
ICANN83 | PF – GAC Africa Members Meeting
Monday, June 09, 2025 – 15:30 to 17:00 CEST

THELMA QUAYE

Good afternoon and welcome. We kindly request that we get seated and start the session. And may I also request, if you are at the back, you kindly move to the table, please. If you may, please move to the table. Thank you.

Thank you once again. And just to mention that this is a hybrid session, we do have a number of our colleagues online. We have, I think, about 30 of our colleagues online, as well as here physically. We are grateful for your presence. And this is an awareness session to the GAC committee on the actions that Smart Africa has been taking on the topic of internet governance. I'll quickly run us through the agenda for today, and we can kick start it. And so at the beginning, we are going to have opening remarks by Mr. Kone, the DG and CEO of Smart Africa. And then we would have a consultant that was recruited by Smart Africa to working on a project for the development of a blueprint on internet governance, give us an overview of the blueprint. I will then come and share an overview of all that we are doing around internet governance, just high level. And then we would give the floor to Mr. Molehe, the chair of the ad hoc committee that was launched in Turkey last year. He would give us an update on what we have been doing around the AFRINIC matter. We will then open the floor for questions and answers, and we would receive the closing remarks. I'll pause here if there's any

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question or comment on the agenda. OK, silence means contentment. So since we are all content, I would like to call to the floor Mr. Lacina Kone, the CEO and DG for Smart Africa, for his opening remarks. Over to you, DG.

LACINA KONE

Thank you very much, Thelma. Dear GAC members, leadership of ICANN in the room, the Africa GAC members, partners of international organizations, dear all, it's really both a pleasure and a responsibility to welcome you to this session, which is a hybrid of GAC Africa, which comes at a time when the stakes for internet governance in our region have never been higher. We are gathered here today not only as an observer of the global internet ecosystem, but more importantly, as the decision makers, bearer of visions that place Africa at the center of its own digital destiny. At Smart Africa, this vision is anchored in our core mandate to build a single digital market for Africa and to ensure that internet governance framework reflects our sovereignty, inclusions, and strategic priority. ICANN 83 takes place at the critical juncture.

Many of you are closely following the ongoing governance crisis surrounding our RIRAFRINIC. Let us be clear, ladies and gentlemen. What is happening in Mauritius is not a mere technical incident. It is a test of resilience in how internet resources are managed, governed, and protected on our continent. During the recent extraordinary ministerial sessions convened by Smart Africa on May 8, African ministers voiced a strong concern over the erosions

of transparency, the rise of [NOPAC] external interests, and the legal ambiguities surrounding AFRINIC electoral process. Dear members, the legitimacy of the institutions and the trust of its members is at stake. And with this, the credibility of our entire regional internet governance architecture.

But we are not here to lament. We are here to act. Through its ad hoc committee that we put together and in coordination with its member state, Smart Africa has taken the initiative to support the electoral observations, strengthen the proposals for legal reforms, and accelerate work on consolidating the African internet governance blueprint. These efforts are not isolated. They constitute a coherent continental response to reaffirm our sovereignty and reinforce accountability at each level in the management of our critical resources.

Dear GAC members, today, GAC Africa session fully aligned with this momentum. We will receive update on the blueprint by our consultants. Now entering a strategic drafting phase, this instrument aims to provide countries with a concrete roadmap for institutional reform, stakeholder engagements, and the regional regulatory harmonization. But its impact will only be real if governments, including yours, take ownership of its content and integrate it into national priority. It is time to run our talk, not just talk our talk. We will also discuss the CAIGA, which is the Council of African Internet Governance Authority. The African Council of Internet Governance Authority is an initiative responding to your call for a continental coordination mechanism. To your call, a

continental coordination mechanism linking regulators, ministries, and African communities is structured dialogue with the global stakeholder, such as ICANN, which, of course, does not mean a government intervention. But it means if we are living in a multi-stakeholder environment, the governments should be the guarantor of transparency and governance. Lastly, we will hear from the Ad Hoc Committee, my brother from South Africa, whose work, despite significant legal and political challenges, continue to embody Africa's commitments to defending its institutions and designing a credible alternative. Dear colleague, the decisions you make today will shape how Africa engages with the global internet governance, not only as a unified bloc, but as a coalition of countries committed to dignity, fairness, and voice. The CAIGA is a space where that voice must resonate with the coherence and resolve. I encourage you to use this session not only to listen, but to engage and to align your national priorities with the regional objective, your regulatory ambitions with the collective actions, and your expectation with the reform that Smart Africa and its partners are championing on behalf of Africa. Africa is not mere recipient of digital rules. Time has changed. It is a co-creator of global internet governance. And the path we are building through the Blueprint, CAIGA, and World Bank Program is not just for us, but is for future generations to come. The evidence is the crisis we are living today was put together by a generation two decades ago. Let us move forward with ambitions, unity and determination, and I thank you.

THELMA QUAYE

Thank you very much, DG. So before we move on to the next session, I wanted also for us to go around the table to know who is in the room, if you would allow. And we would like to start from the extreme left on the table. If you could please let us know your name and organization very quickly. We want to spend about five minutes to go around the table. Thank you.

ADERONKE ADENIYE

Hello, everyone. My name is Aderonke Adeniyi. I'm from Nigerian Communications Commission, and I'm one of the GAC reps in Nigeria. Thank you.

EDOWAYE MAKANJUOLA

Hi, everyone. My name is Edowaye Makanjuola. I'm from the Nigerian Communications Commission as well. I'm a GAC rep. Thank you.

HERBERT WU

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Herbert Wu. I come from China, Chinese Academy of Sciences. It's my great honor to attend this conference. Thank you.

[ISSAM KHATILI]

Hello. My name is [Issam Khatili.] I'm a network engineer in the ETI, Internet Tunisian Agency. Thank you.

WAJDI GARALI Hello, everyone. My name is Wajdi Garali. I'm the GAC rep representative of Tunisia.

[KHALID KHALIFI] Hello, everyone. My name is [Khalid Khalifi] from Tunisian Internet Agency. I'm also a member of Smart Africa Internet Governance Group.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER Hi. Good afternoon. [inaudible] from Uganda Communications Commission.

