

AfPIF 2014 - Dakar, Senegal - Opening remarks for Sofie Maddens

Mr. Malick Ndiaye, Directeur de Cabinet du Ministère de la Communication, des Télécommunications et de l'Economie Numérique, Mr. Abou Karim SALL, Directeur Général de l'ARTP, Chers participants,

C'est avec plaisir que je suis devant vous aujourd'hui à l'occasion de cette conférence importante. Avant tout, je voudrais remercier nos hôtes Sénégalais, et surtout le Ministère de la Communication, des Télécommunications et de l'Economie Numérique et l'ARTP qui nous ont honoré par leur support et leur appui précieux. Merci pour votre appuie et pour tout le travail de votre équipe.

Before I go on, let me pause for a second to thank you all for coming to the event, either in person or remotely. As you all know, the major challenge of this year's forum has been the outbreak of Ebola in some countries in West Africa. Even though Senegal is still spared from an outbreak of the disease, we recognize that this is a major crisis for the region and in particular for the affected countries and our thoughts go to those in DRC, Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria where we have chapters, members, partners as well as personal friends. Our thoughts and prayers are with you all !

It was only in 2005 - a mere 9 years ago - that the world reached 1 billion Internet users. By 2015, this number will triple to 3 billion, which is a major achievement for the world. However, it also means that we still are seeing less than half of the world's population on the Internet. What do we need to do to bring the others online as well?

Africa is the continent with the highest growth of Internet penetration and has one of the fastest growing economies. Reports even show that Internet access through various broadband technologies is advancing at a higher rate in Africa compared to the rest of the world. Therefore with over 15 percent of the population in Africa with access to the Internet, then it is indeed time for Internet business in Africa. Just think of this – it is interesting to note that a 15 percent Internet penetration rate provides a valid business case for a win-win situation for both local and global content providers and network operators. There is an opportunity to lower the cost of access through more in region peering with content providers. We believe that this in turn will

drive the demand for more investment in broadband access beyond the urban centres.

The Internet Society operates at the intersection of policy, technology, and development. For more than 20 years, our global teams, working with partners around the globe, have been focused on engaging with communities of practice, sharing technical expertise and knowledge, and exchanging information to advance our mission and to extend an open, interoperable, ubiquitous and accessible Internet for people throughout the world.

As a cause-driven organization, the Internet Society works to keep the Internet open, thriving, and benefitting people across the world. We have five regional bureaus covering the globe that work closely with our more than 100 chapters to advocate for access to an open global Internet and to build local collaboration and. We truly do believe that a reliable and sustainable Internet not only dramatically enriches a country's Internet ecosystem, but also helps drive social and economic development.

Through the work of our Regional Bureaus, and here in Africa in particular, through the work of our African Regional Bureau led by Dawit Bekele, working with his team, Michuki Mwangi, Kevin Chege, Betel Hailu, Marsema Tariku as well as Anne Lord and Christine Saegesser, as well as with the support of our dedicated chapters, partners, dedicated experts and other collaborators across the continent, we aim to create an enabling environment for the growth and expansion of the Internet and work together toward strengthening and defending the open development and evolution of the Internet, including open Internet standards, technology and infrastructure development, deployment and innovation.

Our vision is to work with chapters, members, partners – in short with communities of practice across Africa and indeed across the globe – to achieve an integrated African Internet infrastructure by 2020 with Internet for all as a tool to improve economic and social standards and standing. We truly believe that people are important and that Internet development is fundamentally about people – we work for the community, with the community and in the community.

We believe that by strengthening and supporting stakeholders who are currently working in Africa and building strong communities of practice ISOC's African team is helping to sustain and improve the regional Internet ecosystem to ensure that the Internet is accessible and available to everyone.

With so many of the continent's networks not directly interconnected, initiatives to develop capacity for implementing Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) are critical. The support of ccTLDs is also a major priority. The deployment of DNSSEC and IPv6 are critically important, as is the development of mobile and wireless Internet technology. Internet governance and the promotion of the multi-stakeholder model are also issues that our team is working to develop further – again, in the community, for the community, with the community.

A great example of our work in Africa is our Interconnection and Traffic Exchange program, where ISOC has worked with many partners to change the Interconnection and Traffic exchange landscape in Africa. ISOC is also implementing the African Internet Exchange System (AXIS) project for the African Union with Best Practice workshops already held in 29 countries around Africa, and technical workshops in close to 30 countries. We have also held Regional Internet Carriers and Regional Internet Exchange Points workshops.

