REPORT

OF THE

NIGERIA INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM (NIGF 2024)

EVENTS.

HELD ON

OCTOBER 15– 17, 2024.

Table of Contents.

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Nigeria Internet Governance Forum (NIGF) is an annual gathering of domestic stakeholders, which provides a platform to express common national interests in preparation for the annual global Internet Governance Forum (IGF). The 2024 edition of the NIGF was held as a hybrid event, with the physical venue in Port Harcourt, Rivers State at the Tamara Centre and many participants attending online. The event was tagged Nigeria Internet Governance Forum (NIGF) 2024 with the theme "Responsible Use of the Internet: A Panacea for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development", with support from the following organisations:

1) Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy (FMCIDE).
2) Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC).
3) Nigeria Internet Registration Association (NiRA).
4) National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA).
5) The Nigerian Internet Governance Forum Multistakeholder Advisory Group (NIGF-MAG).
6) Internet Society (ISOC) Nigeria Chapter.
7) Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD).

2.0 PRE-EVENTS – 15TH OCTOBER 2024.

2.1 NIGERIA WOMEN INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM (NWIGF)
2.1.1 OVERVIEW OF NWIGF 2024.

(I) Overview

> The Women Internet Governance Forum 2024 session, organised by the Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD), brought together women leaders, digital advocates, and Internet stakeholders from across the continent to discuss and promote women's roles in Internet governance. The session aimed at addressing the crucial need for a gender-sensitive Internet that fosters inclusivity and equity in digital transformation, and provides a discussion platform, especially among women on how

to develop strategies to address issues reinforcing women's marginalization in digital transformation, decision processes and promote a gender-sensitive Internet we want.

(II) Objectives

The objectives of the session were to:

1. Discuss how to promote a gender-sensitive Internet
2. Provide ways that will promote women's inclusivity in decision-making within the digital space.
3. Outline strategies to tackle the challenges of women's exclusion from the Internet.
4. Propose policy recommendations to address women's underrepresentation in Internet decision-making.
5. Create a campaign plan to promote a gender-sensitive Internet and women's inclusivity in digital transformation.

Key discussions at this year's focused on women's rights, inclusivity, challenges and opportunities for women in the digital space. The sessions were divided into three: an opening session and two technical sessions and featured distinguished women advocates, speakers and panellists who provided in-depth insights into the theme. WIGF served as a platform for sharing experiences, challenges, and best practices. Participants agreed on the need for continued efforts to increase women's representation in digital decision-making roles. They also advocated for stronger policies to protect women against digital threats and to ensure their access to opportunities in the Internet governance space.

Sessions Overview:

Opening Session:

Topic: Promoting a Gender-Sensitive Internet: Women's Inclusivity in Digital Transformation.
Chair: Madam Mary Uduma, Chair, West African IGF
Keynote Speaker: Mrs. Ene Obi, immediate past Country Director, Action Aid Nigeria.

In her opening remarks, Madam Mary Uduma underscored the importance of addressing gender disparities within the digital landscape to create equitable opportunities for all. She highlighted how the digital gender gap limits not only individual potential but also the overall socio-economic development of the country, advocating for increased investment in digital inclusion initiatives specifically tailored toward women. She emphasized that without intentional policies and efforts to bridge this gap, women will continue to face barriers that hinder their full participation in an increasingly digital economy, thereby affecting their economic empowerment and access to opportunities.

Building on this, Mrs. Ene Obi, in her keynote address, explored several key issues that impact women's digital inclusivity. She pointed out that persistent socio-economic barriers, such as poverty and lack of educational resources limit many women's access to technology and digital tools. Cultural norms and gender stereotypes further compound these issues, often restricting women's mobility and their exposure to digital platforms. Obi stressed the importance of supportive policies to foster digital literacy among women and argued that without a concerted, inclusive approach, many women will remain excluded from the benefits of the digital revolution.

Mrs. Obi shared statistics underscoring the digital divide, noting that women are 16% less likely to own mobile phones, 47% lack access to the Internet, and about 20% report low confidence in using digital tools. These figures, she pointed, reveal systemic issues that require a collective response from government agencies, civil society organizations, and the private sector to effectively bridge this divide, particularly in underserved communities where digital access is most limited. By working together to address these challenges, stakeholders can create a more inclusive environment that enables women to leverage digital technology for personal and professional growth.

The keynote speaker also emphasized the potential economic benefits of women's digital inclusivity, highlighting the substantial impact it could have on Nigeria's GDP. Citing projections from the World Bank, she noted that closing the gender gap in digital access could boost Nigeria's GDP by approximately $3.2 billion. She continue to argue that when women are given the resources and support to enter the digital economy, they become powerful economic agents, with

those in the digital space shown to be three times more likely to launch businesses than their offline counterparts. This entrepreneurial activity not only drives innovation but also creates job opportunities, contributing to a more robust and diverse economic landscape. Mrs. Obi's remarks reinforce the critical need for proactive strategies to promote digital inclusivity among women, emphasizing that the benefits extend beyond individual empowerment to national economic growth and development.

First Technical Session:

Topic: **Gender-Based Violence - Way Forward.**
Chairperson: Aminu Naganye, Editor, WikiTimes.
Panelists: Angela Uwandu Uzoma-Iwuchukwu, Country Director, ASF Nigeria and Chioma Agwuegbo, Executive Director, TechHer NG.

This session focused on the critical issue of online harassment and cyber-violence against women, a growing concern in the digital age. The Chair opened the discussion by highlighting that the media mirrors societal norms and structures, including the gender dynamics present in Nigerian society. Thus, the widespread prevalence of gender-based violence online reflects broader societal challenges, where patriarchal attitudes and systemic inequalities are reinforced and magnified in digital spaces. According to a 2021 study by Paradigm Initiative 23% of women who engage online have experienced abuse explicitly due to their gender, underscoring the scale of the problem.

In further discussions, panelists elaborated on how this digital manifestation of gender-based violence affects women's participation online, particularly in leadership roles and public discourse. The hostile environment discourages many women from using online platforms for self-expression, networking, or professional advancement, fearing harassment, threats, or cyberstalking. This issue is compounded by the fact that the lack of stringent policies and reporting mechanisms often leaves perpetrators unaccountable, which, in turn, perpetuates a cycle of violence and exclusion.

Mss. Chioma contributed by linking online harassment to broader economic pressures. She argued that worsening economic conditions have contributed to an increase in online bullying by men, who dump their frustrations onto women online, especially those in visible or influential positions. Chioma shared that Tech Her NG, an organization committed to supporting women in the digital space, launched a platform called CORAM in 2023. CORAM allows women to report gender-based violence incidents and connects them with resources and legal support. Through partnerships with the justice system, CORAM facilitates mediation efforts aimed at reducing violence and supporting affected women. According to Chioma, CORAM initially received fifteen cases of reported violence from March 2023 to early 2024; however, from March 2024 to the present, the platform has been handling an average of four cases weekly. Alarmingly, these cybercrimes have escalated from being monetary (Naira) extortions to demands involving foreign currencies like the U.S. dollar and cryptocurrency, indicating both an increase in sophistication and a shift in perpetrators' tactics.

In her contribution, Mrs. Angela Uwandu spoke on the necessity of comprehensive online protection policies, stressing that awareness alone is insufficient in addressing the systemic nature of online gender-based violence. She advocated for robust policies that not only deter perpetrators but also protect victims, providing them with channels for redress and justice. Angela argued that governments, in collaboration with tech companies, have a responsibility to implement safeguards, such as content moderation and stronger reporting mechanisms, to foster a safer online environment. She emphasized that tech companies, by virtue of their role in managing online spaces, must engage proactively in establishing safeguards against harassment and supporting women's right to participate freely in digital spaces.

This session highlighted the importance of collective action in tackling online gender-based violence. While initiatives by various organizations offer essential support to victims, a broader, multi-sectoral approach involving policymakers, tech industry leaders, and civil society is necessary to combat the rising tide of online harassment.

Second Technical Session:

Topic: *Promoting Internet Inclusivity: Prospects and Challenges*
Chair: Ali Isah, Artificial Intelligence Fellow, Fact-Check Africa
Panelists: Harira Wakili, Africa Gender Regional Coordinator, Local Network Initiative, Alliance for Progressive Communication, Peace Ewor, Lux Legacy Agency, and Temitope Agunde, Tech Societal.

Opening the session, Mr. Ali Isa highlighted the significant lack of access to the Internet and technology for women, particularly in Northern Nigeria. He noted that, despite efforts by civil society organizations (CSOs) and the government to ensure women's inclusivity in the tech space, women from rural communities, marginalized groups, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) remain excluded. The session focused on how to address these challenges, as well as the broader issue of gender transformation in technology. He added. Mr. Isa also referenced the Nigerian government's 2019 initiative under the ministry for Digital Economy, which targeted programs for women. Unfortunately, the program's outcomes were unclear, and its impact on gender transformation in technology remains questionable, despite initiatives like the National Digital Plan (NDP) and broadband access efforts. The chair queried.

Economic Barriers to Women's Participation in Technology

The first speaker, Harira, discussed the challenges women face in accessing technology. She pointed out that the lack of support for basic education, coupled with cultural norms in Northern Nigeria, limits women's participation in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) courses. Additionally, the economic challenges—such as the high cost of infrastructure, devices, and affordable Internet—are significant barriers to women's participation in the tech space. Mrs. Harira also mentioned that in rural communities, men are often uncomfortable allowing their wives to engage with the Internet due to concerns about the negative content, especially on social media platforms. From the women's perspective, online bullying and harassment disproportionately affect girls, making them fearful of engaging in social media. This fear, combined with technophobia, discourages many young women from embracing digital tools. This lack of access also impacts their performance in exams like the Joint Admissions and

Matriculation Board (JAMB)-which now requires computer-based testing (CBT). Many girls use computers for the first time during these exams, leading to poor results. Furthermore, while some secondary schools have computer labs, a lack of funding for power or fuel renders these labs unusable, and there is often a shortage of qualified facilitators to guide students. Mrs. Wakili proposed engaging stakeholders to update school curriculum, distribute free computers, and offer training in rural communities to increase women's inclusivity in the tech space.

Primary Barriers to Women's Inclusion in the Tech Space.

The second speaker (Peace Ewor) discussed the potential opportunities to enhance digital inclusion and accessibility for women, particularly in rural areas. Mrs. Peace noted that while private organizations and CSOs have made some efforts, rural girls often lack access to Internet infrastructure. Even when they do have access, the Internet speed is inadequate, with many still relying on 2G or 3G connections. She added. According to her deploying more advanced technologies like Starlink to these areas, will reduce the current limitations that hinder meaningful participation. The speaker also stressed the importance of equipping rural areas with the same technological tools used in urban centers. Collaboration between government and private organizations is crucial to enhance rural connectivity. The speaker emphasized. In addition to infrastructure, educating girls on digital literacy is vital, especially those in rural communities. With the prevalence of harmful online content, women must also be sensitized to digital safety.

In her contribution, Mss. Temitope Agunde said another significant challenge face by women in the Internet is the language barrier. Many women in rural communities cannot participate in online discussion and access the vast opportunities it offers because local languages are rarely used on digital platforms. Implementing policies and frameworks that promote inclusivity is essential because Internet access should be viewed as a right, not a privilege. Ensuring that Wi-Fi is available in rural areas would also enhance inclusivity. While there are digital centers in some rural areas, many remain underutilized due to power shortages or a lack of Internet connectivity. The speaker suggested that working closely with grassroots organizations to raise awareness about Internet access is key. Engaging rural community stakeholders and training them in advocacy would enable them to lobby for digital infrastructure and training from higher authorities. This could lead to sustainable change in their communities, even in the absence of donor funding. She concluded.

Contributing on addressing gender imbalance in the ICT Sector, participants hammered on the lack of women in leadership positions in the government ICT sector. To address this, participants emphasized the need to mentor and sensitize women about the importance of participating in decision-making processes. They called for continuous engagement and conversations, such as the Women Internet Governance Forum, to motivate women to take up leadership roles and advocate for change. Another participant urged that conversations held in such forums should not remain to these spaces. Stakeholders must take the discussions forward through advocacy to ensure that the issues of inclusivity in the digital space are addressed and resolved.

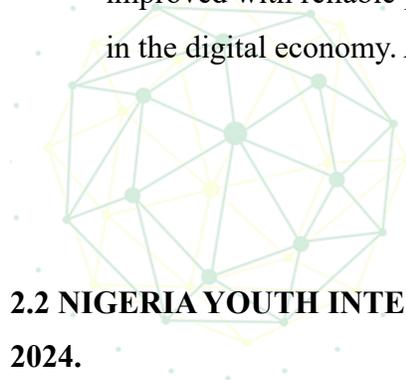In conclusion, participants called on the stakeholders to:

i. Government to implement strong policies to protect freedom of speech for underrepresented groups, including women, PWDs, and marginalized communities.
ii. Women should be involved in decision-making processes without fear of discrimination, particularly in the ICT sector.
iii. Participants opined that continuous mentorship and advocacy will be critical to achieving meaningful inclusion for women in the tech space.
iv. CITAD's initiative to host this event demonstrates its commitment to advancing gender equality in the digital landscape.
v. The participants argued digital transformation provides significant opportunities for women, especially in entrepreneurship, remote work, and access to education and financial services.

Recommendations:

- **Close the Digital Divide:** Governments and stakeholders should invest in infrastructure and policies that ensure equal access to the Internet for women, particularly in rural areas.
- **Internet Affordability:** Government and other stakeholders should ensure affordable Internet access is prioritized for underserved communities.

- **Safe Digital Spaces for Women:** Collaboration among governments, civil society, and tech companies is essential to create stronger regulations addressing online harassment and cybercrimes targeting women.

- Platforms and web applications should be built with gender sensitivity to encourage women's participation.

- **Promote Digital Literacy Programs:** Education and training programs targeting women, especially those from marginalized groups, should be expanded. These could include initiatives like coding boot camps, digital marketing workshops, and financial technology training.

- **Empower Women in Decision-Making:** Government and CSOs should Support women's participation in Internet governance through mentorship, leadership programs, and decision-making roles. This could involve deliberate mentorship programs and leadership development initiatives aimed at increasing women's influence in policy-making.

- **Support Female Entrepreneurs:** Governments and private sector actors should provide resources, funding, and mentorship for women in the digital economy. Creating dedicated funds or grants for women-led businesses and organizations can help close the gap.

- **Enhance Rural Connectivity:** Governments and private organizations should collaborate to improve the Internet infrastructure in rural areas, ensuring that technological tools available in urban areas are also accessible in underserved regions.

- **Mentorship and Engagement:** Women should actively mentor younger girls by introducing them to business centers and digital technologies. Continuous forums like the Women Internet Governance Forum can motivate more women to assume leadership roles.

- **Capacity Building in Digital Rights Protection:** Judiciary should be empowered to protect women's digital rights and address online harassment effectively.

- School curriculum should be updated, and digital literacy programs, including free computer distribution should target rural areas.

- **Economic Support and Affordable Access:** Government and tech companies should provide affordable Internet and infrastructure, especially for women from low-income or marginalized backgrounds, while organizations should donate computers and offer free digital skills training.

- **Policy Implementation for Digital Inclusivity:** Governments must implement policies that protect freedom of speech and ensure digital inclusivity for women, persons with disabilities, and marginalized groups.

- **Advocacy:** Groups and organizations should intensify advocacy and push for the recognition of Internet access as a right, not a privilege.

- **Foster Digital Citizenship and Awareness:** Public awareness campaigns should be initiated to promote responsible digital behaviors, reduce online discrimination, and promote women's rights in digital spaces.

- **Language Inclusivity:** To overcome language barriers, local languages should be promoted in online spaces, allowing rural women to engage more effectively in the digital environment.

- **Utilize Digital Centers Effectively:** Underutilized digital centers in rural areas should be improved with reliable power and Internet connectivity to promote women's participation in the digital economy. A clear example of this, is the CITAD Hello World initiative.

2.2 NIGERIA YOUTH INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM HELD ON 16TH OCTOBER 2024.

Overview.

The 2024 Nigeria Youth Internet Governance Forum (NYIGF) was a hybrid event, combining in-person and virtual formats to maximize accessibility and engagement. The physical gathering took place in Port Harcourt, while the virtual component was hosted via Zoom, enabling nationwide participation. The event's theme, "Navigating the Digital Sphere: Rights, Risks, and Resilience," positioned Nigerian youth at the center of critical discussions on digital rights, Internet safety, and technology adoption, reflecting the nation's commitment to an inclusive and secure digital future.

The Forum featured a structured program, divided into distinct sessions that catered to different levels of engagement and expertise. It opened with a high-level panel discussion where

policymakers, thought leaders, and digital rights advocates explored the theme's core issues. This was followed by an in-depth plenary session designed to foster open dialogue and collaborative problem-solving among participants. Additionally, the Forum dedicated a specialized session to secondary school students, offering them a unique platform to learn, share their perspectives, and engage with Internet governance topics in an accessible manner. A keynote address further highlighted the importance of youth-led initiatives in shaping Nigeria's digital landscape.

Participants actively engaged in dynamic discussions and expert-led sessions focused on strengthening resilience within Nigeria's digital ecosystem. These conversations provided an in-depth exploration of challenges and opportunities related to digital security, equitable access, and sustainable technology use. By delving into pressing issues such as cybersecurity threats, misinformation, and the digital divide, participants were able to collaboratively identify strategies to create a more inclusive, secure, and adaptable digital environment. The expertise shared by industry leaders and digital rights advocates enriched the dialogue, empowering attendees with the insights and tools needed to drive meaningful change in Nigeria's evolving digital landscape.

The Forum successfully gathered a diverse array of stakeholders, including representatives from government agencies, academic institutions, industry professionals, and emerging Internet governance enthusiasts. This broad participation underscored the multi-stakeholder approach necessary for effective digital policy development. By bringing together these varied perspectives, the 2024 NYIGF fostered a collaborative environment where Nigerian youth were empowered to drive conversations and contribute actively to the future of Internet governance in Nigeria.

SESSIONS AND KEY OUTCOMES.

Keynote Speech: Navigating the Digital Sphere: Rights, Risks, and Resilience.

Keynote Speaker: Uffa Modey.

Summary.

The keynote address was delivered by Taiwo Sobowale, Business Operations Manager, on behalf of Uffa Modey, Global Lead at Digital Grassroots. The speech centered on the theme "Navigating the Digital Sphere: Rights, Risks, and Resilience," addressing the role of Nigerian youth in shaping

a safe, inclusive, and innovative digital future. Taiwo's address highlighted the potential of digital transformation while acknowledging the challenges that come with it, particularly for marginalized communities.

Taiwo Sobowale underscored that over 60% of Nigeria's population is under 30, placing youth in a strategic position as both consumers and creators in the digital space. While the digital age offers boundless opportunities, it also brings risks that Nigerian youth must navigate. She emphasized that youth must take the lead in leveraging the digital revolution to create a future that is both innovative and inclusive.

Quoting, "The future is already here, it's just not evenly distributed," Taiwo pointed out that despite Nigeria's large youth population, access to digital tools and resources remains unequal. She highlighted the work of Digital Grassroots in addressing these disparities, particularly through programs targeting underrepresented groups such as young women and girls.

Taiwo stressed the importance of digital literacy as a lifelong necessity rather than a luxury. She emphasized that youth must be equipped with the skills to navigate the digital world responsibly. She also mentioned how Digital Grassroots's digital literacy initiatives, which have impacted over 330 individuals across 67 countries, empower young people to take control of their digital futures.

As technology continues to shape societies, ethical considerations must be at the forefront of digital development. Taiwo mentioned pressing issues such as algorithmic bias, data privacy, and cybersecurity, stressing the need for frameworks prioritizing inclusivity, fairness, and respect for users' rights. She highlighted Digital Grassroots' advocacy for ethical digital policies that align with the values of social justice and equality.

The potential for using digital technology to drive social good was a key focus. Taiwo encouraged participants to explore how digital tools can be harnessed to bridge societal divides, improve public services, and empower communities. She highlighted Digital Grassroots' mission of linking high-level entities with grassroots voices to ensure that digital innovations benefit all members of society, not just the privileged few.

Key Outcomes

- Youth positioned as key players in shaping an innovative and inclusive digital future.

- Unequal access to digital tools and resources was highlighted, especially for marginalized groups.

- Digital literacy is emphasized as a lifelong necessity for responsible digital engagement.

- Ethical concerns like algorithmic bias, data privacy, and inclusivity raised for digital development.

- Digital technology was urged as a tool to bridge societal divides and empower communities.

- Advocacy for inclusive digital policies that align with social justice and equality principles.

HIGH-LEVEL PANEL SESSION – Navigating the Digital Sphere: Rights, Risks, and Resilience.

Moderator – Charles Atat.

Panelists

- Adamma Isamade

- Saheed Adedokun

- Majiuzu Daniel Moses

The session began with the definition of key concepts including personal data, data subjects and the roles of relevant government agencies such as the Nigerian Data Protection Commission in regulating data protection and privacy in Nigeria. The Nigerian Data Protection was explained to be the foremost legislation regulating the activities surrounding personal data in Nigeria (Adamma Isamade). Saheed Adedokun advised that a person could be made vulnerable when traces of their digital footprint are left on digital spaces, allowing bad actors to make use of this information maliciously. He went further to state that you must guide your digital activities and ensure that your personal data is not unintentionally collected from you.

Daniel Moses informed the audience that a person has certain digital rights accorded to them when their data is given for use by a data processor/controller or company. One of such rights is the

ability to opt-in or provide permission for the use of your personal data (authorization), and the right to recall your data when you no longer want your data to be used. Other rights that exist with the use of the Internet include the right to digital inclusion, and the right to be protected against cyberbullying.

They stressed that we all have personal responsibilities to understand the digital risks that lurk with the use of these technologies and provided a list of certain steps to take to protect against online harms.

Key Outcomes.

- Digital literacy on the risks involved in engaging these devices e.g. cyber fraud, cyber bullying.

- Be careful and consider the kind of data you want to put out. This can help you deal with the repercussions of having your data online.

- In case of a data breach or privacy invasion, you can report to a branch of the Nigerian Data Protection Commission (NDPC).

- Where you suspect that hackers have gained access to your private information, first take down your database. The essence of this is to prevent further manipulation of personal data.

- Afterwards, you report to the nearest authority the data breach even before you present it to the Commission. This can help prevent attackers or malicious actors from using your personal data to deceive others.

- File a report to the Commission detailing all the evidence you have of the data breach as well as what you're doing to handle the situation.

PLENARY SESSION

Having an interesting conversation centred on the theme "Navigating the Digital Sphere: Rights, Risk, and Resilience," this session had wonderful deliberations on key thematic areas on 'Empowering the Digital Generation: Addressing Challenges and Harnessing Opportunities; Ethics in Digital Transformation; and Innovation for Social Good and Digital Public Infrastructure.'

Moderator: Chioma Ezenwafor

Panelists:

- Gloria Ojukwu

- Kingsley Owadara

- Owen Shedrack

Empowering the Digital Generation: Addressing Challenges and Harnessing Opportunities

Q: What are the challenges young people face in accessing DPI?

Many young people struggle with understanding how Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) functions. A significant barrier is the lack of awareness about its purpose and benefits, coupled with the tendency to skip reading terms and conditions. This lack of understanding can lead to misuse or missed opportunities, putting them at risk of privacy violations or other challenges when engaging with DPI.

Q: How can DPI be leveraged in an ethical way?

To leverage DPI ethically, young people should align its use with their career aspirations and long-term goals. Understanding the opportunities within DPI, such as access to digital services, financial inclusion, and public resources, allows individuals to harness its benefits responsibly. Digitalization should be seamlessly integrated into daily activities, but it's crucial to do so while respecting data privacy, promoting inclusivity, and ensuring transparency in interactions with digital platforms.

Ethics in Digital Transformation: AI | IoT | Blockchain.

Nothing truly comes for free; we often pay for what we receive by unknowingly sharing our personal data. As we continue to innovate, it's essential to focus on long-term, sustainable benefits rather than just short-term gains. When using AI and other emerging technologies, strive to do so without exposing your personal information, prioritize your privacy at every turn. Take the time to thoroughly research new platforms and tools before engaging with them. Be cautious and deliberate about sharing your data, especially when the trustworthiness of a platform is uncertain.

Building diversity in the digital space is key to mitigating bias and ensuring that technology serves everyone fairly.

When it comes to ethics, taking full responsibility for your data is crucial. Protecting your privacy is not just a personal choice; it's an ethical obligation.

Q: Is there a balance between content creation and privacy?

In the digital landscape, the loudest voices often capture the most attention, which can lead content creators to feel pressured to share personal details to engage their audience. However, it's important to establish clear boundaries between your personal life and your professional persona. Focus on sharing content that enhances your career and aligns with your professional goals. Instead of mindlessly engaging with every post or trend, be intentional about your online interactions. Minimize your data footprint by selectively engaging with content that directly supports your personal brand and career, particularly if maintaining privacy is important to you. Finding this balance is key, strategically share what serves your goals while keeping sensitive aspects of your life private.

Innovation for Social Good and Digital Public Infrastructure.

Q: What do you have to say about Innovation for Social Good and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)?

To begin, it's essential to understand what Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) entails. DPI consists of digital systems and platforms provided by the government to facilitate social welfare initiatives and enhance public services. These infrastructures aim to improve access, efficiency, and transparency in service delivery. Key examples include:

- National Identification Number (NIN): This unique identifier for Nigerian citizens simplifies access to various government services, including healthcare, education, and social welfare programs.

- Bank Verification Number (BVN): This system links individuals to their financial accounts, enhancing security by reducing fraud and ensuring accurate identification in financial transactions.

- Nigeria Inter-Bank Settlement System (NIBSS): This platform facilitates seamless interbank transactions, thereby promoting financial inclusion and efficiency in the banking sector.

The impact of the Internet on our daily lives cannot be overstated. These digital infrastructures have created significant opportunities for content creators, enabling them to monetize their work and contribute to the digital economy. Furthermore, by leveraging these systems, we can address many societal challenges, from improving healthcare access to enhancing financial literacy.

Q: Do we really have Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)?

Yes, we currently have these infrastructures in place, but their adoption and implementation are still evolving. For example, the NIN allows citizens to access government services more efficiently and improves identity verification processes across various sectors. The BVN plays a crucial role in enhancing security within the banking system by connecting individuals to their financial transactions, thereby reducing incidents of fraud and identity theft. Both the NIN and BVN contribute to a more efficient service delivery framework, but the challenge remains that these infrastructures are still developing and being adopted slowly across the country.

Q: How can we leverage DPI in an ethical way?

The goal of digital transformation is to address pressing human issues and enhance societal welfare. For instance, while drones can effectively deliver essential medicines to remote areas, the potential misuse of this technology raises ethical concerns, as the same drones could be repurposed for harmful activities. Therefore, it is crucial to advocate for the development of DPI that prioritizes social good and ethical considerations.

One significant challenge is that many social media platforms and government services are hosted outside of Nigeria, which can pose risks to data privacy and security. To mitigate these risks, we must advocate for the establishment and support of indigenous platforms and services that meet our local needs while ensuring that user data is protected. By fostering local solutions, we can empower communities and enhance the effectiveness of our Digital Public Infrastructure.

Key Outcomes.

- Lack of awareness and understanding of DPI leads to challenges for young people, including missed opportunities and privacy risks.

- Ethical use of DPI requires aligning it with your career goals, promoting inclusivity, transparency, and respecting data privacy.

- Personal data protection is a critical responsibility in the age of AI and other emerging technologies, where privacy is often compromised unintentionally.

- A balance between content creation and privacy is important, so focus on attaining your professional goals while minimizing data exposure.

- Digital Public Infrastructure like NIN, BVN, and NIBSS enhance access to government services, security, and financial inclusion but face slow adoption.

- Ethical digital transformation should prioritize social good, advocating for local platforms to mitigate risks from external hosting.

FIRESIDE CHAT

Teen Session – **"Empowering Teens: Safety, Rights and Strength"**

Moderator: Nwajie Success Jackson

Panelists

- Teens from ECWA model school

- Teens from Orominike Girls School

The session opened with the moderator engaging the children in thoughtful discussions about the advantages and disadvantages of the Internet. She highlighted that while the Internet can serve as a powerful tool for personal growth, it should be used mindfully to avoid negative consequences.

Following this, she handed over the session to a representative from the children, who skillfully led the panel discussion.

A student representative then delivered a brief speech on the theme, "*Empowering Teens: Safety, Rights, and Strength*." Below is a summary of her key points:

The Internet has become a crucial source of knowledge for many teenagers, often serving as their primary go-to hub for information. With the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), accessing information has become even easier, helping young people navigate today's digital landscape. However, digital literacy — the skills and knowledge needed to use online tools like gadgets and search engines effectively — is essential. While digitalisation offers numerous benefits, it can also pose significant risks, particularly when misused, such as in cases where explicit photos or videos are shared maliciously without consent.

Digital technologies, including AI, social media, online learning platforms, and coding tools, are shaping a new generation of youth. However, adopting an irresponsible digital lifestyle can hinder their overall development. Examples of such behaviours include:

- Excessive screen time.

- Engaging in cyberbullying.

- Falling victim to online fraud.

Excessive Internet use can severely impact teenagers' mental health, leading to poor academic performance and reduced social skills. As responsible digital citizens, teenagers must recognise their duty to respect the privacy and rights of others online. It was recommended that governments and technology companies create opportunities for young people to learn safe and responsible Internet practices.

To navigate the digital space safely, teenagers need to be equipped with essential tools and knowledge. Cyberbullying, for example, can lead to low self-esteem, depression, and even suicidal thoughts. Therefore, students should be encouraged to confide in a trusted adult if they face such challenges. The constant presence of the Internet can also intrude on a teenager's personal space, potentially leading to self-sabotage and intentional isolation.

Preventing cyberbullying can be achieved through:

- Comprehensive digital education

- Avoiding irresponsible use of digital platforms

- Sharing content responsibly and not engaging with online bullies

- Reporting incidents of cyberbullying to a trusted adult.

The session also touched on the rise of Internet fraud in Nigeria, where scams often target teenagers. Common tactics used by fraudsters include phishing, identity theft, and fake online shopping deals, like offering phones at suspiciously low prices.

Key strategies to protect teenagers from online fraud include:

- Educating them on how to recognise malicious links and encouraging them to verify before responding.

- Training them on the importance of secure passwords and multi-factor authentication, and how to implement these security measures.

Maintaining a healthy balance between digital exposure and offline activities is crucial for teenagers' holistic development. Suggested strategies include:

- Setting time limits on screen time and gaming

- Prioritizing educational online resources

- Implementing tech-free study periods

- Creating tech-free family time.

In conclusion, empowering teenagers through digital literacy is vital for helping them understand their responsibilities in the digital world.

Key Policy Questions.

Q: How can parents help teenagers use the Internet safely?

Parents should actively monitor their children's online activities and regulate their use of digital devices through applications or by setting strict time limits.

Q: What role can teachers play in promoting responsible Internet use among teenagers?

Teachers can foster responsible Internet habits by stressing the value of integrity. They should consistently highlight the benefits and drawbacks of the Internet and equip students with essential digital literacy skills.
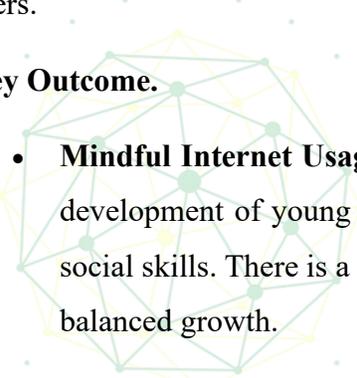
Q: How can teenagers balance their academic pursuits with their online activities?

Teenagers should prioritise their activities by creating and adhering to a structured schedule. Additionally, it's important to take breaks during intense study sessions. However, online usage should be purposeful; setting a specific timeframe for non-academic Internet activities is advised.

Q: What are some common online risks teenagers face?

Cyberbullying remains a significant risk, often targeting teenagers who are still building their self-esteem. This vulnerability is frequently exploited by malicious individuals aiming to harass young users.

Key Outcome.

- **Mindful Internet Usage for Teenagers:** An irresponsible digital lifestyle can hinder the development of young people, affecting their mental health, academic performance, and social skills. There is a need for teenagers to be mindful of their online activities to ensure balanced growth.

- **Empowering Teens Through Digital Literacy:** Teenagers should be equipped with the skills and knowledge to navigate the digital space responsibly. This includes understanding digital tools, recognising malicious links, creating secure passwords, and using multi factor authentication.

- **Promoting Ethical Digital Behaviour:** As responsible digital citizens, teenagers must respect the privacy and rights of others online. Both governments and technology companies have a role to play in creating avenues for educating youths on safe and ethical Internet use.

- **Balancing Digital Consumption and Offline Activities:** Establishing a healthy balance between online and offline activities is crucial for teenagers' overall development. Strategies include setting screen time limits, prioritizing educational content, tech-free study periods, and encouraging tech-free family time.

- **Addressing Online Fraud Targeting Teens:** Internet fraud is increasingly targeting teenagers, with tactics like phishing, identity theft, and online shopping scams. Educating teenagers on how to spot malicious links and the importance of verifying online information can help reduce their vulnerability to scams.

- **Support Systems for Navigating Cyberbullying:** Cyberbullying can severely impact teenagers' self-esteem, leading to depression and suicidal thoughts. Schools and families should foster supportive environments where teens feel safe discussing online issues, encouraging them to report incidents to trusted adults.

Expert Session – **"Empowering Teens: Safety, Rights and Strength"**.

Panelists:

- Amina Ramallan

Key Policy Question

What measures can be taken to ensure children/teens safety online?

With the increasing number of young people accessing the Internet, it's essential to build awareness and put protective systems in place. We need a multi-layered approach involving parents, schools, policymakers, and the students themselves. The Internet, while a great tool for education and socializing, can also expose young people to risks like cyberbullying, privacy breaches, and harmful content. Proactive steps must be taken to build a safe and supportive digital environment.

1. Education and Awareness: One of the most important measures is teaching both children and teens about the risks they may face online. Parents and teachers need to work together to educate young people on how to recognize and handle dangerous situations, such as cyberbullying or unsolicited messages. Schools can regularly host workshops or seminars that focus on online safety, where experts in cybersecurity and digital rights can speak to students. The Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), in partnership with schools, can support campaigns that raise awareness about online safety.

2. Stronger Parental Involvement: Parents also play a crucial role in ensuring their children's safety online. Setting up parental controls and monitoring online activities is one way to protect young people from encountering harmful content. But beyond technical measures, parents should foster open communication, making it easy for children to report uncomfortable online experiences. Nigerian parents must be aware of the apps, platforms, and websites their children use, and talk to them about the importance of maintaining their privacy.

3. Collaboration with Tech Platforms: Tech companies and platforms popular with young people, such as social media and gaming sites, need to be held accountable for ensuring their spaces are safe for children and teens. In Nigeria, schools and advocacy groups can work with these companies to ensure they have the right tools in place, such as reporting systems for inappropriate content and privacy settings tailored for young users.

4. Legal Protections and Enforcement: The Nigerian government can also play a major role by enforcing laws like the Cybercrime Act, which protects individuals from online harassment, identity theft, and cyberbullying. More regulations are needed to specifically address the safety of children and teens online, ensuring that online platforms operating in Nigeria are compliant with these protections.

Parents, schools, and government bodies must collaborate to protect children from online threats like cyberbullying, privacy violations, and harmful content. For example, parental controls can be introduced at home, while in schools, there can be regular discussions around digital behavior and how to stay safe. Authorities like the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) and the Ministry of Education could work on nationwide awareness campaigns, focusing on online safety for teens.

By creating awareness, fostering communication between stakeholders, and building protective measures around technology use, we can safeguard the online experiences of Nigerian children and teens while empowering them to use the Internet confidently and responsibly.

What strategies should schools (in collaboration with other stakeholder groups) implement to educate children/teens about the legal implications of their online behavior while promoting a culture of online safety and responsibility?

Schools play a key role in educating students about the legal implications of their online activities. This can be done through collaborations with relevant stakeholders such as law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organizations, and digital rights advocates. Programs that introduce the basics of Nigeria's Cybercrime Act and explain how certain behaviors like cyberbullying or hacking can have legal consequences will help build awareness among students. These programs should also encourage responsible behavior, teaching students that online actions have real-world implications.

1. Integrating Digital Literacy into the Curriculum: Schools should incorporate digital literacy and online safety lessons into their regular curriculum. These lessons can cover topics like the legal consequences of online misconduct, including cyberbullying, hacking, and privacy violations. By teaching students about laws like Nigeria's Cybercrime Act, they will understand that their actions online have real-world legal implications. Workshops and interactive sessions on Internet safety can also help students recognize the potential risks they face.

2. Collaborating with Law Enforcement and Legal Experts: Schools can partner with law enforcement agencies or legal experts to educate students on the legal boundaries of online behavior. Police or cybercrime experts can conduct talks and interactive sessions to help students understand the consequences of illegal activities online, such as identity theft, online scams, and spreading false information. Such partnerships can provide practical insights, making the information relatable to the students' everyday experiences.

3. Engaging Parents and Guardians: Schools should not work in isolation; involving parents is essential. Parent-teacher associations (PTAs) can be platforms for educating parents on how to monitor their children's online activities and help them understand the legal risks involved. This ensures that parents can reinforce the same safety and responsibility messages at home, promoting a consistent approach.

4. Involving Tech Companies and Digital Platforms: Given that teens often interact with popular social media platforms and online gaming environments, schools should collaborate with tech companies to promote a culture of safety and responsibility. These companies can provide resources, tools, and training materials that inform students about safe online practices and how to report inappropriate behavior. Initiatives like safety

tutorials or digital badges for completing online safety courses could motivate students to engage more responsibly.

5. Organizing Peer-Led Programs and Advocacy Groups: Students often listen to and learn from their peers. Schools can empower students to become "digital safety ambassadors" who advocate for responsible online behavior among their classmates. These peer-led groups can work with digital rights organizations and tech experts to spread awareness of legal risks and online safety through debates, school clubs, and events. By giving teens a voice, they can actively participate in creating a safe online community.

6. Creating Policies on Responsible Internet Use: In collaboration with government bodies and digital rights organizations, schools can develop clear policies on responsible Internet use and make these part of the school's code of conduct. These policies should outline acceptable behavior online, the legal implications of misuse, and the steps the school will take in cases of online misconduct. Clear consequences and guidelines can serve as a preventive measure.

By employing these strategies, Nigerian schools can foster a culture of online responsibility and legal awareness among teens, helping them navigate the Internet safely and respectfully while understanding the implications of their actions in the digital world.

What role should schools play in promoting digital literacy and critical thinking skills to prepare students for navigating online challenges? How can they ensure that students have the necessary skills to use technology responsibly and critically?

Schools should be at the forefront of promoting digital literacy and critical thinking skills to help students navigate online challenges responsibly. By integrating digital literacy into the curriculum, teachers can help students learn how to fact-check information, recognize fake news, and assess the credibility of online sources. Critical thinking skills are crucial in teaching students not just to consume content, but to analyze and understand the impact of what they see and share online. Nigeria's schools can also partner with technology experts to hold workshops that focus on digital safety, privacy protection, and media literacy.

How can children/teens voices be included in the development of policies that affect their digital rights and online safety?

Including the voices of children and teens in the development of policies that affect their digital rights and online safety is essential to creating an environment that truly reflects their needs and concerns. In Nigeria, this can be achieved through several practical and engaging approaches that actively involve young people in policy discussions.

1. Establish Youth Digital Advocacy Groups: One of the most effective ways to include young voices is by creating youth-led advocacy groups focused on online safety and digital rights. Schools, in collaboration with digital rights organizations like the Youth Coalition for Internet Governance, can facilitate the creation of such groups. These platforms give young people the space to express their concerns, share experiences, and suggest practical solutions. These advocacy groups can then be involved in consultations when new policies are being drafted.

2. National and Regional Youth Consultations: Government bodies like the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) and the Ministry of Education can organize nationwide consultations or town hall meetings specifically aimed at gathering input from young people. By hosting these sessions, either virtually or in person, they can create safe spaces where children and teens can discuss online safety, cyberbullying, and digital privacy. Including this demographic in policy conversations ensures that the policies developed truly reflect the reality of young Nigerians' online experiences.

3. Engaging Students through School Workshops: Schools play a critical role in policy engagement. Workshops can be organized where secondary school students can work with educators and policymakers to explore topics related to online safety and digital rights. These workshops can be structured to allow students to present their concerns and propose solutions, which can then be fed into broader policy discussions at the local, state, or national level.

4. Collaborating with Online Platforms: Many children and teens in Nigeria are active on social media platforms and other digital spaces. These platforms should collaborate with

schools, parents, and advocacy groups to create initiatives where young users can provide feedback on how to improve online safety measures. For example, social media companies could introduce surveys or focus groups aimed at their younger audience to gather insights on their experiences with privacy, bullying, or inappropriate content. This input can then inform both platform policies and national digital rights discussions.

5. Leveraging Technology for Youth Participation: Technology itself can be a tool for gathering youth input. Schools and government agencies can use online surveys, discussion forums, and apps specifically designed to collect feedback from young people on digital rights and safety. These digital tools ensure that the consultation process is more accessible and reaches a larger number of students, even those in remote areas of Nigeria.

6. Empowering Youth Ambassadors in Policy Development: Select students could be appointed as "digital youth ambassadors" to represent their peers in policy discussions. These ambassadors can participate in meetings with policymakers, present the ideas of their fellow students, and advocate for changes that better protect young people online. Such ambassadors can be drawn from various schools across Nigeria, ensuring a diverse range of voices are included.

Children and teens should have a voice in the development of policies that affect their digital rights and safety. This can be done by creating forums where students can engage with policymakers, tech experts, and educators to share their views on issues like privacy, online bullying, and content regulation. In Nigeria, organizations like the Youth Coalition for Internet Governance can be platforms where young people are encouraged to share their experiences and contribute to shaping online safety policies. Their input is invaluable as they are the ones experiencing the digital world first-hand.

By actively involving children and teens in these processes, Nigeria can create policies that are not only more effective but also reflective of the real challenges and opportunities young people face in the digital world. Their involvement will foster a sense of ownership and responsibility, empowering them to advocate for their own digital rights and the creation of safer online spaces.

3.0 MAIN EVENT – 17TH OCTOBER 2024.

3.1 Opening Ceremony.

3.1.1 Welcome Remarks.

Dr. Wariowei D.S., the Chairperson of the Nigeria Internet Governance Forum Multistakeholder Advisory Group (NIGF-MAG) and Director of E-Government Development and Regulation at the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), delivered the welcome remarks. His address began with warm recognition of the distinguished guests in attendance. These included the Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy; the Director General of NITDA; the Executive Vice Chairman of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC); the Governor of Rivers State; the President of the Nigeria Internet Registration Association (NiRA), President of the Internet Society, Nigeria Chapter (ISOC-NG); representatives from the government of Rivers State; as well as notable leaders from the private sector, civil society, academia, youth organizations, and other invited guests.

Dr Wariowei noted that the 13th edition of the NIGF, themed **"Responsible Use of the Internet: A Panacea for Sustainable Socio-Economic Development,"** underscores NIGF's unwavering commitment to fostering an Internet that drives development for all Nigerians. He described it as a significant milestone in the forum's ongoing efforts to address the pressing Internet governance challenges confronting the nation through an inclusive, bottom-up approach.

He commended the stakeholders for embracing the opportunity to contribute to the conversations shaping Nigeria's digital future. He emphasized that the panel sessions would explore critical sub-themes, such as "Strengthening Digital Inclusion and Representation in Internet Governance," "Cybersecurity and Cyber Resilience: Safeguarding Nigeria's Digital Future," and "The Role of Emerging Technologies in Sustainable Socio-Economic Development." These discussions, he explained, aim to create actionable strategies for leveraging digital tools responsibly while addressing the gaps and vulnerabilities in Nigeria's Internet ecosystem.

Dr Wariowei also stressed the dual nature of emerging technologies, which offer remarkable opportunities for growth but also introduce significant risks. Achieving a balance between fostering innovation and establishing effective regulatory and security frameworks is crucial, he said. He highlighted the necessity of collaboration across all sectors—government, private enterprises, civil society, and the technical community—to address these challenges collectively.

Reflecting on the multi-stakeholder approach that defines NIGF, he described the forum as a melting pot of dialogue, understanding, and collaboration. It brings together diverse voices from the digital ecosystem to examine the interplay of regulation, cybersecurity, and technological innovation. This collective effort, he affirmed, will chart a course for a framework that ensures digital security, supports innovation, and guarantees inclusivity.

Dr. Wariowei expressed optimism about the outcomes of this year's forum, assuring attendees that the results and recommendations would be shared widely with academia, civil society, and other stakeholders for adoption and implementation where appropriate. He reiterated the forum's potential to harness innovative ideas, foster collaboration, and develop strategies for a secure and sustainable digital future for Nigeria.

In closing, he warmly welcomed all participants to the NIGF 2024 and encouraged active engagement in the discussions and deliberations to make the forum a resounding success.

3.1.2 Goodwill messages.

I. Mrs. Mary Uduma, West Africa IGF Coordinator, spoke about her commitment to Internet Governance, driven by a desire to ensure that all regions in Nigeria, including the South-South and Rivers State, benefit fully from the Internet. She stressed the importance of responsible Internet use, acknowledging its integral role in daily life, impacting banking, education, communication, and more. Mrs Uduma noted the Internet's dual nature, offering opportunities but also posing risks like privacy concerns and cybersecurity threats. She emphasized the need for West Africa to be active in global digital developments to drive economic growth in sectors like e-commerce, agriculture, and education, while underscoring the need for responsible engagement at all levels, from youth to government.

She further expressed optimism that discussions at the forum would yield actionable recommendations for stakeholders across West Africa and Africa. She highlighted the importance of multi-sectoral engagement, including government, ECOWAS, the technical community, academia, civil society, and the private sector, to implement these recommendations for the region's socio-economic advancement. In closing, she affirmed Nigeria's commitment to the annual IGF gatherings and underscored the forum's impact on both regional and global Internet policy.

II. Mr Adesola Akinsanya, President of the Nigeria Internet Registrations Association (NiRA), described the forum's theme as timely and essential. He emphasized the Internet's pervasive influence on life, from commerce and education to healthcare and governance, underscoring the responsibility of all users to engage meaningfully and responsibly online. He reiterated NiRA's commitment to supporting a secure and open Internet that fosters innovation while protecting users, with the .ng domain name as a crucial element of Nigeria's digital identity.

Mr. Akinsanya also stressed that sustainable socio-economic development requires responsible Internet usage, which includes promoting cybersecurity awareness, enhancing digital literacy, and developing policies that safeguard privacy and free expression. He called for collaborative efforts among government, corporate entities, civil society, and educators to foster a safe, inclusive digital environment. Concluding, he urged participants to champion a secure Internet that drives Nigeria's economic growth and social progress.

III. Mr Bernard Ewah delivered a goodwill message on behalf of Mr Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, the Director General of NITDA emphasising the transformative power of the Internet, comparing it to landmark achievements like the development of highways and the discovery of oil. Addressing the theme, Mr. Ewah called for responsible engagement from all sectors, including individuals, businesses, and government entities, to harness the Internet's potential for national progress while mitigating risks. He highlighted the Internet's influence on global infrastructure and its role in fostering efficiency and development, emphasizing the need for collaborative action across all sectors.

IV. Dr. Aminu Maida, Executive Vice-Chairman of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), represented by Dr. Chris Agha of the Port Harcourt Zonal Office, emphasized the relevance of this year's theme, which aligns with the NCC's commitment to ensuring the Internet contributes to national development while addressing the challenges of the digital age. Dr. Chris praised the forum's multi-stakeholder approach and acknowledged the pre-events, such as the Nigerian School of Internet Governance, Youth IGF, and Women's IGF, for their focus on inclusivity and empowerment. He encouraged participants to work towards actionable outcomes that would shape Nigeria's Internet governance landscape, reaffirming NCC's commitment to collaborative efforts that foster responsible Internet use.

V. Engr. Olomiete Ayeo Enekpeni, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Communication, Science, and Technology, Akwa Ibom State, reflected on Nigeria's challenges in leveraging the Internet for socio-economic advancement. He underscored the need for a shift in mindset towards responsible Internet use, especially in sectors such as politics, family life, and the economy. Engr. Enekpeni stressed that while the Internet has the potential to provide economic opportunities, irresponsible usage could exacerbate issues like unemployment and inequality. He called on individuals, particularly parents, to take personal responsibility in guiding youth toward productive online engagement, highlighting the collective role in shaping Nigeria's digital future.

VI. Engr. Faruk Yusuf Yabo, Permanent Secretary of the Federal Ministry of Communications, Innovation, and Digital Economy, underscored the ministry's commitment to fostering a digitally inclusive Nigeria. He outlined achievements like the National Broadband Plan, which has increased broadband penetration from 6% in 2015 to nearly 50% in 2023, with a target of 70% by 2025, and the Nigerian Startup Act, which supports Nigeria's growing tech ecosystem. Engr. Yabo emphasized the importance of ethical online behaviour, data protection, and digital citizenship, inviting stakeholders to collaborate on frameworks that promote responsible Internet use.

VII. On behalf of the Ministry of Women Affairs and the Rivers State Government, Dr. Roselyn Uranta expressed gratitude to the organizers of the Nigeria Internet Governance Forum (NIGF) and acknowledged the importance of the forum's theme, "Responsible Use of the Internet." She emphasized the critical role the Internet plays in everyday life, noting that while some individuals use it positively for research, business, and knowledge acquisition, others misuse it for fraudulent and unethical purposes. Dr. Uranta highlighted the need for greater sensitization to promote responsible and ethical Internet usage, stressing that programs like the NIGF are essential for fostering awareness and capacity-building among users.

Dr. Uranta admitted this was her first time hearing about the forum and encouraged the organizers to increase outreach and visibility in subsequent editions to ensure broader participation. She commended the relevance of the forum's agenda, particularly in addressing issues such as cybersecurity and digital ethics. In closing, she encouraged participants to continue leveraging the Internet as a tool for positive growth and societal development, urging a collective effort to eliminate its misuse and maximize its potential for good.

The ceremony concluded with a vote of thanks from Engr. Kunle Olorundare, President of the Internet Society Nigeria Chapter. He acknowledged the contributions of key dignitaries, including the Honorable Minister for Communication, Innovation, and Digital Economy, Dr Bosun Tijani, and recognized the leadership roles played by stakeholders in addressing crucial issues within the ministry's purview. Engr. Olorundare expressed gratitude for the continued support of Mr Adesola Akinsanya, Mr Kashifu Inuwa Abdullahi, Dr Aminu Maida, Engr. Olomiete, and Engr. Faruk Yusuf Yabo, along with an appreciation for the presence of the Rivers State Governor Siminalayi Fubara, represented by Commissioner Dr. Roselyn Apawari Uranta.

3.2 High-level Panel session.

Moderated by: Mrs. Hajia Sani (Director, Digital Media, Voice of Nigeria).

Lead Paper: Engr. Fenibo Fubara (Special Assistant on ICT to the Governor of Rivers State).

Speakers:

- Prof. Yinka David-West (Associate Dean, Lagos Business School).
- Ms. Adamma Isamade (Head, Legal Unit, Nigeria Data Protection Commission).
- Barr. Emmanuel Edet (Ag. Director, Standard Guidelines and Frameworks, NITDA).
- Barr. Tonye L. Apiafi (Snr. Legal Manager, Compliance and Concessions, Intels Nigeria Limited).
- Mr. Ibifuro Asawo (Co-founder & CEO Cinfores Limited). – Represented by Mr. Mee-Ebari Francis Ndee-ue (Director of Technical).

Summary of the session.

The moderator welcomed all panellists to the session and thanked them for being available amidst other responsibilities.

Highlights from the Keynote Speech: Responsible Use of the Internet by Engr. Fenibo Fubara.

Engr. Fenibo Fubara, Special Assistant on ICT to the Executive Governor of Rivers State, delivered a keynote address emphasizing the theme, *Responsible Use of the Internet*. The speech outlined

pivotal areas concerning Internet governance, cybersecurity, emerging technologies, regulatory frameworks, and digital literacy as drivers for socio-economic development.

Key Issues Addressed.

1. **The Internet and National Growth**

   - The Internet, connecting over 190 countries and used by 68% of the global population, serves as a backbone for national development.
   - Engr. Fubara stressed the importance of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs). Nigeria's initiatives, such as the National Identity Number (NIN), e-Naira, and Integrated Payroll and Personnel Information System (IPPIS), were highlighted as essential components of the digital ecosystem.

2. **Cybersecurity Challenges**

   - Cybersecurity threats were identified as a major concern for critical infrastructures and businesses, particularly MSMEs.
   - Issues such as outdated cybersecurity practices, weak regulatory compliance, and advanced cyber threats, including phishing and ransomware, were underscored.
   - He emphasized the role of agencies like NITDA and NIMC in addressing these challenges and enhancing digital security.

3. **Emerging Technologies and Potentials**

   - Emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), IoT, and blockchain offer transformative potential in sectors like healthcare, finance, and agriculture.
   - Examples include using AI for telemedicine, blockchain for secure financial transactions, and IoT for precision farming. However, their adoption must align with ethical and regulatory standards.

4. **Regulatory Framework Gaps**

   - The Cybercrime Act of 2015 and other regulatory frameworks were critiqued for being outdated and overly punitive, creating barriers to digital innovation.

- Challenges such as unclear data privacy guidelines, restrictions on mobile money operators, multiple taxation, and lack of provisions for gig workers were identified as impediments to the growth of Nigeria's digital economy.

5. **Digital Literacy and Inclusion**

- Digital literacy was highlighted as a cornerstone for enabling compliance, adoption, and the safe use of digital tools.
- Programs such as Skillwave in Rivers State were commended for their role in fostering responsible online behaviour. However, there is a need to scale digital literacy across rural and vulnerable populations to bridge the digital divide.

Recommendations

1. **Strengthen Digital Public Infrastructure**

- Expand DPI to improve data exchange, digital identity systems, and interoperability between government, businesses, and citizens.

2. **Enhance Cybersecurity Awareness and Investment**

- Promote cybersecurity awareness among MSMEs and ensure compliance with robust standards such as the NDPR.
- Increase investments in advanced cybersecurity technologies and enforce regulatory frameworks to protect businesses and users.

3. **Foster Adoption of Emerging Technologies**

- Leverage AI, blockchain, and IoT to address industry-specific challenges while ensuring regulatory compliance and mitigating biases in technology deployment.
- Encourage innovation by creating enabling environments for tech startups.

4. **Reform Regulatory Frameworks**

- Update cybersecurity and financial regulations to reflect modern digital realities.
- Simplify tax structures and include provisions for gig workers to encourage participation in the digital economy.

5. **Prioritize Digital Literacy and Inclusion**

- Integrate digital literacy into educational curricula from primary to tertiary levels.
- Establish community-based programs to provide affordable access to digital technologies for rural populations.
- Develop localized technologies and language models to ensure inclusivity for underserved communities.

6. **Collaborate for Responsible Internet Use**

- Engage stakeholders across sectors to create policies that encourage innovation while ensuring security and privacy.
- Advocate for responsible usage through targeted campaigns and seamless reporting mechanisms for online fraud and misuse.

Conclusion

Engr. Fubara concluded by reiterating that the responsible use of the Internet requires a collective effort involving government, businesses, and citizens. By addressing existing challenges and adopting a forward-thinking approach, Nigeria can harness the full potential of the digital economy while safeguarding its users.

Panel Discussion Overview.

The panel discussion revolved around multiple dimensions of Nigeria's digital economy, governance, data privacy, digital inclusion, cybersecurity, and the necessary actions to foster a conducive environment for sustainable digital growth. The panel brought together thought leaders from the government, private sector, academia, and civil society to address the challenges and opportunities presented by digital transformation.

The moderator opened the session by prompting the speakers to share their insights on the keynote presentation, which outlined the importance of collaboration between government and private sector entities to advance digital adoption and address the challenges associated with Internet governance. Each speaker provided a unique perspective on the intersection of policy, regulation, digital literacy, and emerging technologies.

Barr. Emmanuel Edet.

Barrister Emmanuel emphasized the importance of awareness in addressing cybersecurity challenges for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). He acknowledged that much has been discussed about cybersecurity, but from the perspective of a government agency, he pointed out the lack of awareness about the risks involved in digital engagement, especially with unknown individuals. He stressed the significance of a good identity system in transactions, ensuring that users can identify who they are engaging with.

Many SMEs use free online tools, which, although cost-effective, come with risks. Barrister Emmanuel highlighted the vulnerability of SMEs who leverage social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok to market their products without realizing that these platforms are profit-driven. This exposes businesses to potential risks, as they often share critical business information on these platforms.

He emphasized that while the government can implement laws and regulations, the first line of defense against cyber threats lies in self-defense. Drawing an analogy to locking one's house to prevent break-ins despite the existence of laws against theft, he argued that individuals and businesses must take responsibility for safeguarding their digital presence.

Barrister Emmanuel concluded by stressing that creating awareness should be a fundamental part of any engagement with digital technologies. He likened it to the basic road safety lessons of looking left and right before crossing the road. He believes that such awareness would significantly help in reducing cybercrime and promoting cybersecurity.

Barr. Tonye Apiafi.

Bar. Apiafi Tonye recommended that the government, in collaboration with the private sector, should first identify potential threat actors and the threat vectors within the Nigerian environment. He emphasized the importance of understanding what could cause problems for both the government and the populace. Once these threats are identified, the next step is to develop strategies to help the public use the Internet responsibly and securely. He pointed out that one common threat is phishing, where people receive deceptive emails, often promising rewards, and may click on malicious links. To combat this, Bar. Apiafi suggested that there needs to be continuous education, particularly for MSMEs and their employees, on how to recognize and avoid

such threats. Additionally, robust IT personnel and the deployment of antivirus software are essential in preventing malware and ransomware attacks. The key takeaway from his response was that constant communication and education, both in the public and private sectors, are critical in mitigating cybersecurity risks and ensuring a secure digital environment.

Ms. Adanna Isamade.

Ms. Isamade emphasized the importance of establishing minimum standards for companies, especially those in the MSME sector. She explained that many companies are often reluctant to comply with laws due to the perceived burden, but they would be more willing to follow guidelines if they are clear, and understandable, and do not include punitive measures. According to her, the government should engage with stakeholders to understand their pain points and create policies that are practical and beneficial to their businesses. Ms. Adanna also highlighted the need for differentiated guidelines based on the size and nature of organizations. She stressed that what works for a market woman in the MSME sector should not be the same as what is expected from larger organizations. Lastly, she underscored the critical role of awareness in promoting cybersecurity, noting that educating individuals on their responsibilities is essential for the growth of the ecosystem and socioeconomic development.