ABDALMONEM GALILA Yeah, Abdalmonem Galila, the director of numbering at the National Telecom Regulatory Authority of Egypt and the GAC alternative representative of Egypt. Thank you.

EMMANUEL VITUS My name is Emmanuel Vitous, not representing the GAC, but coming from Togo, University of Malta.

[ANTOINE DABRÉ] My name is [Antoine Dabré.] I'm a coordinator for francophonie in governance, digital governance. I'm based in Geneva. Thank you.

[MOHAMED EL MOCTAR MOHAMEDINE] Mohamed El Moctar Mohamedine, advisor to the minister and the GAC representative of Mauritania.

MOLEHE WESI Good afternoon, everyone. Molehe Wesi from the South African Domain Name Authority and also a chair of the Ad Hoc Committee. Thank you.

CATHERINE ADEYA Catherine Adeya. I'm on the ICANN board from Kenya, but not from Kenya on the ICANN board. I'm on the ICANN board.

[ERIK ALMQUIST] This is Erik Almquist. I'm the CEO and founder of Sense Strategy, and I will be presenting the next topic. Thank you.

ZIWO KEITH-CHAMBA A pleasant day to you all, ladies and gentlemen. The name is Ziwo Keith-Chamba. I'm coming from the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe.

[BOKA THOMAS] Good afternoon. My name is Boka Thomas from Zimbabwe.

[JESSE] [Jesse] from the Internet Society and also the Africa Youth IGF, so I'm not here as a MAG member, but yeah, thank you.

[BERTRAN ALI] Hello, everyone. I am Bertran Ali.] I am for the Development Agency of Information from Chad.

[NIEL DITENGOROKAYA] Hello. I'm [Niel Ditengorokaya.] I'm Gabonese, but I'm from France, and I'm research in ICT subject, so I don't represent any GAC community, but I'm here because I like the topic we are talking about here. Thank you.

MARCIEN MACKAYA Hello, everyone. Marcién Macaya. I do represent Gabon in GAC.

[MOHAMED KEITA] Hello, everyone. Mohamed Keita. I am from the Telecommunications of Guinea.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER Hello, everyone. I am in charge of emerging technology in RTP, and I am from Senegal. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER Hi, everyone. I am not from the GAC. [inaudible] from ICANN. Thank you.

THELMA QUAYE	Thank you, and is there anybody sitting behind who wants to speak also? Ah, okay. So there's the microphone. Thank you.
PAULOS NYIRENDA	Good afternoon. I'm Paulos Nyirenda. I'm from Malawi, running the .mw ccTLD.
TOMBOYE IBRAHIM	Good afternoon, everyone. I am Tomboye Ibrahim from Chad. I'm at the GAC.
[MOFED AMINI]	Good afternoon, everyone. I'm [Mofed Amini.] I'm from AFRINIC.
AYOUB Ghamas	Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Ayoub Ghamas. I come from Morocco, and yeah, I'm here as a NextGen program fellow.
[SMITH AMU]	Hello, everyone. My name is [Smith Amu.] I'm a trainee. I come from Germany, and yeah. Thank you.
BARNABAS Peter	Good evening to you all. My name is Barnabas Peter. I'm from Kenya. Currently, I'm in Warsaw University of Technology. Thank you. I'm a NextGen as well.

LEONARD OBONYO Afternoon, everyone. My name is Leonard Obonyo from the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organization, also with GAC. Thank you.

BOB OCHIENG Good evening. My name is Bob Ochieng. I'm with ICANN.

JOHN CRAIN Good afternoon, all. My name is John Crain. I am the Chief Technology Officer at ICANN.

MICHAEL ABEJUELA Hello, everyone. I'm Michael Abejuela, General Counsel of ARIN.

ATHINA FRAGKOULI Hello, everyone. My name is Athina Fragkouli, Chief Legal Officer from RIPE NCC.

JEREMY HARRISON Hello, everybody. My name is Jeremy Harrison. I'm the General Counsel of APNIC.

LEON GRUNDMANN Hello, everyone. My name is Leon Grundmann. I'm with ICANN Org.

THELMA QUAYE	So we move to the other side of the room, and then we will move online to our colleagues as well.
ISABEL GATES	Hi. Isabel Gates, United States. Thank you.
REGINA FUCHSOVA	Regina Fuchsova, .eu registry, EURid.
OZAN SAHIN	Hello, everyone. I'm Ozan Sahin. ICANN Policy Development Support Staff.
LAENA RAHIM	Hi, everyone. I'm Laena Rahim, ICANN Org.
SARAH ZAGHA	Hi. Sarah Zagha, ICANN Org.
THELMA QUAYE	Thank you. We'll move to the people online.
PIERRE DANDJINOU	Good afternoon. Good morning. I'm Pierre Dandjinou. I'm VP, Stakeholder Engagement and in charge of Africa at ICANN.

SARR IDRISSE	Good afternoon. Sarr Idrissa. I manage the .SN, and I'm a VP for the AFTLT.
ADEDOKUN ADEWALE	Hello. Good afternoon. My name is Adedokun Adewale. I'm from Nigeria. I work with the Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria. Thank you.
ALAN BARRETT	Yes. Hello. This is Alan Barrett. I'm an ICANN board member.
MERT BIRER	Yeah, hello everyone. I'm Mert Birer from Sense Strategy. Happy to be here. Thank you.
MICHAŁ SUCHOCKI	Hello everyone. Good afternoon, good morning. My name is Michał Suchocki. I'm representing Sense Strategy. And I'm really happy to be here on this meeting. Thank you very much.
SEUN OJEDDEJI	Hello everyone. My name is Seun Ojedeji, former member of AFRINIC Board. Thank you.
SEYDOU SOUMAH	Good afternoon. I'm Seydou Soumah from the Telecom Regulations Authority of Guinea.

YAOVI ATOHOUN

Hello everyone. My name is Yaovi Atohoun from ICANN Staff Working as Director for Stakeholder Engagement Operation for Africa. Thank you.

THELMA QUAYE

Thank you. And if there's anyone I didn't mention, apologies. Please let me know through the inbox and we'll give you the floor at a later time. At this point, I just want to thank you all for your presence. And I'll hand you over to Erik who will take us through the outline of the blueprint that we've been developing. Just an overview. The blueprint is one that has been supported kindly by ICANN together with GIZ. And the idea is to create a guideline for our member states as well as the whole of Africa on what to do when it comes to Internet governance. So Erik, over to you please.