AfPIF is another component of our ITE program, again led by our African Bureau.

It is now five years ago that a few of Africa's ISPs, network providers and content carriers met for the first time in Nairobi, Kenya. Today, AfPIF is a widely recognized and respected forum with many and multiple participants from around the continent. The discussions have evolved from focusing on ways to improve access to infrastructure and lowering the cost of connections, to discussions within a forum where IXPs can learn the benefits of peering. There are lively discussions and exchanges on how to grow critical mass of members at participants respective IXPs and indeed discussions on how to interconnect more effectively and on how to negotiate agreements between countries.

In 2011 an OECD report highlighted that over 99.5% of interconnection are formed using "hand-shake" agreements at peering events. We are

proud to say that AfPIF is one such key event. An annual event, AfPIF was created to foster a community of practice on issues related to peering and interconnection. It brings together key stakeholders, including Internet service and content providers, IXP operators, government network managers, regulators, and policymakers. Today, the number of IXPs in the continent has increased, at the same time the content exchanged has also grown and providers now understand the benefits of exchanging content locally. AfPIF has contributed to that.

From a small gathering of 60 participants in 2009, AfPIF has grown to the major meeting it is today. Indeed, in 2013, we counted over 180 participants, and we hope to keep growing participation from peering coordinators, business development managers, policy makers and decision makers from Africa and around the world in the years to come. Yesterday, we had over 200 participants!!!

We strongly believe that the growth in participation at AfPIF is an important indicator that operators in the African region are adopting peering and interconnection strategies in order to compete both regionally and globally and understand the benefit and importance of these kinds of exchanges and discussions.

AfPIF is an effort for the community, by the community, with the community. This year, we have worked with a program committee consisting of 10 members plus two ISOC staff. We look forward to strengthening the role of the program committee for future events as this will play a critical role to the growth and evolution of AfPIF and indeed of our other work in the area of Internet Interconnection and traffic exchange in the region and around the world.

The community's influence is also visible in the evolving format of the meeting. AfPIF started as a two-day event to a three-day event, and now with the AF-IX operators meeting even a four-day event.

The interest of the sponsoring organizations to showcase their peering and transit solutions led to the introduction of the Exhibitions feature at AfPIF events in 2012. The feature has provided an opportunity for participants to engage with the sponsors at a greater level than before.

This year, AfPIF includes a new feature known as “peering bilaterals”. This new feature was requested by the community, and we hope it will help advance AfPIF’s mission to promote both national and regional interconnection in Africa.

We are grateful for all the sponsors this year who have helped make this event possible. The number of sponsors has increased year after year starting with 6 sponsors in 2010 to a high of 15 sponsors in 2013 of which 50% were from the African region. This is a clear indication that peering is gaining the attention of operators from this region and at the same time attracting interest from beyond the region. And the year-over-year growth in sponsorship further reinforces the importance of this forum and the work we hope to accomplish.

To address the information asymmetry that exists on peering and transit economics, we have also established partnerships with various organizations and experts. Thus, for the last 4 years, we have collaborated with William B. Norton, the author of the “Internet Peering Play Book.” This partnership has led to the donation of books to countries and the translation of the book into French and German. What is most interesting is that the translation of the book just like the contributions in the book are from the IXP community around the world. This is an ideal example of the collaborative nature of the Internet technical community for the good of the Internet. We are proud of the fact that the launch in French is taking place later today in a French speaking country in Africa on the 5th anniversary of AfPIF.

In addition, in 2013 and 2014, we also offered full fellowships to AfPIF to over 50 participants and speakers from IXPs, Research and Education Networks, Policy makers, content provider networks, and small to medium ISPs amongst others. Please join me in congratulating the fellows - most of whom are first time participants at AfPIF.

We are pleased whenever we come across experiences of those who have benefited from past AfPIF events. For instance, after the AfPIF-2012 event in South Africa themed “Regional Interconnection - addressing the African Transit Deficit” we met a participant from Egypt who informed us based on their experience at AfPIF-2012, that his IXP had made a strategic organizational decision to realign its internal resources and establish a department to develop their peering and transit business opportunities.

Let me say that given the interest in the event and the importance of the matters addressed, we have moved the event around the continent. The first Forum was held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2010, and brought together 60 attendees from 20 countries. AfPIF 2 in Accra, Ghana in 2011 grew as the word spread about the benefits of the Forum and the training and networking opportunities that the meeting provided. More than 80 attendees from 25 countries attended. AfPIF 3 in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2012 was a new chapter in many ways. Over 200 participants from 32 countries participated, and 14 sponsors signed up too. AfPIF-4 on “Policy Implementation and the Regional Content Factor”, in Casablanca once again had an excellent level of participation.

Peering may sound foreign to the uninitiated on Internet business models. We are however pleased to note that the value of AfPIF’s vision has also resonated with policy makers in our region. The 2013 & 2014 events have had the honor of being recognized and organized in partnership with the respective Government agencies, and have also included discussions beyond the technical and business to cover policy issues.

So why is this important? What is the impact?

Here in Africa, we have seen a change in landscape in recent years: new undersea cable landings, new domestic and foreign investments, increased dialogue between government, industry, and other stakeholders on the development of access-enabling public policies, among many others.

Connectivity is on the rise and available bandwidth in Africa has increased significantly.

We see very positive trends.

Since 2009 there have been ongoing initiatives aimed at harmonizing strategies, policies, and regulatory frameworks towards integrated regional Internet infrastructure. Various organizations including the regional economic communities, ministries, and regulatory authorities through their regional associations have been at the forefront of these efforts and implementation. The outcomes are visible especially in establishing multistakeholder partnerships for infrastructure

development. However, the level of policy transposition and implementation varies from one region another.

However, there are still significant challenges to achieve sustainable, efficient, and cost-effective *networking* on the continent. And, many of these challenges specifically relate to the interconnection and peering topics of this and past AfPIF events.

Although on a domestic level, network operators in many countries have yet to establish Internet exchange points, or maximize the use of IXP infrastructures already in place, we must recognize that local traffic exchange and more intra-African traffic exchange is facilitated by Internet exchange points, better cross-border connectivity, more intra-country networks, and cheaper back-haul and transit costs.

Another issue relates to local content – even where infrastructure develops and traffic exchange facilitated, it is important to ask - how and where is content produced, and where it is hosted!

Africa is seeing growth in “African” content.

Today, delivery of that content is still held back by lack of interconnection and by the lack of local hosting facilities. From Nollywood content production in Nigeria, on-line content production and E-Government services, Africa is producing its own content and enhancing the relevance for its users. Innovative applications are being created across the continent. Data-centers are no longer considered a risk, but a necessity. But ask yourself – where is it hosted? And why is this important?

It is our hope that holding this AfPIF event here will continue to stir interest and discussion in the region on how to grow the number of Internet Exchange Points and cross-border interconnection and also to think of the business and the production and hosting of local content.

At the Internet Society, our vision is to have 80% local and 20% international Internet traffic and more locally produced and hosted content in Africa by the year 2020.

While this goal may seem ambitious and almost unrealistic, we believe that this can be championed through partnership and collaboration with all the stakeholders. And, we see growing interest and support.

We are committed to making an impact in Africa and helping to empower communities to get more and more people connected and more content available, and more opportunities available for people on the continent. The AfPIF event is just one example of our work, and we have many other programs, ideas, ambitions.

We have a great opportunity here today. I hope that our time together will open doors to greater progress and provide opportunities to share best practices, and build and enhance business relationships to extend the very positive momentum for the expansion of the Internet in Africa.

It is our hope that over the next two days, we can use this meeting as an opportunity to also discuss the policy issues, cross-border interconnection and regional and local content. Local content is essential to local industry and jobs, and ultimately boosts the resiliency of the economy. The topics we will be discussing here are critical to creating an environment that supports the ongoing development of the Internet.

We hope to measure the outcomes and impact of this event, and discuss how we want to take AfPIF forward. To this end, we would like to hear of your experiences at AfPIF and whether it has been a benefit to you and your organization.

So to all those who have made this such a great event – not just this week, but over the LAST FIVE YEARS – to the sponsors, the Team working on this Afpif, those speakers and participants and all those working behind the scenes that have been with us this year and indeed over the years – let me thank you. We truly hope that this year's event is of value to you and look forward to working with you in the years to come!