Prof. Olayinka David-West.

Prof. Olayinka David-West emphasized the need for Nigeria to first clarify the type of economy it is operating in, particularly in relation to the Fourth Industrial Revolution. She questioned whether the country was preparing its resources, capabilities, and infrastructure to operate effectively in this new industrial era. She pointed out that, while the private sector is working on digitizing services and operations, the government, being the largest employer, also needs to digitize its services to contribute to the progress of the economy.

She also stressed the importance of backward integration into education, advocating for the inclusion of digital literacy from early schooling to ensure that future generations are better prepared for the digital economy. She mentioned that the principles and environment have significantly changed, and the country needs to act by putting the right systems and structures in place to keep up.

In response to a question on data, Prof. David-West noted that while data is often referred to as the new oil, the critical question remains whether the country has the necessary data in digital form that is both analyzable and usable. She emphasized the need for a robust data infrastructure to understand and mitigate the evolving risks, particularly with the pace at which threats develop. She argued for a flexible legislative and policy-making system that could keep up with the rapid technological advancements.

She also highlighted the importance of assessing Nigeria's level of digital maturity and avoiding the direct application of systems designed for more digitally advanced countries. Prof. David-West acknowledged that achieving digital maturity would not happen overnight, but that the country must start laying the foundation now, particularly by building information orientation and changing mindsets regarding information technology and the Internet.

Addressing the challenge of leveraging global technological advancements, Prof. David-West mentioned that Nigeria is already making strides, but there is an internal digital divide between those who have access to technology and those who do not. She discussed the affordability issue, particularly given the importation of technology and the economic challenges, such as the devaluation of the Naira. She advocated for more inclusive strategies that ensure access to technology for different segments of the Nigerian population.

She recalled initiatives like the "One Laptop per Child" program, which failed to materialize, and suggested that community-based programs might be more effective in rural areas. Prof. David-West pointed out that rural communities often rely on a few literate individuals to act as intermediaries for technology access. She warned that the migration of young people from rural areas could exacerbate this issue.

Lastly, Prof. David-West emphasized the need for developing native technologies, especially AI-driven solutions that could address the linguistic diversity of Nigeria. She highlighted the importance of creating language models to support the country's various languages, ensuring that no one is left behind, especially marginalized groups like women in rural areas. She urged for inclusive solutions that cater to the unique needs of the Nigerian context, stressing that without these measures, the digital divide would only worsen.

Barr. Tonye Apiafi.

Barr. Apiafi emphasized the importance of focusing on the foundational aspect of digital literacy, suggesting that children should be introduced to it as early as kindergarten. He stressed the necessity of strong efforts and partnerships to make this possible.

Drawing from Nigeria's past technological advancements, he highlighted how the country leapfrogged from traditional telephone systems to mobile telephony and noted the need for a similar approach to transition into the digital age. Barr. Apiafi underscored the importance of collaborating with stakeholders, including those in more advanced countries, to drive this transformation.

He also pointed out that training is essential, not only for the general populace but also for government officials, such as legislators and members of the executive branch. He called for significant investments to digitize systems and equip people with the skills needed to succeed in the digital era, asserting that these steps are critical for Nigeria's development.

Mr. Francis Ndee-ue Mee-Ebari.

Mr Francis recommended that governments and stakeholders take proactive steps to encourage digital adoption. He highlighted ongoing challenges, such as resistance to automation within both the public and private sectors, including Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs). He noted that some individuals, even key gatekeepers of digital innovation, remain reluctant or even fearful of adopting technology, often reacting negatively to its implementation.

He shared a recent experience where his team deployed digital infrastructure in a state and encountered surprising resistance from users. Despite being educated and expected to support such advancements, many expressed concerns that the technology was too advanced, expensive, or unnecessary. Mr. Francis emphasized that this resistance among adults could hinder the digital literacy of their children.

He concluded by stressing the need to establish structures that promote technology adoption within both government and private sector organizations, advocating for efforts that address these concerns and foster a more accepting attitude toward digital innovation.

Ms. Adanna.

Ms. Adamma highlighted key issues surrounding the acceptability of technology by the general populace and the critical concern of security. She noted that many people avoid engaging with digital spaces due to fears about security and emphasized the importance of recommendations to enhance security adoption and improve existing laws.

She suggested that collaboration among stakeholders, particularly the government and private sector, is essential to creating a unified system that supports digital technology adoption. Ms. Adamma stressed that while digital adoption cannot be forced, it is inevitable as most individuals already interact with digital technologies, especially in the financial sector, through tools like USSD or online banking.

To build trust in digital systems, she advocated for organizations to embed **privacy by design** and **privacy by default** into their technologies. She emphasized the need for transparency, legal accountability, fairness, and equitable access, ensuring that users from any location have consistent and reliable experiences.

Ms. Adamma proposed that governments and organizations establish accessible and seamless reporting mechanisms for technology-related grievances. She criticized the inefficiency of traditional legal resolutions, which often take years, arguing that such delays are unacceptable in the fast-paced technological environment. Instead, quick and effective feedback mechanisms would enhance user trust and foster accountability.

On leveraging emerging technologies, Ms. Adamma shared insights from her involvement with global committees on large language models (LLMs). She addressed the biases inherent in these technologies, noting that they are often developed abroad without sufficient consideration of local needs. She called for governments to assert influence by ensuring imported technologies are adapted to local peculiarities and standards, advocating for inclusivity and non-discrimination in their design.

In conclusion, Ms. Adamma emphasized that government policies must ensure that technology vendors meet standards that promote trust, security, and inclusivity, thereby encouraging widespread and easy adoption of digital innovations.

Barr. Edet.

Bar Edet's address emphasized the balance between individual rights and responsibilities in fostering responsible use of the Internet and digital spaces. He challenged the notion that the government alone bears the bulk of the responsibility for protecting these rights. According to him, while the government has played its part by creating platforms for discussions, individuals must assert their rights and not simply delegate this duty to others.

He highlighted the role of Big Tech companies, noting that these entities often act as gatekeepers of the digital space, deciding what users see and interact with. For example, platforms like Google and Meta determine the content displayed to users based on algorithms and data-driven decisions. This raises concerns about the autonomy of individuals over their digital experience. Bar Edet stressed the importance of understanding the terms of use for apps and platforms before consenting, as users often unknowingly grant permissions with significant implications, such as access to cameras and browsing behaviors.

Bar Edet also called for active engagement with policymakers to ensure community needs are considered in decision-making. He pointed out that while regulatory agencies and legislative bodies create policies, individuals rarely engage with these processes, even though they ultimately impact everyone. He encouraged people to voice their opinions and participate in discussions about digital governance to ensure policies align with the public's interests.

Lastly, he warned against passivity in the digital environment, emphasizing the need for awareness and active participation. He reminded the audience that the cumulative effects of both government and Big Tech policies are felt more acutely when individuals fail to engage. By asserting their rights and engaging with policymakers and digital platforms, people can shape a more inclusive and equitable digital future.

Contributions From Participants.

Victor Effiong, an online participant, raised several points regarding the importance of government regulation in cybersecurity and the digital space. He emphasized that while awareness is essential, the government must also play a major role in regulating those who operate within the information technology sector. He pointed out that individuals who are not computer literate could easily be misled by irresponsible professionals, thus increasing their vulnerability to cyber threats.

Victor stressed the need for the government to regulate the practice of information technology in Nigeria, drawing parallels with the regulation of other professions, such as law and medicine, where the government keeps track of licensed practitioners. He highlighted the challenge of identifying and holding accountable individuals who build malicious applications, like bots, that can steal personal information without the user's knowledge.

He further noted that while organizations like the Computer Professionals Registration Council of Nigeria (CPN) exist, the government's awareness of the actual number of professionals in the field is limited. Victor suggested that professionals in the tech space should be licensed before they can develop and release applications, ensuring that there is accountability. He proposed that applications should bear the signature of their creator, so when issues arise, it is clear where the responsibility lies. If an application lacks this signature, it should be flagged as a potential threat.

Muhammad Nasir Umar, joining from Zamfara State, raised a concern about the current focus on "awareness" in the discussion. While acknowledging that awareness is important, he emphasized the need for a more detailed and structured approach. He suggested that discussions should go beyond general awareness and instead focus on creating a specific, strategic work plan that outlines clear, actionable goals.

Muhammad highlighted the importance of having a granular plan that breaks down the efforts needed to address various issues, including cybercrime. He expressed the expectation that, as a government or forum, there should be measurable progress towards tackling these issues, with a set level of achievement by a certain time. His concern is that without a concrete strategy and work plan, efforts to address cybercrime and other digital issues may lack direction and effectiveness.

Patrick Isichelli made a contribution suggesting that Nigeria should conduct regular risk assessments, particularly focusing on identifying vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure. He recommended that the country take a proactive approach to address these vulnerabilities. Drawing from examples like the United States' Department of Homeland Security's Cyber Infrastructure Survey, Patrick proposed that Nigeria could model a similar initiative. By doing so, he believes the country would be better equipped to mitigate the risks it faces in the cybersecurity landscape.

Key Issues and Recommendations.

Key Issues

1. **Digital Literacy and Awareness**

   - There is a need to deepen digital literacy and create awareness for Nigerians, regardless of location or sector, to ensure widespread digital inclusion.

2. **User Responsibility and Cybersecurity**

   - Users must prioritize their own security when engaging online, being mindful of their actions and the platforms they interact with.
   - Expansion of privacy protection measures is essential to safeguard users against fraud and data theft.

3. **Policy Formulation and Stakeholder Engagement**

   - Policies should be tailored to address the needs of different sectors, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach.
   - Engaging stakeholders to understand their specific challenges and objectives is critical for creating effective regulations.

4. **Risk Management in Digital Spaces**

   - Governments and businesses must assess and preempt potential risks, including those associated with emerging technologies like AI.
   - Tools like risk checklists are needed, particularly for MSMEs, to mitigate threats like malware and spyware.

5. **Digital Literacy in Education**

   - Digital literacy programs should start from the grassroots, integrating into the curriculum from nursery to tertiary education to foster responsible digital behaviour.

6. **Affordability and Local Technology Development**

- Over-reliance on imported technologies poses affordability challenges. Local technology manufacturing should be prioritized to reduce dependence on foreign solutions.

7. **Accessibility and Inclusivity**

   - Efforts must be made to extend digital access to rural communities, which constitute the majority of the population.
   - Inclusive measures should address the needs of people with disabilities, ensuring digital platforms are accessible to all.

8. **Global Collaboration and Support**

   - Leveraging global partnerships for up-to-date security systems and technologies is essential while building local capacity for innovation.

9. **Government and Private Sector Roles**

   - While the government provides the enabling environment and supports initiatives, the onus of utilizing and maximizing digital spaces lies with businesses and individuals.

10. **Responsibility and Ethical Use**

    - Individuals and businesses must adopt a culture of responsibility in using digital spaces, recognizing the rights and duties that come with online engagement.

Recommendations

1. **Enhance Digital Literacy Programs**

   - Establish nationwide campaigns to improve digital skills across all age groups and communities.

2. **Strengthen Privacy Regulations**

   - Implement robust frameworks to address fraud, data theft, and user protection.

3. **Tailor Policies to Stakeholder Needs**

- Conduct consultations with diverse stakeholders to inform sector-specific digital policies.

4. **Develop Local Technology Solutions**

- Incentivize local tech entrepreneurs to design affordable and secure homegrown technologies.

5. **Prioritize Inclusivity**

- Integrate accessibility features into all digital tools and platforms to cater to individuals with disabilities.

6. **Focus on Grassroots Education**

- Embed digital literacy in school curricula from early education levels to promote lifelong responsible Internet use.

