

CONCEPT NOTE
WSIS FORUM 2023 SIDE EVENT
THEME: CYBERSECURITY AT THE CENTER OF
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN AFRICA

Cybersecurity is at the center of global security and prosperity as digitalization spurs in developed and developing countries. The challenge is to create a thriving digital society that is resilient to cyber threats and with knowledge and capabilities to exploit opportunities and manage risks. This is especially important in low- and middle-income countries, which are investing heavily in digital infrastructure to accelerate their development goals.

Africa is in the third year of implementing the Digital Transformation Strategy 2020-2030, expecting to invest massively in cyberspace. Member states – as part of digital transformation, are working to integrate digital systems with other sectors of the economy, such as finance, health, education, transport, and others. While digital transformation is crucial for sustainable development, it can pose severe cyberattacks if member states are Cybersecurity immature.

Based on ECA 2022 report, African Cybersecurity is immature compared to other regions, making the continent susceptible to cyberattacks as the African digital market is forecasted to reach USD 712 billion by 2050¹. The continent is estimated to lose Africa is losing \$4 billion annually to cybercrime². Africa's low level of preparedness in Cybersecurity is costing Member States on average 10% of their GDP³. That raises the need for the African government to establish a legal and regulatory framework on Cybersecurity and invest in capacity building to develop local talents. Only slightly more than a half of 54 African countries assessed have introduced cybersecurity legislation⁴. Further, the continent has had a shortage of 100,000 proficient cybersecurity personnel since 2020 – which will only rise as Africa's e-commerce industry expects to reach \$75 billion by 2025⁵. According to ITU, *“Africa’s levels of commitment to cybersecurity – as well as capacity for response to threats – remain low compared to other continents.”*⁶.

To support African countries to build resilience in cyberspace. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) launched the Guideline for a Model Law on Cybersecurity of African Union Member States during the 17th Internet Governance Forum (IGF) held in Addis Ababa. While the Guideline is not a binding law or legislation and does not seek to limit the operation of any national or regional law, it provides a set of guiding principles that African Member States may follow as they set out to establish standards for ensuring Cybersecurity. The model guideline is expected to provide guidance to synergize intercontinental cyber norms that enable African member states to take proactive measures to counter cyber threats.

The draft guidelines indicated essential areas that policymakers and legal experts could explore in suggesting member states implement the Lomé Declaration through national legislative processes. Recalling that on 23rd March 2022, African Heads of State and Government adopted the Lomé Declaration on Cybersecurity and the Fight Against Cybercrime in Africa to ensure Cybersecurity takes top priority at the highest level of governance.

OBJECTIVE OF THE SESSION

¹ https://techerunch.com/2022/06/08/new-report-examines-africas-growth-in-the-digital-economy-and-vc-investment-landscape/?gucounter=1&gucite_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&gucite_referrer_sig=AQAAANXrWRKs6VHaeH4Yi9YF3D13ePxGEpUkAYUjVLIQRkNodAGCc1Z2osef7Qm5jddq_vzoSWMWCYw_LpsXSkr9v9OhExVIIqO_MPCaqU3tjqRLSoCBKuIurRr73CICu5mXS3-UCJfUFmAO_Sx-c_-tjUuy4xZyt0JRC4MnFqf25XhZ

² <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/08/africa-must-act-to-address-cybersecurity-threats/>

³ <https://www.unece.org/stories/eca-launches-the-guideline-for-a-model-law-on-cybersecurity-during-the-17th-igf>

⁴ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/08/africa-must-act-to-address-cybersecurity-threats/>

⁵ <https://thegfce.org/cybercrime-and-cybersecurity-trends-in-africa/>

⁶ <https://www.itu.int/hub/2021/09/are-african-countries-doing-enough-to-ensure-cybersecurity-and-internet-safety/>

To support African countries to build resilience in cyberspace. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) launched the Guideline for a Model Law on Cybersecurity of African Union Member States during the 17th Internet Governance Forum (IGF) held in Addis Ababa. While the Guideline is not a binding law or legislation and does not seek to limit the operation of any national or regional law, it provides a set of guiding principles that African Member States may follow as they set out to establish standards for ensuring Cybersecurity. The model guideline is expected to provide guidance to synergize intercontinental cyber norms that enable African member states to take proactive measures to counter cyber threats.

The draft guidelines indicated essential areas that policymakers and legal experts could explore in suggesting member states implement the Lomé Declaration through national legislative processes. Recalling that on 23rd March 2022, African Heads of State and Government adopted the Lomé Declaration on Cybersecurity and the Fight Against Cybercrime in Africa to ensure Cybersecurity takes top priority at the highest level of governance.

Objective of the Session

UNECA is the Vice-chair of the UNGIS and Chair of the WSIS Regional Commission Group for (2022-2023). Noting that Africa lags behind other regions in cybersecurity maturity, standing at 29.1% compared to Latin America and Asia/Middle-East at 35.6% and 61%, respectively. The 10% increase in cybersecurity maturity yields between 0.66% and 5.4% increase in per capita GDP in Africa. Specifically, only 20% of African states currently have the basic legal frameworks in place for countering cybercrime⁷.

The main objective of the side event is to capacitate Member states – policymakers and experts on cyber security on the developments in the Cybersecurity landscape in Africa. The session will:

- Present the in-depth research that clearly shows the maturity of Cybersecurity in Africa and its linkages to economic growth (Gross Domestic Product),
- ECA will share the guideline Model law on Cybersecurity that can be used to guide Member States to develop Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Legal and Regulatory Frameworks in their countries.
- Cybersecurity experts, as part of the panel, will share development and opportunities for Cybersecurity in the continent and responds to questions and comments from Member States.

Format

- It will be held in a hybrid format allowing onsite and online participation.

Speakers/ Presenters:

- Mr. Jean-Paul Adams, Director of Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management Division. UNECA
- Dr. Jimson Olufuye, Cybersecurity Experts, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) Present on the Cybersecurity for Development in the 4th Industrial – Revolution – 2022 Report

⁷ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/cybersecurity-trust-fund/overview>

- Prof. Nnenna Ifeanyi-Ajufo, Cybersecurity Experts, Chief of Technology and Innovation Section, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa - Guideline for a Model Law on Cybersecurity
- Ms. Anat Lewin – Senior Digital Development Expert, World Bank
- Dr. Martin Koyabe - Senior Manager AU-GFCE Project, Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE)

Moderator:

- Mr. Mactar Seck, Chief of Technology and Innovation Section, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa