United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

Africa Internet
Governance Forum

CONCEPT NOTE

Advancing Africa's Digital Future: From Global Commitments to African Action on Innovation, Inclusion and Trust

High-Level Panel Discussion
Date: 5 November 2026 (12:10 UTC; duration: 60 minutes)
Labadi Beach Hotel; Room: Adesa / Plenary Room; Accra, Ghana
Organized by: United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) & International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

Background and Rationale

Africa's digital transformation is entering a defining phase. Rapid advances in artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, expanding digital infrastructure and the growing digital economy offer significant opportunities for innovation, productivity, regional integration and sustainable development. Yet persistent gaps in meaningful connectivity, digital skills and technological capabilities, alongside growing cybersecurity risks and inequalities, could limit the continent's ability to fully capture these opportunities.

Expanding digital infrastructure, rapid advances in artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, and the growth of the digital economy are creating unprecedented opportunities for innovation, entrepreneurship, productivity, regional integration and sustainable development. At the same time, significant challenges remain. Millions of Africans still lack meaningful and affordable connectivity, digital skills gaps persist, cybersecurity threats are increasing, and inequalities in access to technology risk widening existing social and economic divides.

This transformation is unfolding within a rapidly evolving global digital governance landscape. The **Pact for the Future and its Global Digital Compact (GDC)**, together with the **WSIS+20 outcomes**, provide a renewed framework for advancing an inclusive, people-centred, development-oriented, open, safe and secure digital future. These processes reaffirm the importance of universal connectivity, digital inclusion, digital cooperation, trust and security, and responsible innovation as key enablers of sustainable development.

For Africa, the priority now is implementation. For Africa, the challenge now is to translate these global commitments into practical action aligned with the continent's own priorities, including **Agenda 2063, the African Union Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020-2030) and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**.

Against this backdrop, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) will convene a high-level multistakeholder panel at AfIGF 2026 to explore how global commitments and African priorities can be translated into concrete policies, investments, partnerships and institutional action. The discussion will focus on four interconnected dimensions: **innovation, meaningful digital inclusion, cybersecurity and trust, and a resilient and globally connected Internet ecosystem.**

Objective

The panel will examine how Africa can move **from global digital commitments to concrete and measurable African-led implementation**, that advances the AfIGF 2026 overarching theme of **"Advancing Africa's Digital Future Through Innovation, Inclusion and Trust."**

The discussion will explore:

- How Africa can accelerate **meaningful and affordable connectivity** and ensure that digital transformation creates opportunities for all, particularly women, youth, rural communities and other underserved populations.;
- How **AI and emerging technologies** can drive African innovation, productivity and economic transformation while strengthening local digital capacities, skills, entrepreneurship and technological sovereignty;
- How **cybersecurity, resilience and digital trust** can be strengthened as foundations for sustainable digital transformation;
- How Africa can strengthen its **Internet infrastructure, critical Internet resources and participation in global Internet governance** while preserving an open, secure, stable, interoperable and globally connected Internet;
- How global and continental frameworks can be translated into **coordinated and measurable implementation** at continental, regional and national levels; and
- **What partnerships, financing models and institutional arrangements are needed** to accelerate African-led digital transformation and ensure that innovation, inclusion and trust deliver sustainable development outcomes across the continent.

Guiding Questions

1. Following the **Pact for the Future, GDC and WSIS+20**, what should Africa prioritise during the next phase of digital implementation?
2. What policy reforms, investments and partnerships are required to move from connectivity towards **meaningful digital participation and an inclusive African digital economy**?
3. How can Africa leverage **AI and emerging technologie**s to drive innovation, productivity and sustainable development while building its own skills, infrastructure, innovation and governance capabilities?
4. What actions are required for Africa to strengthen its **cybersecurity, Internet resilience and digital trust** while increasing its agency and influence in global digital governance?
5. How can **Africa strengthen its voice and leadership in global digital cooperation** and Internet governance processes while advancing continental priorities through Agenda 2063, the AU Digital Transformation Strategy, the AU Continental AI Strategy, and the AfCFTA Digital Trade agenda?
6. Where can **cooperation** among African institutions, governments, the technical community, civil society and international partners deliver concrete results over the next five years?

Format and Proposed Representation

The **60-minute moderated high-level dialogue** will comprise approximately **40 minutes of panel discussion and 20 minutes of interactive engagement with participants**.

The panel will bring together **high-level voices** representing:

1. African Union Commission (AUC);
2. Economic Commission for Africa (ECA);
3. International Telecommunication Union (ITU);
4. Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN);
5. African Government;
6. Private sector representative; and
7. African Civil Society and Youth representative.

Expected Outcome

The session will identify a focused set of **African implementation priorities and pathways, and partnership opportunities** for translating global digital commitments into action. Its key messages will contribute to the **AfIGF 2026 outcomes**, while identifying areas for continued collaboration among AUC, ECA, ITU, ICANN, and the wider African multistakeholder community.

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Draft Agenda

Moderator: Afework Temtime, Economic Affairs Officer, Technology, Innovation, and Digital Transformation Section, UNECA

12:10 - 12:15 Opening

12:15 - 12:50 Panel discussion (5 minutes each)

1. Mactar Seck, Chief of Technology, Innovation, and Digital Transformation Section, UNECA
2. Christine Sund, Senior Advisor, International Telecommunication Union - Regional Office for Africa
3. Yaovi Atohoun, Director, Stakeholder Engagement & Operations for Africa – ICANN
4. Dr. Ibiso A. Kingsley-George, Head, Internet Governance, Cybersecurity & Internet Governance, Nigerian Communications Commission, Government representative
5. Winnie Kamau, Vice Chair of the Africa Internet Governance Forum (Africa IGF) Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG), Kenya, civil society representative
6. Faiza Seidu-Adam, Cybersecurity & Privacy Professional, Ghana, African Youth representative

12:50 - 13:10 General Discussion