7. **Assess Emerging Risks**

- Establish risk assessment mechanisms to address threats associated with technologies like AI, ensuring safe adoption.
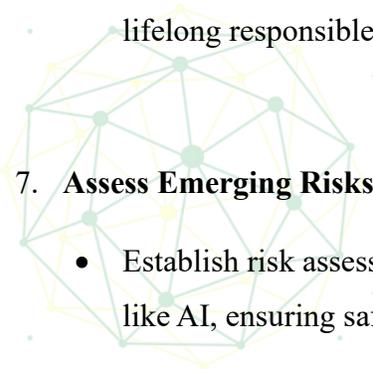
8. **Foster Public-Private Partnerships**

- Encourage collaboration between the government and private sector to scale digital literacy and cybersecurity efforts.

9. **Promote Individual Responsibility**

- Create awareness campaigns highlighting the importance of ethical and responsible digital engagement.

10. **Leverage International Support**

- Build on global partnerships to access cutting-edge technology while developing local capabilities for self-reliance.

3.3 Breakout sessions.

3.3.1 Session 1: Cybersecurity, Data Protection, and Child Online Safety as Foundations for Responsible Use of the Internet.

Moderated by: Mr. Johnson Barimlenea Dandy (Cybersecurity Analyst, Tecnimont Nigeria Limited).

Speakers:

1. Ms. Nihinlola Adeyemi (Co-Founder, SecureOps Solutions).

2. Engr. Patrick Isicheli (Principal Manager, Information & Communications Technology, Niger Delta Development Commission).

3. Mr. Oyegun Osamuyimwen (Member, National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons Cyber Crime Task Team).

4. Mr. Obinna Osuji (General Manager, ICT, Nigerian Content Development and Monitoring Board) Represented by Mr. Bobby Tamunotonye Ekaro (Lead Developer/Supervisor Enterprise Applications).

Rapporteurs:

- Mr. Umar Faruk.
- Ms. Martha Negedu

Summary of the session.

The moderator began the panel discussion by inviting Mr. Obinna to elaborate on cybersecurity as the foundation for responsible internet use. Represented by Mr. Ekaro, he emphasized that cybersecurity is analogous to securing one's home by locking doors, highlighting its role in protecting against scams and fostering safe online practices. Mr. Ekaro stressed that cybersecurity serves as a cornerstone for responsible internet usage.

The moderator then directed a question to Mr. Ekaro about promoting digital literacy among children amidst the hazards of cyberspace. Mr. Ekaro advocated for awareness initiatives, noting the importance of engaging teachers to educate children effectively about digital literacy. He

emphasized that collaboration with educators is essential for equipping children with the knowledge to navigate the digital world safely.

Next, the moderator raised the issue of controlling children's access to harmful information online. Mr. Patrick Isicheli outlined key measures, including implementing age verification systems, developing online safety education programs, encouraging parental controls to mitigate cyberbullying, enacting laws to punish offenders, establishing multi-stakeholder task forces on Child Online Protection (COP), and creating user-friendly reporting platforms. These steps, he suggested, could create a safer digital environment for children.

Further exploring age verification, Mr. Osamuyi Oyegun highlighted the role of parents in monitoring children's online activities. He stressed that parental involvement is crucial to regulate children's internet usage. Additionally, Mr. Oyegun called for educational institutions to enlighten students on responsible social media use and urged the government to prioritize an age verification strategy.

The panel also addressed the relationship between age verification and data breaches. Mrs. Nihinlola Adeyemi clarified that age verification is unrelated to data breaches. She emphasized the importance of robust data protection laws and their enforcement to safeguard user information. She further urged parents to ensure that their children's digital exposure aligns with age-appropriate standards.

When asked about government measures to enhance cybersecurity, Mr. Patrick recommended several actions. He proposed developing a National Cybersecurity Strategy to define stakeholder roles and objectives. Additionally, he suggested establishing a dedicated cybersecurity agency to collaborate across the public and private sectors.

The discussion then shifted to the impact of reduced data tariffs on cybersecurity. Mr. Ekaro expressed skepticism, arguing that lower tariffs might lead to increased cyberbullying due to broader internet access. However, Mrs. Adeyemi countered that reduced tariffs would boost internet usage but emphasized the need for continuous government awareness efforts and regular updates to cybersecurity frameworks. She underscored that artificial intelligence (AI) is integral to modern digital strategies and requires focused attention.

Mr. Osamuyi offered additional strategies to mitigate cybersecurity threats, including enforcing a national cybersecurity policy, fully implementing the Cybercrime Act, and conducting public awareness campaigns to digitize citizens and promote safe online behavior.

In summarizing the session, the moderator highlighted key recommendations, such as implementing age verification systems, promoting online safety education, and enforcing robust cybersecurity policies. Despite varying views on data tariffs, there was consensus on the importance of public awareness, parental involvement, and collaborative efforts among the government, stakeholders, and citizens to strengthen cybersecurity and foster responsible digital behavior

Key Points Raised

1. Cybersecurity as a Foundation: Cybersecurity is essential for safe and responsible internet use, protecting individuals and businesses from scams and cyber threats.

2. Digital Literacy for Children: Awareness initiatives and teacher training are necessary to educate children on digital safety and responsible online behavior.

3. Child Online Safety:

   - Risks include exposure to harmful content, cyberbullying, and exploitation.

   - Effective measures include age verification systems, online safety education, and parental controls.

4. Parental Involvement: Parents play a crucial role in monitoring and guiding children's digital activities.

5. Data Protection:

   - Strong data protection laws are vital for securing user information.

   - Data breaches require stricter enforcement of regulations.

6. Cybersecurity for Businesses:

   - Developing a National Cybersecurity Strategy to define roles and objectives.

   - Establishing a dedicated cybersecurity agency to foster public-private collaboration.

7. Impact of Reduced Data Tariffs:

   - Concerns that lower tariffs could increase cyberbullying due to broader internet access.

   - Counterarguments suggest reduced tariffs could boost digital adoption, requiring greater awareness efforts.

8. AI and Emerging Technologies: AI is pivotal in the digital landscape and requires focused frameworks to mitigate associated risks.

9. Cybercrime Act Enforcement: Full implementation of the Cybercrime Act is necessary to strengthen Nigeria's cybersecurity posture.

10. Public Awareness: Nationwide campaigns to promote cybersecurity and responsible internet use are critical for mitigating digital risks.

11. Digital Inclusion: Access to digital spaces should extend to rural and underserved communities, ensuring no one is left behind.

12. Technology Localization: Developing homegrown technological solutions to reduce reliance on imports and ensure affordability.

13. Inclusive Policies: Catering to individuals with disabilities and ensuring their access to digital spaces.

14. Collaborative Governance: Engaging parents, educators, policymakers, and tech companies in fostering safer digital environments.

15. Behavioral Change through Education: Incorporating digital literacy into school curricula to build lifelong responsible internet habits.

Recommendations from session 1.

1. Cybersecurity and Governance:
   - Develop a National Cybersecurity Strategy to address emerging threats.
   - Establish a centralized cybersecurity agency for oversight and rapid threat response.
   - Enforce global cybersecurity standards, such as ISO 27001, for critical sectors.
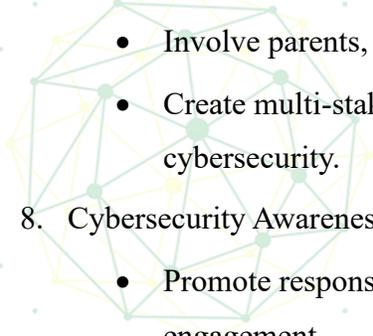
2. Child Online Protection:
   - Mandate age verification systems on platforms targeting children.
   - Introduce content filters to prevent access to harmful material.
   - Develop a Child Online Protection (COP) curriculum in schools.
   - Create user-friendly reporting mechanisms for harmful online activities.
   - Enact stricter penalties for cybercrimes targeting children.

3. Digital Literacy and Public Awareness:
   - Integrate digital literacy into educational curricula from primary to tertiary levels.
   - Conduct national awareness campaigns using media and community initiatives.
   - Promote grassroots involvement in cybersecurity awareness, especially in rural areas.

4. Data Protection:

- Implement robust data protection laws with provisions for privacy, consent, and accountability.
- Ensure data protection frameworks are regularly updated to address evolving risks.

5. Inclusive Access:

- Enhance digital inclusion for rural communities and underserved populations.
- Design digital solutions accommodating individuals with disabilities.

6. Technology Development and Affordability:

- Encourage homegrown technological solutions tailored to Nigeria's needs.
- Foster partnerships between tech companies and the government to develop affordable digital tools.

7. Collaboration Among Stakeholders:

- Involve parents, educators, tech companies, and civil society in policy-making.
- Create multi-stakeholder task forces for Child Online Protection and cybersecurity.

8. Cybersecurity Awareness:

- Promote responsible use of the internet through targeted education and engagement.
- Emphasize user responsibility for online safety, such as understanding terms of service and avoiding risky behaviours.

9. Policy and Law Enforcement:

- Fully implement the Cybercrime Act to address gaps in Nigeria's cybersecurity framework.
- Continuously review and update cybersecurity policies to stay ahead of emerging threats.

10. Global Partnerships:

- Leverage international collaborations to access up-to-date cybersecurity tools and expertise.

- Advocate for the inclusion of Nigeria-specific needs in global technological developments.

3.3.2 - Session 2: Emerging Technologies: Leveraging AI, IoT, and Blockchain for Responsible Internet Use.

Moderated by: Mrs Priscillia Igba – Treasurer, Internet Society Nigeria Chapter.

Speakers:

- Engr. Kunle Olorundare (President, Internet Society Nigeria Chapter).
- Dr. Kingsley Theophilus Igulu (Data Scientist/Lecturer, Department of Computer Science, Ignatius Ajuru University).
- Engr. Praise Igochi Onu (Lecturer, University of Port Harcourt).
- Ms. Nene Iroha (General Manager, Global Innovation Learning Lab).

Rapporteurs

- Mrs. Anthonia Odiokwu.
- Ms. Martha Negedu.

Question 1: What is the current state of policies on these emerging technologies, especially in Nigeria?

Engr. Kunle Olorundare began by highlighting the explosion in the tech sector and emphasizing the need for Nigeria to tap into this growth. He noted that some foundational policies already exist, such as the **National Policy on AI** and the **National AI Strategy**, though both remain in draft stages. Kunle stressed the importance of advancing these drafts into substantive documents. Additionally, he pointed to the **National Startup Act**, which encourages startups to engage with emerging technologies, but raised concerns about low public awareness of these documents, suggesting awareness campaigns as a solution.

Dr. Kingsley Theophilus Igulu agreed that Nigeria is in the infancy stage of its technological journey and requires heightened awareness. He highlighted existing efforts spearheaded by organisations like **NITDA**, which established the **National Center for AI and Robotics**, and referenced frameworks like the **National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy (NCPS)** and the

National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy. Kingsley emphasized the need to mature these policies and translate them into actionable programs.

Engr. Praise Igochi Onu added that beyond drafting policies, the government must prioritize their implementation and establish mechanisms to monitor their impact.

Question 2: What steps can the government and other stakeholders take to promote the responsible adoption of AI for economic development while adhering to ethical and regulatory standards?

Ms. Nene Iroha proposed a comprehensive AI strategy that prioritizes **human rights, transparency, data privacy, and protection**. She advocated for the development of bias-free, fair AI and called for practical, adoptable policies, with a particular emphasis on promoting AI ethics across organizations. Nene also stressed the value of public-private partnerships in achieving these goals.

Engr. Kunle Olorundare echoed the importance of public-private collaborations, emphasizing initiatives like the **Nigeria Internet Governance Forum (NIGF)**, where discussions on policy recommendations can be pushed toward implementation. He suggested a **comprehensive legal framework** that not only drives innovation but also incorporates enforceable penalties. Additionally, Kunle underscored the importance of capacity building in emerging technologies.

Dr. Kingsley Theophilus Igulu emphasized the role of the government in investing in **digital infrastructure** and fostering competencies across various sectors to aid policymaking. He called for **time-bound and context-specific legal frameworks** that address Nigeria's current technological landscape.