ERIK ALMQUIST

Thank you, Thelma. Thank you, Lacina Kone. Ladies and gentlemen, Your Excellencies, very happy to be here with you today. As Thelma mentioned, this is a blueprint for the Smart Africa countries. Smart Africa Alliance now encompasses over 40 countries in Africa out of approximately 54 in total. Even though this is for Smart Africa countries, the intention is for all purposes that this is a blueprint that could work for the continent. Next page. Our firm was introduced in Seattle at ICANN 82. So I will not dwell on this, but suffice to say that our company is a company of world's

first oil tanker, world's first Internet bank, world's first scientific calculation of broadband speed upgrades. We've done 10 projects historically with Smart Africa. We worked in total in 45 African countries and most recently had the great pleasure of working with Smart Africa on the launch of the ANCA, the African Network of Cyber Security Authorities, where the vote on the Constitution was taken on the 3rd of February this year. Now, Julia, page number three.

The blueprint for Internet governance in Africa. On paper, it looks simple. In reality, it's anything but, and we'll come to that. But first of all, it is about defining who are the stakeholders of Internet governance across the African continent. Secondly, identify major challenges and fault lines. And Ms. Lacina Kone elaborated on some of those fault lines that are visible and are high up on the ministerial tables across the continent as we speak. And so these major challenges are currently being mapped by me and the team that you got introduced to a moment ago by Chihab, Mihael, Mert, Tony, and everyone else, Robert on Team Sense Strategy. And thirdly, someone has said that a problem well defined is half solved. And there's some truth in that. Once we've established what are the major fault lines and what is the priority list, then we will move to solutions. And those solutions will become the blueprint and the plan for addressing Internet governance in Africa. And this will be presented in Moscow on the last days of October at ICANN 84. We move to the next page.

Now, all of you sitting in this room, you know what Internet governance is. You are indeed the architects, the present day architects of Internet governance in your respective domains. You know how complex this chain is and how many facets it incorporates. And you also know that it all starts with the stakeholders because with no stakeholders, there's no need for an Internet and, of course, no need for Internet governance. And the stakeholders, well, you know your history. You know that the stakeholders in the very early days started with ARPANET 1969. But it moved from the realms of Pentagon to the university system in the U.S. And then the Internet proliferated. The Buckingham Palace caught on in 1976 earlier than most people realize with the first e-mail sent by the late Queen Elizabeth II and so forth. The Internet of Things is older than most people think. First Coca-Cola vending machine was connected in 1980. And nowadays, of course, the Internet is used by the private sector, the public sector, citizens, by civil society, by the technical and academic community, as well as international and multilateral organizations. And the last thing, international multilateral organization are a part together with the technical and academic community that underline and upholds the principle of multistakeholderism on which the Internet is founded based on the principle that it's not one individual entity that controls the wonderful creation that we call the Internet.

There are multiple principles that are designed to balance the needs of various stakeholder groups in Africa and throughout the world. These principles, some of the most known are principles

such as net neutrality that, as you know, came in the forefront in the U.S. with commercial interests trying to overrule the original principles of the Internet. But there are many more, universal access, affordability, inclusivity, freedom of expression, rights to privacy, data protection, cybersecurity, network stability, openness, transparency, and accountability that Mr. Kone mentioned in his opening speech. All of these principles, which are a combination of express principles but also induce principles through the work of various committees, are basically transcended into the protocols and laws that we see on a daily basis. In the technical standardization committees such as ITU, ICANN, IETF, and so forth, and in the encryption protocols in DNS and IP address governance. But we also see it in policy guidelines, national ICT policies, regional digital strategies, in legal frameworks, legal frameworks related to data protection and privacy laws, DPP, GDPR, and so forth, cybercrime and content regulation.

All of this is very beautiful, but it would be toothless unless there was an element of enforcement as well. And that is why when we are talking Internet governance in Africa, we need to talk about both the standards and its enforcement. And on Wednesday, we're going to talk a little bit more about the reality on ground in Africa. But Africa lacks, as a continent, enforcement to a great degree. And that will be one of the main discussion topics on Wednesday.

Why is this so very urgent now for Africa and for the world? Well, for the world, before we go to Africa, if Internet governance is lapsed in Africa, the rest of the world is affected and is affected in many

ways. It is affected by cybercrime and cyber theft. It's also affected by lack of progress, lack of commercial development. Africa is the continent right here and now that has the biggest potential of them all in the world. 1.6 billion inhabitants officially, although the real number might be higher, which means that it's a population larger than China. It's larger than India. It's also larger than it looks on the map, because of the square projection of a round planet. You can fit the U.S., China, European Union, India easily inside the map of Africa. And indeed Africa has the youngest population, 19.3 average ages according to World Meter in the latest figures.

So there's an enormous potential, and apart from the already highest population growth on the planet, there is also the prophecy by many established institutions that Africa can and will overtake Asia as the fastest growing continent in terms of economic growth. But this will only happen with a well-functioning Internet because the digital economy and the repercussions in the real economy of the digital economy can only function with a functioning Internet and therefore a functioning Internet governance. In what used to be in the recent past a digital gap in terms of connectivity is nowadays a digital divide based on affordability in the African continent, and it is fast becoming a digital divide based on countries' ability to harness the full potential of AI and 6G in a safe and inclusive manner. So on the one hand, Africa has the chance of leapfrogging other regions and really catch up now with 6G and AI with a well-functioning Internet and a governance around it, but on

the flip side, it could also risk falling further behind if this does not happen.

And it is for these very reasons that Smart Africa, in their wisdom, together with Burkina Faso, decided to launch this program, well-needed project, as backed and under the leadership of Burkina Faso and backed by ICANN. And this is an opening session. We will go more into the details. We are about two months into the project, but I will tell you where we stand today, and we will dive deeper on Wednesday. Next page.

And so the first three deliverables are done. We have submitted the diagnostics report to the Smart Africa Secretariat last week, and we are embarking – we have well progressed on the stakeholder mapping. The remaining steps of this project is the clustering guidelines in the long-term vision report, the continental roadmap for Internet governance, and the foundations for effective implementation, and the launch of the framework, which will take place on the last days of October this year in Muscat, Oman.

