI, how have we even gotten up to the aspect of a digital literacy in Africa?

And bringing that into a multilingual, I belong to an organization, PAYAC, which we are training more than 1,500 to 2,000 youth in internet governance. And it is in Swahili, Arabic, Portuguese, French, and English. And we started last year, and this year we are about sending 2,000 fellows in Africa. And we select 200 ambassadors where we can equip them. I think that ICANN cannot do all the work in terms of making sure that every country, they have to have that AI policies or AI fellowship integrated.

But what I can see is that we can partner the civil societies, which ISOC has branches all over chapters across Africa. Can we try to build that kind of perspective from digital literacy training to AI fellowship, AI training, whereby the youth and the various civil societies in Africa can react. Thank you very much.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much, Abraham. Just in a second, Dr. Catherine.

CATHERINE ADEYA:

Actually, in a second, what, Abraham, you're speaking to what I'm speaking about. I'm just saying there are examples. Let us get all these examples, like exactly what you're talking about with Pan African youth ambassador does it do it. And let's share this because ICANN cannot do it alone. And the last one I wanted to say is ICANN has opportunity to use the UA days. Let us use where ICANN is strong to explain what UA is, multilingualism, and then all AI and everything comes around. So everybody who's online and here, you are all partners indirectly. So that's what I was saying. Thank you.

HADIA ELMINIAWI:

Thank you so much, Dr. Catherine. And to summarize, we have recommendations that say start with a mapping exercise, the importance of research and development, the importance of leveraging activities like Universal Acceptance Day, and the importance also of collaborating with all stakeholders, including civil society.

With that, I would like to thank you all for being on this session. The statement will remain open for the upcoming 10 days. So please, if you want to add your thoughts to the statement, please go ahead and do that. It's linked to the agenda. And after that, we will share it on the mailing list in order for its adoption. Thank you. And this call's now adjourned.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]