

## **Recommendations from the Pre-event convened by the Association for Progressive Communications the Nepad Agency of the African Union Commission, and the Center for Democracy and Technology at the African IGF 2013 on establishing sustainable and effective multi-stakeholder participation in ICT policy processes in Africa**

### **Background**

Inclusive policy processes open to participation from all stakeholders have become essential to addressing issues affecting knowledge and information societies.<sup>1</sup> Along with human rights and people-centred development, the of participation of **all** stakeholders is captured in the WSIS outcome documents. It is also recognised as a constructive mechanism for achieving those goals.

### **Integrating access to information, public participation, and transparency in ICT policy processes**

- Helps identify national or regional priorities and specific issues that affect social and economic development;
- Drives national policy formulation and bridges gaps by virtue of their inclusiveness;
- Enables research and analysis that can inform policy formulation and subsequent implementation;
- Contributes to raising public awareness of ICT-related policy issues and encourages community engagement;
- Pools resources, expertise, and other capabilities from a diverse range of stakeholders, thereby strengthening the capacity to effect change;
- Enables sharing information on problems and solutions;
- Promotes greater levels of understanding and trust between various stakeholders;
- Promotes mutual respect and collaboration, and informed debate, even in cases where consensus is not reached;
- Builds the capacity of a wide range of individuals and communities to gain knowledge, skills and confidence, which will enable them to participate more fully in policy processes;
- Fosters stakeholder buy-in and encourage implementation and compliance;
- Enriches policy outcomes through the inclusion of additional expertise and diversity of views; and
- Constitutes the realisation of the fundamental rights to freedom of expression and association and the right to participate in the government of one's country (Articles 19, 20 and 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

### **General Recommendations for effective and inclusive multi-stakeholder policy processes**

- Public participation processes should be open to all stakeholders and their engagement should be encouraged throughout;
- Stakeholder representation should be equally valued;
- Participants should agree from the outset on the purpose, goals, and modalities of the process;
- Participants must come to the process with a willingness to work towards consensus and to engage constructively;
- Public participation in policy processes should be formalised at legislative or constitutional level (as is the case, for example, in Kenya and South Africa);

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO WSIS+10 Statement Feb. 2013. [www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/wsis/WSIS\\_10\\_Event/wsis10\\_final\\_statement\\_en.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/HQ/CI/CI/pdf/wsis/WSIS_10_Event/wsis10_final_statement_en.pdf)

- Multi-stakeholder policy processes and their results need to be seen as legitimate and credible;
- Consultation should occur at the early stages of policy making thereby improving buy-in and implementation;
- Stakeholder groups should develop/strengthen their deliberative structures and processes so as to more effectively engage;
- Stakeholder groups and their representatives should be accountable and transparent and report back to their constituencies;
- All stakeholders should contribute and participate in the monitoring and follow-up of the results of the process;
- Documents, proceedings, and submissions should be open and readily available to the public throughout the process to enable stakeholders to assess whether their inputs have been taken into account.
- All stakeholders are encouraged to enable remote participation to the extent that it is possible.

## **Recommendations for Specific Stakeholder Groups**

### Youth and Students

- Involvement of young people and students is critical to public participation and contributes to building future capacity. Universities and student organisations should take account of and be involved in ICT development and policies.
- We recommend that young people and students participate in multi-stakeholder processes and seek inclusion where they have not been explicitly invited.

### Government

- National governments that have shown leadership in opening policy processes to participation from other stakeholders should continue to do so and ensure that these processes are sustained over the longer term.
- Governments that have not yet adopted this approach to policy development are encouraged to do so and to using the above guidance;
- Governments need to allocate resources in national and departmental budgets to facilitate and support public participation processes;
- All appropriate levels of government, including provincial and local government, and also relevant government departments, need to be involved;
- Governments should include representatives from non-governmental stakeholder groupings in their delegations to regional and international policy forums and in the preparation of their positions for such forums.

### Regional Institutions

- Regional institutions, including the African Union, ECOWAS, COMESA, and EAC, should actively engage with non-governmental stakeholders on ICT public policy issues, in particular those relating to infrastructure development.
- Regional institutions should participate actively in multi-stakeholder ICT dialogues and forums.

### Business

- Business including small and large business entities should participate in multi-stakeholder policy dialogues and forums.

- The participation of business in such dialogues and forums can be facilitated through business associations. Where such associations do not exist, we encourage the business community to establish them.

### Civil Society

- Civil society participation needs to reflect the diversity of civil society, and include non-ICT-specific organisations and groups such as traditional leaders and human rights and faith-based organisations.
- Civil society organisations should continue to convene and self organise to build their knowledge and develop common positions on policy issues when possible.

### Media

- Media, including community media, public/state media and commercial media also social media, blogs etc., are key to raising public awareness about ICT policy, and therefore should be an active participant.

### **Recommendation on sustainable, continuous multi-stakeholder dialogue and forums**

We recommend that where such processes exist they be strengthened and sustained, and where they do not exist, they be established, taking into account the outcomes and recommendations outlined above. While the question of who should initiate or drive such processes is dependent on local contexts and issues, government participation and commitment is essential.

### **Monitoring and implementation**

We recommend the development and use of "scorecards" to monitor and assess the progress that is being made by governments and other stakeholders toward achieving the WSIS principles on participation and inclusion of all stakeholders included in the Geneva Plan of Action, as well as substantive goals included in the WSIS Action Lines. Such scorecards can be based on indicators for use throughout Africa, and can be customised to national contexts. We urge the adoption of WSIS-related scorecards to measure progress on adhering to the WSIS principles to complement reporting on implementing WSIS goals, into existing national, sub-regional, and Africa-wide multi-stakeholder processes, including the IGF process.

*This statement reflects the views of a collection of individuals from different stakeholder groups from more than 20 countries who participated in the pre-event at the African IGF 2013 on establishing sustainable and effective multi-stakeholder participation in ICT policy processes in Africa. Further consultation may be needed for localization and/or implementation at national or regional level, as appropriate.*

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