And we swap page to page number seven, and this is where we are, two weeks – sorry, two months in the running at ICANN 83, 9th of June. And on Wednesday, we will show some early results on the fault lines in Africa. And we swap page again to page number eight. This outlines the morning session on Wednesday, which will start at 10:00, and we will invest 90 minutes together discussing observations on the ground in Africa on Wednesday. Ladies and

gentlemen, thank you very much, and I hope to see you all on Wednesday. Thank you.

THELMA QUAYE

Thank you very much, Erik. And at this point, I'd like to request if there's any comments, questions, clarification, before we move on to the next session.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER

Thank you very much. I mean, for a long time in Africa, internet governance has been driven by the private sector and the civil society, and I applaud Smart Africa for taking this initiative to bring the government at the forefront of internet governance. Thank you.

ABDALMONEM GALILA

Actually, this is the first time to attend as a representative for this session, so forgive me for this question. I am looking to know what are the return of investment, the long-term and the short-term from this project. Maybe you said it before, the return of this project, the long-term one and the short-term one. I am new for this, so sorry.

ERIK ALMQUIST

So the timelines are as follows. First of all, it's a six-month project. It will give input, I would say, in the next four or five years. That's approximately the timeline. Who knows what happens after five

years? I think it's a feasible timeline for our perspective on internet governance in Africa.

EMMANUEL VITUS

Okay, so this is Emmanuel Vitus, and let me speak now in the capacity of coordinator of the West African IGF. In the past, we had other organizations that have worked on blueprints like this. Maybe these questions would have come in Seattle. Unfortunately, I was not in the room. What would be different? I know [inaudible] did a lot of work in terms of research, in terms of stakeholder mapping, in terms of putting in place the guiding principles. So what are the particular differences from those previous blueprints that we got from the African Union?

ERIK ALMQUIST

From our perspective, what we can see is that ICANN is coming together with Smart Africa. Smart Africa is backed by the prime ministers and presidents across Africa. So there's a tremendous mass of political force this time around, and this should not, of course, be a paper tiger. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, as they say. This is about implementation, and this is not an academic project. Let's be clear about this. This is a practical project, backed by the political leadership of Africa.

LACINA KONE

Yeah, if I can, if I may, we are about pragmatism. The CAIGA, which is the Council of African Internet Governance, it's just like a Council

of African Regulators, Smart Africa. It's not a paper. It's just like CAITA, Council of African IT Agency. It's not a paper. It's just like the, how do you call this, ANCA, the African Network of Cyber Security Authority. It's not just on a paper. They meet every three, four months. With all due respect for [inaudible], we are living in a crisis moment now, that I could ask you questions. Where is [inaudible]? Where is all this paper we put together? And also to piggyback on what my brother said, yes, Smart Africa will be trying to pull the effort together, to coordinate effort, to be able to come out of this crisis, I'm not saying with a victory, because there is not really a winner. It is, if we are living in a multi-stakeholder platform area, there is also a multi-polarity. The only thing that can create a stickiness together, it is a trust. But there is no trust today in AFRINIC. So the government has to step in to make sure the multi-stakeholder platform is working well, then the government will step back for the private sector to lead. But there is no multi-stakeholder platform if there is no governance and guidance from the government. That's for sure. If we were to live only in the private sector in Africa, it's a wild, wild west. And we've seen this for the past 25 years. I'm saying this and I know exactly what I'm talking about. What this blueprint will allow, it will allow each country member on our continent to know exactly what to do and what to empower in terms of private sector for the continuation of the governance. Because no matter what you do, the domain name, the IP addresses, they're only locally significant and that locality, the IP addresses, they're only locally significant and the significance of this locality, their country and behind countries,

each country, there are reputation. So stepping in to make sure we have a transparent governance and stepping back to make sure it's working properly. That's the only thing Smart Africa is going to do and is doing right now. Just have to be very clear. This Council of African Internet Governance Authority, it is not an authority to be able to be wielding power on the private sector and the management of IP resources. No, it's to make sure Africa is respected when you talk about internet governance. At the moment, let's be frank, it is not respected because we fail to take our own responsibility. Thank you.

CATHERINE ADEYA

I don't even know what else to say. Yeah, but I mean, just listening to you, I'm not, what you're saying, there's a lot of truth in what you're saying, even for people like us who worked in the area for over 20 years. I think I see a real opportunity here and maybe we give this opportunity a chance. And in giving the opportunity a chance, we see what, I think once you get into it on Wednesday and as we see things coming out, it'll be evident where the gaps have been because gaps are there and that's not my place. What I would like to request, I'm hoping it will come up on Wednesday or later on, talk of Africa lacks enforcement. Whenever I hear those kind of things, I would like to unpack it a little bit. And when you talk about it, maybe you'll share, is it a common thread? Are there examples of places where there's clear progress and there can be a demonstration effect? Are there others that are completely lagging behind? Because as the CEO says, if you're to get it right, sometimes

we have to speak the truth. And the truth is, look, it's Uganda who's doing it right. Is there something we can learn there? And that's what I'm hoping would come out of this, rather than what used to happen in the past and the blanket thing, oh, all Africans can run, all Africans cannot run, you know, kind of thing. Thank you.

ERIK ALMQUIST

So just to comment on that, on Wednesday we will be discussing both the fallacies, the challenges, but also best practice. And it is true that if we were to bring all of Africa up to the standard of the best practice countries, we would not have a problem in Internet governance. Thank you.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER

Thank you. Before we come to you, yes please, go ahead. Okay, thank you, Chair, for the opportunity. I think I was happy that one of the first things that the CEO addressed was the current, the AFRINIC mess, because, I mean, it does go without saying that it has reflected poorly on our Internet governance as a region. And as we are working towards engineering a solution to the current mess, I think, let me point out the important fact that as we are working towards engineering a solution to fix and bury this problem once and for all, let us also take note of the underlying situations and the gaps that have made us arrive to this situation. We had a lot of gaps, and if we are to create a situation that does not address all of these challenges, we might close this chapter again, and in the next five, six or seven years, we are still going to find ourselves in that same

mess. So I want us, in the spirit of transparency that the DG has reflected earlier on, I want that same transparency to be applied as we engineer a solution that is going to address the current mess, so that we do not find ourselves in the same mess as we are going to the future. Thank you.

THELMA QUAYE

Thank you very much. So if you bear with us, once the President of the Ad Hoc Committee comes in, he will share all the updates, progress, and the plans as well. So the last comment, and then we'll move on to the next session.

LEONARD OBONYO

Thank you, Chair. Just for the record, Leonard Obonyo from the Commonwealth. I mean, away from the politics, times have changed. When you look at the work that has been done in previous years, a lot has changed in technology, with the era of AI, Internet of Things, and other emerging technology. So it was about time for someone to step up and update the records. Two, Smart Africa brings together governments who are in charge of not just the tech sector, but other sectors. And right now, ICT is not only an enabler for other sectors, but other sectors are participating in ICT. eHealth, eEducation, eAgriculture. Ten years ago, we would come to ICANN meetings, and it's only tech people. Right now, we have people from across the board, people in education, people in agriculture, people in health, attending ICANN meetings. So it's important that the blueprint and the statutory instruments are forward-looking

and inclusive to these sectors, because they're going to play a big role in the economies in Africa moving forward.

THELMA QUAYE

Thank you very much. The comments are very well noted, and without much ado, I will move on to the next session. If you could please go on to the next slide. Next. Next slide. Next. Next, please. Yeah, the next slide. Thank you. So over here, if you could please just go to the next slide. I'll give an overview of what we are doing at Smart Africa. It's a number of things that transcends the blueprints, as well as CAIGA. When we started this work, we did a thorough landscape analysis, and we realized that there are a number of things that we needed to do, besides, you know, building AFRINIC, and you've just said it, besides supporting AFRINIC, besides developing a blueprint.

For us, one of the key things that we realized was the low level of African representation at events or at places where decisions are being made, right? And so that was, if you see, that's a huge pillar for us to make sure that the voice of Africa is heard on the stages that are very important to policymaking, to anything related to internet governance. And I'll come to how we are doing that. The next one is on the regulation and policies. You know, as Erik has mentioned, the policies either do not exist or are very fragmented. So how then do we support our countries to be able to develop the right policies, the right regulations, and even govern in the right way, right? Because traditionally, we think of regulation as very

punitive. How do we make them more innovative in regulation? The third for us is on collaboration and diplomacy. How do we collaborate? Somebody around the table mentioned that if our internet governance is weak in Africa, it doesn't only affect Africa. It affects other continents that surround Africa. That means weak cyber security. And in cyber security, you know, your weakest link is your next neighbor who doesn't know what not to do or what to do. And so it's important that we are creating these partnerships and encouraging the diplomacy that will help an overall health of the internet governance. And then finally is the infrastructure sovereignty.

So for us, these are the four main pillars that we look at when it comes to internet governance. And on the first one, we have been training our policy and decision makers, leveraging the platform that we have called the Smart Africa Digital Academy. And the focus here is to empower them, to support them to be present at these meetings, not only being present, but also having the technical know-how and even the ability to speak. And we know within the context from where they come from. The second is on the regulation is what we have just discussed on the blueprint. The blueprint is going to help our member states to develop either regulation, strategy, policies in a contextual manner. And over here, I want to just emphasize the fact that this is not a blueprint we have come up with in Smart Africa. We've done many blueprints. We have cyber security, we have Smart cities, we have broadband, and in all of them, they have not stopped at being a

document. For each of them, once the blueprint is approved by the heads of state, we go ahead to support countries who are interested who come forward to develop either strategy, policies, that will support their contextual case in their countries.

The third one is a collaboration and diplomacy where, and this is where we are creating CAIGA, the Council of Internet Governance Authorities in Africa, to share knowledge, to have peer sessions, to learn from each other, so that all countries at least can be at a certain threshold when it comes to Internet governance.

The fourth one would be the infrastructure sovereignty, and that would be protecting the Internet infrastructure that we have, and making sure that countries hold sovereignty when it comes to their infrastructure. And so for us, under the umbrella of Internet governance, these are the main four pillars. Of course, it's underpinned by the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa by the AU, which we also were part of developing, and so that serves as a framework in whatever that we do. Just to assure you that we ensure that there's no duplication, to the point of my brother from Togo, we do ensure that there's no duplication. Whatever it is that the AU has done, we look at it and see how we complement. Next, please. Next slide. I think I've exhausted this in terms of the challenges, so please go to the next slide.

The objectives of CAIGA.

So in creating CAIGA, which is the Council of Africa's Internet Governance Authorities, one, we want to ensure there's strategic

representation, two, we want to ensure that our frameworks are inclusive. Inclusive is very important to us, because not all the countries are at the same level. And if we do not bring them together, what you see is that the first countries are always the first, and the last countries are always behind. And by bringing them together, you realize that there's a certain peer exchange, peer learning, and countries that were seen to be lagging now take some momentum, and they are able to speed up.

Of course, there's also the infrastructure sovereignty. So you see that outcome to it later in the membership of CAIGA. We ensure that we have the whole multi-stakeholder approach so that the council has representatives from IXPs, IP registries, people who can advocate for sovereignty on the internet governance infrastructure. We also want to encourage public-private collaboration with CAIGA. We understand that at the heart of internet governance is a multi-stakeholder approach that includes everyone. And just to highlight also that at Smart Africa, one of our core manifesto statements is to put private sector at the heart of development. We do not move without the private sector, and so we are very, very aware of the need to bring in the private sector into this discussion, as well as civil society. And finally is cyber diplomacy and global influence, making sure that we are collaborating properly with our neighbors, creating the collaboration that is required to make sure that we are cyber ready. And overall, we want this council to be able to define strategic objectives in Africa's internet governance. We wanted to support

the creation of inclusive internet governance frameworks, and also advocate for the place of Africa where it has to be. Next please.

So in terms of the membership that we have suggested for CAIGA, one, we are looking at regulators, that is our government and our policy makers. So we are thinking the ministries of ICT, the regional economic communities, key representatives from national internet governance tax forces. So that will be a number of you here in this room. We are also looking at the private sector and industry leaders. We are looking at technical and regulatory authorities, and this I'm referring to the ccTLD and DNS managers. We are also looking at academia and civil society, as well as the AF star community. We are aware of their presence and their influence on internet governance in Africa, and we are looking to have them as part of CAIGA. Next please.

In terms of roadmap and next steps, we started this journey last year. At this point, we have been able to prepare some draft documents in terms of the proposal on statutes, constitutions, the governance structure, which is a draft and a proposal. We would share it with the Council of ICT Ministers, which is one of the organs in Smart Africa, at the upcoming Transform Africa Summit in July. Pending their validation, we want to also work with the community between July and September once we get the approval, and launch CAIGA in the upcoming ICANN 84. Once we have gone through that process in 2026, we want to start the operationalization. This is our

roadmap. As working group members, we also call for more inputs, more ideas. We are open for your suggestions as well. Next please.

That was the end of my presentation, showcasing an overview of what we are doing. At this point, before we open the floor for questions and discussions, I would like to invite Molehe, the Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee. He will give us an update on what we have been doing regarding AFRINIC, and after that we will open the floor for questions and discussions. So over to you, Moele.

MOLEHE WESI

Thank you very much, Thelma. May I be please given a co-host right, so that I can project from my side? Thank you. Good afternoon once more. I think one will be very brief, considering the late hour of the day. My task, ladies and gentlemen, it's quite easy. It's just to share the hard work that myself and the other committee members have undertaken since ICANN 81. But as a disclaimer, as much as one indicated is from South Africa, I'm not speaking for the country. This is in my capacity as the Ad Hoc Committee Chair. I have to disclose that knowing that my country is represented in GAC. So I have to acknowledge the protocol. With that said, there has been a number of developments. Some that one list will be talking to have been taken over by time. But to kick off things, I think it's important to acknowledge the committee members. There's 10 of us in the committee, of course, supported by Smart Africa Secretariat. I see some of the colleagues in the room. And

myself chairing the committee, and of course, the Deputy Chair being Ms. Anne-Rachel Inne from Niger.

So without really wasting more time, just to get into our mandate, we have a very simple crystallized mandate, summarizing those six bullet points. But in the main, really to work with Smart Africa and many other stakeholders across the continent and the diaspora to understand the complexities of the issues faced by AFRINIC. Furthermore, develop frameworks on how to combat or engage in these particular problems. Come up with feasible solutions. And more so, a roadmap on how to sustain these developments and ensure, of course, this particular roadmap aligns with the resolution taken by the Board of Smart Africa. More so, come up with feasible solutions. And more so, a roadmap on how to sustain these developments. Today I'm going to talk about how to supervise and implement this particular roadmap once it has been developed and accepted by the board.

Moving right along, I think I have summarized some of the key and strategic developments. As indicated, some have been overtaken by time, but you'll just bear with me as I walk you through those key activities. Under the elections themselves, I think you have seen the lists of candidates being circulated. We have, of course, on our side, been privy to some of those developments pre the formulation or compilation of some of the lists. I think it has been one of those tough decisions to remain impartial while allowing processes from AFRINIC to unfold, supported, of course, by Smart Africa to ensure that credible and capable individuals are

nominated, and I think the process speaks for itself to a large extent. It goes without saying, and I think I can never emphasize it, the committee and many other stakeholders have raised the concern of voter fragmentation. As a saying in my own home language from South Africa, you can never have two bulls in one kraal. So that speaks to what was highlighted there, and I think it's quite a serious problem whereby if, of course, you have too many candidates vying, which of course it's fair, but it is only fair if the community itself comes together and pulls behind credible candidates that they have identified. I think it has been noted by the DG there has been extensive collaborations and engagements that have taken place with ICANN. It speaks to itself with the most recent notification from ICANN on its position in relations to the AFRINIC elections. There were workshops. Some, I believe, have taken place, and some engagements are still to take place leading up, of course, to the elections. We were appraised as the committee on these developments, and we do support them, and we enthuse everyone around the room and also joining online to partake and really behind these workshops. The regulators have been engaged to speak to their local internet registries to bring forth or identify those contacts and ensure that there's equitable participation from all member states of Smart Africa and all those that hold resources from AFRINIC.

Smart Africa convened a bilateral engagement comprising of, I think, a little above 25 ministers across the continent, which is a great achievement considering the large number of representation

that is required. It was quite a robust – from the feedback we received, quite a robust engagement between Smart Africa and its member states to ensure that issues that are critical to the digital economy of the continent are discussed and tabled, and also highlighting the importance of AFRINIC as a key stakeholder in unlocking that particular potential. Furthermore, it was noted numerous communication was shared with the official receiver. Unfortunately, no response thus far to some of the issues and concerns that have been highlighted. These are further re-emphasized by the communication shared by the ICANN CEO with, of course, the official receiver.

With that said, we move on to the risks, plan B, and the next steps. There is a legal concern, contrary to popular belief as articulated by the leader and CEO of Cloud Innovation, that we should not be alarmed as an African community, but it really raises an alarm bell that someone who you are engaged in in legal disputes is now listed in one way or the other as a director on your company registration documents. If we are not alarmed and if we did not know there is publications of such, there are numerous articles surrounding this. We further emphasized the risk of the voter fragmentation, and I think, like I said, we cannot stress this enough in light of what is developing. We are working, of course, with Smart Africa on a plan B. Due to the complexities of this plan B, I think it would be very premature to share it with the collective, but trust me when I say we are observing all due prudence to ensure that the rights of those that have resources from AFRINIC are protected and

those that are impacted by not being able to access or gain access directly or indirectly to those resources.

Next steps, of course, one has passed whereby there was a closure, and now subsequently there has been an announcement of the candidates, both independent and also regional. It goes without saying this particular point leaks back to the concern and the risks that we reflect. We have put forth a proposal to have a technical observation committee. This is to ensure that the elections amidst the concerns that have been raised are transparent and everyone else is held to account.

Summarizing it as I step off, there are ongoing engagements in terms of the ICP2 process. Notably, while it has been open to the public, we have motivated members of the ad hoc committee to really, they are individual countries and many other AFRINIC resource owners to partake in that process. So I think colleagues would like to ask questions as I step off from the platform. Thank you very much.

THELMA QUAYE

Thank you very much. So at this point we'll open the floor if there's any question, comment. No question or comment? All right, so I'd like to piggyback on what Molehe has just mentioned in terms of the risk and I think around the table we need to discuss and have a way forward in terms of fragmented votes. It's important that we come together, and at the end we all want AFRINIC to be great again. And so my call here is can we look at coming together, let's

not go in different ways, this camp, this camp, it will not help us. Once we have a common enemy, that alone is a good uniter. So let's come from the perspective of having a common enemy and come together, consolidate votes and then we can agree on the candidates that we all want to vote for. The candidates list were out this morning, I saw it this morning, there are quite a number of them. So it's important that we all come together and agree on who we want as an African community with one common enemy. Otherwise, we are defeated even before we go into the battle. So yeah, that's what I wanted to add whilst we wait. If there's any comments, questions, the floor is open.

[PAULOS NYIRENDA]

Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Chair. I wanted to reflect on an earlier comment that was made specifically on AFRINIC. I'm Paulos Nyirenda, I'm from Malawi. I think it's extremely important. I was a board member for AFRINIC some time ago. I think it's extremely important, as was reflected at the beginning, to address the fundamental problem at AFRINIC. And I am not convinced that this is being addressed. So if we continue with AFRINIC as it is, probably this problem will recur two or three years from now, because the fundamental problem has not been addressed. So, as Smart Africa looks at this, I think we really need to look at the fundamental problem. We are now going through this process as if everything is normal. I don't think it is. So, this is my call. Address the fundamental problem.

MICHAEL

Thank you very much, Chair. And probably just to piggyback on my colleague's submission, my name is Michael. I'm from Uganda. I think at AFRINIC 81 it was in Istanbul, we did have a side discussion about AFRINIC. And specifically with colleagues around the continent. And rightly so, during that discussion, many of the problems were around governance, etc., etc. And the good thing is through this presentation, some of them seem to be addressed, one way or another. But again, I believe many of them haven't yet been addressed. Maybe the plan B addresses them, I'm not sure. But I think, quite frankly, we need to be frank with ourselves and also transparent in terms of dealing with these issues. Otherwise, it will just become one of those things that just keep coming back over and over and over again. Thank you.

LACINA KONE

If I may ask you in this case, what are your suggestions to solve this?

MICHAEL

Well, like I did say, some of them have been addressed through this presentation. There were issues of governance. Yes, I know we have elections coming up. I remember one of the issues that came up also was legally, then, in terms of where AFRINIC is located and what laws then apply to whatever is happening there. And whether that shouldn't be elevated from maybe the country's law to maybe the African laws. Because in the country's laws also, I think we are

dictating a certain course of action in terms of dealing with the issues. But again, the problems are many, and I'm not sure if we can exhaustively discuss them within this meeting and the time that we have. But maybe the suggestion would be to break them down in terms of maybe governance, in terms of membership. Because also the other risk is that members also and the communities around Africa sort of take a step back in terms of participating in solving this because of what is happening. So maybe to break them down in understanding what they are at different levels and then looking at them critically at those levels.

LACINA KONE

If I may, I've been blamed a lot of times, but it's okay for my boldness. The [inaudible] just mentioned, we can't be sitting here just business as usual. All of the Africans in this room, if they follow our independence, if they sit down to business as usual, you wouldn't be here. And the fundamental question you should ask yourself, what are you doing for the future generations? The problem is very simple. We all failed collectively 25 years ago, including myself. I was too young. I didn't know anything. AFRINIC was registered as a private company in a country which has laws. That's one side of the coin. The other side of the coin, there are bylaws, which are the internal law of AFRINIC, governed by board, board elected by community of users. But when 25 years ago it was being put together, it is serving a public purpose, but was it well protected? That's the question. So problems happen. People have ambitions. Private sector have ambitions. Government have

ambitions. We cannot solve everything because not all of these problems were created at once. It piled up. So now our continent reputation is tarnished. Maybe you don't want to say that, but I'm allowed to say it. It is tarnished. In this conference here, when you talk about Africa, we're not able to solve our own problem. Yet, we like to victimize ourselves. Why victimize ourselves? Let's do what's right. And what's right, this is what is right. Someone has to speak up. How do we solve this? The country has law on one side. It's a corporate that is a private entity. On the other side, there's a bylaw. There's a board. Board is appointed by people. Those community of users are there. They are from countries. Why? Because IP resources are being used by countries. So number one issue, I always say in a multi-stakeholder approach, where are these IPs being used? Are they being used in China? Excuse my French. It's in Africa. Africa is over 50 countries. So the government has a say in how the IP should be used. Put the safeguard because we know there are greeds. But if we don't do anything, forget about digital transformation on our continent. Today, it's been two and a half years. No one can get an IP. Because of what? A private sector against a country generating over 2.5 GDP? That's powerless. They call this toothless tiger. When you look at it, it's a tiger. It has no teeth. It can't bite. So are we going to sit down business as usual? So we go back to the fundamentals.

I'm speaking, I'm talking about this, but this is very important. Why is it important? If we don't do anything, already, AFRINIC today belongs partly by a cloud innovation. I would say it. Which is a

private entity. Whether we win or we don't win. By law, who gave AFRINIC those IPs to manage it? It's ICANN. Once they're done with Africa, don't be surprised if they don't attack any other region. I touched the wood. It is a reality. That's why our collective effort is important. It is not a moment of empathy. Because the person opposing us, there's no empathy. There's no sympathy. You have to take a decision in a very cold-blooded way. Deliberate, intentionally deliberate. Not passively optimistic. Things are going to get resolved. We passed that. When we have our private sector writing to us, they cannot get an IP, and we have an institution, A private institution, where the shareholder, it's another entity, controlling the entire 1.4 billion populations and we sit business as usual? Something has to be done. Let's go back to the drawing board. The drawing board is, what is the mandate of AFRINIC with ICANN? Who owns those IPs? We may not be able to dismantle AFRINIC. I will say it here. But those IP resources belong to someone. Vis-a-vis all those institutions, is it right to behave like that? In a multi-stakeholder environment, with transparency, with good governance. If not, then you need to act. Not yesterday. You need to act now. On our part, Smart Africa, we will follow this till the last breath. You know why? Those IP domain names are being used in our countries, which are sovereign. We are the user. We are the one paying. So we have something to say. We do not want it in that country. Period. We had extraordinary [inaudible]. It was very clear. How can you allow someone who is corrupted to be participating in an election? And we sit down like business as usual. I don't want to get emotional. But we have to solve this in a cold-

blooded way. No emotions. They know what they're doing. Our countries are sovereign. We do not want the future generation to be looking back, "Who are the stupid people who are sitting around the table and make those law and actually outsource our future which is not even determined yet?" No. We say no. So something must be done. We may not be able to discuss Plan B now, but we have a Plan B, and we have a Plan C. Thank you.

ABDALMONEM GALILA

Thank you. Yes, please go ahead. Yes, this is Abdelmanem Galila for The Record. Actually, I have one question inside my mind. The first one, did we have before a clear governance model for AFRINIC to keep it sustainable? I think the answer is no. That's why we have the crisis. So we are going before election. So do we currently have a clear governance model for AFRINIC to follow in order to make AFRINIC sustainable for the future of AFRINIC and for the future for AFRINIC project for Africans?

LACINA KONE

We are at a point, we call this a kitchen sink strategy. I will hit you with anything I have in the kitchen. Do you know what does that actually mean in the plain old English? We cannot sit down to say we are not going for election. It's called the strategy of empty chair. We don't want to go for election. Okay. The election is not transparent. We all know. They will elect the board they want. They know. They will do whatever they want. The same garbage. You know, garbage in, garbage out. You don't do that. You mobilize

your base. We have a chance. The candidate list is out. We mobilize our stakeholder who are ethical, responsible for African sovereignty. It's not a greed. We go for election. We get our board people. If we get them elected, we introduce the changes. But we do not start from plan B. Plan B is who gave the mandate initially AFRINIC to manage those IP resources in a corrupted way. It's called kitchen sink strategy. I will hit you with anything that's in a kitchen sink.

THELMA QUAYE

Thank you. Thank you, DG. So we'll take, are there any further comments apart from my brother from Togo?

LACINA KONE

I want to say one word. I do not want anyone in this conference to undermine African government. When you are facing the government, the government in 2025 is not the government in 2020. We all graduated. Diaspora, we all came back. People have the mentality Africa is weak, has a weak institution, is corrupted. So we will continue doing the same thing. Don't get it wrong. Don't undermine, don't underscore African government. It will not happen under our watch. That is the message very clear. If you think Africa is the same as 2020, thank you and good luck. But it's not going to happen this way because we will follow through until we get a transparent, we get our continent respected worldwide. We do not want to be coming to these conferences and Africa is

seen as a corrupt country. We cannot even govern ourselves. I owe it to a future generation. Thank you.

EMMANUEL VITUS

Thank you very much. I'm going to use our interpreters. Congratulations, DG, because it's not easy to be very open in front of the issue. It's an issue with money. It's a business issue. And your institution, your life is at stake. Congratulations. But as a community, because I think that when we started with this crisis, we elected wolves to take care of sheep. And now we're going to have an election that is going to be disorderly. When you look at the list of candidates, we have more than 50 people. This is not positive. But we are at ICANN for many years, and ICANN has and owns those addresses that were distributed. And this is the source of the conflict today. As a community, we cannot vote. But those that can vote use their proxies. Can we sign something? Can we have some concrete actions we can take before the election? Because we are numerous in Africa. We have a strong community. We're ashamed of what's going on. And we meet at ICANN meetings, and we talk about AFRINIC, and we are ashamed of that, of that situation. Can we sign a petition? Can we do something? I know that ICANN did some work, but as a community, are we ready? If today we can sign a petition, I'm sure that many people are ready to sign a document to explain what we think. Because I am from a small country. We have four people that can vote for nine million inhabitants.

LACINA KONE

We have House of Africa, which is a civil society movement started two, two and a half weeks ago, signing a petition to be able to activate by law 11.7 articles in the bylaw of AFRINIC, which requires 70 percent, if I'm not mistaken, 70 percent of active members of AFRINIC to say, no, we do not want AFRINIC. So you're more than welcome. Not only you, I'm encouraging everyone to voice it. You do not want to outsource your future. I am saying this. This is the 9th of June, 2025. This is a very serious matter. If you're not happy about it, then you need to voice. For us to be able to collect the 70 percent of active members to say no to masquerade and let ICANN actually do whatever is right. Because, as you know, I don't want to speak on behalf of ICANN, but ICP2 is not active yet. So we need to do our own responsibility. This is not ICANN fault. This is an African mistake, and we need to resolve it. This is not victimization. And we can't sit down and set business as usual. Then voice with the majority. Every single solution is on the table on this plan B. Everything is in plan B.

THELMA QUAYE

So we'll take the last comments, because we are being asked that we've run over by 14 minutes. So you'll be the last.

[ANTOINE DABRE]

It will be very quick. I just wanted to say that I did verify, but I am authorized to officially, from the Francophonie organization, there

are no difference in our opinion on the solutions that are being presented by the general directors. We fully support you at the Francophonie organization. And I hope that people voting will choose their continent instead of private actors.

LACINA KONE

We are looking for similar support around the table. When it doesn't make sense, use the common sense. As simple as that. If it doesn't make sense, use the common sense. What do we do? Should we sit down and say, okay, let things roll? Thank you.

[ANTOINE DABRE]

So I just double-checked with my bosses, and I was allowed to give the full support of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie to the initiative taken by Smart Africa, and also to propose any support we could provide from now on until the election. There's no difference between the views that have been expressed by the director general and the views that are shared by the Francophonie, and we hope that the African countries will have the common sense to choose their continent and not private actor, whoever it is.

LACINA KONE

I want people to know there is a life after elections. And we will never stop until we obtain our sovereignty in this matter and transparency. It doesn't matter who wins. We win, we follow. We don't win, we follow. So there is a life after election. This is to say,

until we get exactly what we want, transparency, good governance, and Africa gets its respect back on the global stage. So there is a life after. This crisis will not stop after the election. We are on until we get what we want. Thank you.

THELMA QUAYE

And I believe with that, we come to a close because after that, there is nothing else to say. I will be available, myself and my colleague Rodrigue, for any other side discussion. We will be available for that. Thank you very much. And see you around and on the corridors. Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]