Engr. Praise Igochi Onu focused on the role of education in responsible technology use, highlighting initiatives like the **"Catch-Them-Young" program** run by the **Center for Information and Telecommunication Engineering, University of Port Harcourt**, which equips children with digital skills.

Question 3: What strategies can be implemented to enhance IoT infrastructure and data security? Ms. Nene Iroha stressed the importance of strengthening **national broadband connectivity** and fostering public-private partnerships to bridge gaps in underserved communities. She suggested

establishing **innovation hubs** to drive development and introducing regulations that mandate "security by design" in IoT systems.

Engr. Kunle Olorundare added that robust digital infrastructure is critical, advocating for **equitable distribution of infrastructure** and the adoption of **edge solutions** to reduce latency and congestion. He also emphasized the need to align with **global standards**.

Dr. Kingsley Theophilus Igulu highlighted the foundational role of the Internet in IoT development, pointing out that many urban areas in Nigeria still lack 5G connectivity. He urged the government to prioritize policy implementation, invest in infrastructure, and create local IoT awareness initiatives to facilitate adoption.

Engr. Praise Igochi Onu noted that the Internet's capacity in Nigeria remains inadequate and called for a **legal framework** that ensures accountability. Mrs. Priscilla Igba also raised concerns about Nigeria's power challenges, stressing that addressing energy infrastructure is vital for IoT expansion.

Question 4: How can regulatory frameworks balance innovation, security, and transparency, especially concerning blockchain?

Dr. Kingsley Theophilus Igulu expressed concerns about the anonymity inherent in blockchain operations, urging the introduction of measures to regulate and mitigate associated risks.

Engr. Praise Igochi Onu highlighted the increasing departure of foreign companies from Nigeria and stressed the need to educate stakeholders about Nigeria's unique context. She advocated for collaboration between the government, private sector, and academia to build the knowledge base required to regulate blockchain effectively while balancing innovation and security.

Ms. Nene Iroha suggested allowing startups to experiment with blockchain under a monitored regulatory environment. She also emphasized cross-border blockchain solutions, particularly in areas like fintech, trade, and supply chains.

Question 5: How can emerging technologies address challenges across sectors to ensure adoption, promote inclusive growth, and enhance digital literacy?

Engr. Kunle Olorundare stated that emerging technologies can significantly boost productivity in critical sectors like agriculture. He advocated for an enabling environment with **sandboxes** for

experimentation, proof-of-concept testing, and timed monitoring. He also suggested offering **tax holidays** for critical technologies and investing in digital literacy initiatives.

Ms. Nene Iroha called for a continuous digital literacy campaign targeting rural areas, emphasizing that many Nigerians still lack basic digital skills.

Dr. Kingsley Theophilus Igulu underscored the need for literacy and awareness campaigns to encourage broader engagement with emerging technologies.

Engr. Praise Igochi Onu highlighted the importance of educating students about both the opportunities and risks of emerging technologies. She suggested integrating digital skills into the government's skill acquisition programs for children.

Questions and Contributions from Participants.

Mr. Kabiru proposed strategies to ensure blockchain's secure nature is not exploited for illicit activities. These include **Know Your Customer (KYC) protocols**, **anti-money laundering regulations**, **permissioned blockchain tools**, **blockchain analytics**, **digital identity solutions**, and **transaction audit tools**.

Dr. Legborsi called for collaboration among ministries to prevent duplication of efforts, emphasizing that many technical drafts are complete but require political will for implementation.

Summary of the Session.

The discussion emphasised the need to finalise draft policies on artificial intelligence (AI) and transform them into substantive frameworks. Participants highlighted that these policies must also be implemented to guide the responsible adoption and use of AI, the Internet of Things (IoT), and blockchain technologies. It was noted that a robust legal framework is essential to support these advancements and ensure that they align with ethical and societal standards.

Awareness creation was another critical point raised during the session. Participants stressed the importance of educating the public about AI, IoT, and blockchain to promote their responsible use. Ethical considerations and transparency in AI were highlighted as necessary to build trust in these technologies and encourage their widespread adoption.

The panel underscored the importance of public-private partnerships to drive advancements in emerging technologies. Collaboration between government entities, the private sector, and other stakeholders was deemed vital to ensure that the benefits of these technologies are maximized while addressing associated risks.

Investments in infrastructure were identified as a priority, particularly the development of high-speed broadband to support IoT applications. Participants also recommended the adoption of edge computing to enhance IoT functionality and enable its scalability in Nigeria. These measures would create a solid foundation for IoT's growth and integration.

Blockchain technology was also a focal point, with recommendations to establish blockchain companies and startups in Nigeria. The session advocated for the creation of controlled environments for these startups to minimize risks and ensure secure implementation. Policies tailored to the blockchain sector were deemed essential to foster innovation while maintaining regulatory oversight.

Education and capacity building were highlighted as crucial for equipping citizens with the skills needed to leverage emerging technologies. Participants suggested incorporating these topics into educational curricula and promoting digital literacy. Such efforts would help the public understand and adopt AI, IoT, and blockchain responsibly.

Finally, collaboration and stakeholder engagement were emphasized as necessary for driving progress. Participants recommended partnerships with institutions and organizations interested in IoT and related technologies. This collective approach was seen as key to fostering an ecosystem that supports innovation while ensuring that ethical and practical considerations guide the use of emerging technologies.

Key Points Raised:

1. **Current State of Policies for IoT, Blockchain, and AI in Nigeria**:
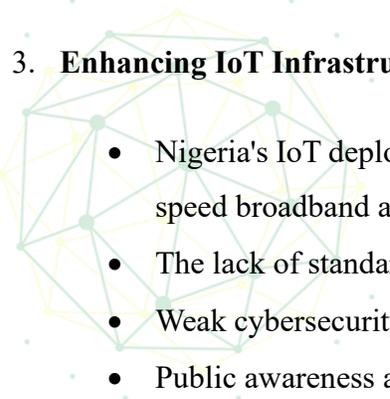
   - Several critical policies remain in draft form, including the National Digital Economy Policy and Strategy and the National AI Strategy.

- Existing frameworks such as the National Blockchain Adoption Strategy, National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy, and Nigeria Data Protection Regulation require updates to remain relevant and effective.

2. **Promoting Responsible AI Adoption**:

- A lack of digital infrastructure, especially 5G networks, hinders AI deployment.
- Public-private partnerships are underutilized in driving AI adoption.
- The absence of comprehensive legal frameworks creates gaps in AI ethics and transparency.
- There is a need to contextualize AI policies to suit Nigeria's technological realities.
- Education and capacity-building initiatives are insufficient to support AI's responsible adoption.

3. **Enhancing IoT Infrastructure and Data Security**:

- Nigeria's IoT deployment is constrained by inadequate infrastructure, such as high-speed broadband and computing solutions.
- The lack of standardized interoperability solutions hinders IoT functionality.
- Weak cybersecurity measures expose IoT systems to significant data security risks.
- Public awareness about IoT technologies and their benefits remains low.

4. **Integrating Blockchain Technology Responsibly**:

- Regulatory frameworks are needed to strike a balance between blockchain innovation and security.
- Limited stakeholder education on blockchain technology impedes its broader adoption.
- The fintech sector, which heavily relies on blockchain, requires targeted regulatory policies.
- Public-private partnerships are critical to driving blockchain innovation.
- Controlled experimentation with blockchain applications could inform future regulatory approaches.

5. **Leveraging Emerging Technologies for Inclusive Growth**:

   - Emerging technologies are not being adequately applied across sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing to drive inclusive growth.
   - Regulatory environments are not sufficiently innovation-friendly to attract investments in emerging technologies.
   - Digital literacy programs are inadequate, leaving many citizens unaware of the benefits and risks associated with these technologies.
   - Nigeria lacks local capacity for creating technology products tailored to its unique challenges.

6. **Privacy and Security Risks**:

   - Emerging technologies such as AI and IoT increase risks to data privacy and security.
   - Existing frameworks like the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation are outdated and need to be updated to address evolving threats effectively.

7. **Infrastructure and Capacity Building**:

   - A lack of robust digital infrastructure, including 5G networks, hampers the deployment of IoT and AI.
   - There is an urgent need for investment in capacity-building programs to develop the skills required for emerging technologies.

8. **Stakeholder Education and Public Awareness**:

   - Public knowledge about emerging technologies and their impact is limited.
   - Awareness campaigns are needed to highlight the benefits and risks of technologies like IoT, AI, and blockchain, with a particular focus on data privacy concerns.

9. **Inclusive Growth and Local Development**:

- Emerging technologies offer significant potential for inclusive growth, but current efforts do not adequately address the needs of marginalized groups or sectors.
- Local development efforts are insufficient to produce technology solutions that cater to Nigeria's unique socio-economic challenges.

Recommendations from Session 2:

1. **Finalize and Implement Draft Policies**:

- Transform existing draft policies on Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and Blockchain into substantive frameworks to guide their responsible adoption and use.
- Establish mechanisms to ensure timely and effective implementation of these policies.

2. **Develop Comprehensive Legal Frameworks**:

- Create robust legal frameworks for emerging technologies to address ethical concerns, ensure transparency, and align technological advancements with societal standards.

3. **Promote Public Awareness and Ethical Use**:

- Launch nationwide awareness campaigns to educate the public about AI, IoT, and Blockchain, emphasizing their benefits, applications, and associated risks.
- Highlight ethical considerations and transparency to build trust and encourage widespread adoption of these technologies.

4. **Invest in Digital Infrastructure**:

- Prioritize investments in high-speed broadband and edge computing to support IoT applications and enhance their scalability in Nigeria.

- Establish infrastructure that enables efficient and secure implementation of emerging technologies.

5. **Strengthen Public-Private Partnerships**:

   - Foster collaboration between government agencies, private sector players, and other stakeholders to drive advancements in emerging technologies.
   - Utilize partnerships to maximize the benefits of these technologies while addressing potential risks.

6. **Encourage Blockchain Startups in Controlled Environments**:

   - Create controlled environments to support blockchain startups and ensure secure implementation of blockchain solutions.
   - Develop tailored policies for the blockchain sector to balance innovation with regulatory oversight.

7. **Integrate Emerging Technologies into Education**:

   - Incorporate topics on AI, IoT, and Blockchain into school curricula to equip students with the skills and knowledge to leverage these technologies responsibly.
   - Promote digital literacy programs across all demographics to enhance public understanding and adoption of emerging technologies.

8. **Strengthen Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement**:

   - Engage stakeholders in the development of policies and strategies for emerging technologies.
   - Partner with institutions and organizations to foster an ecosystem that supports innovation while addressing ethical and practical considerations.

9. **Follow Up on Implementation of Recommendations**:

   - Establish mechanisms to track and evaluate the progress of recommendations from this session, ensuring continuous improvement and accountability.

10. **Organize Further Sector-Specific Discussions**:

- Hold targeted discussions on the application of emerging technologies in specific sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and finance to explore their potential impact and guide sector-specific strategies.

11. **Support Education and Capacity Building**:

- Invest in capacity-building initiatives to develop a skilled workforce capable of managing and innovating with AI, IoT, and Blockchain technologies.

12. **Ensure Responsible Innovation**:

- Encourage innovation within ethical and societal boundaries to prevent misuse and ensure that emerging technologies benefit all segments of society.

3.3.3 - Session 3: Enhancing Multistakeholder Digital Cooperation: Internet Governance, Regulations and Infrastructure.

Moderated by: Mr. Bernard Ewah (Zonal Coordinator, South-South Zone, National Information Technology Development Agency).

Speakers:

- Dr. Ibiso Kingsley-George (Head, Internet Governance Unit, Nigerian Communications Commission).
- Dr. Aburuotu Emmanuel (Lecturer, Computer Science Department, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education).
- Dr. Enoch Joseph (Lecturer, Engr. Dr. Enoch, Joseph Diema, Rivers State University).

Rapporteur:

- Mr. Umar Faruk.

Summary of the session.

The moderator gave a brief insight into the importance of stakeholder engagement and how to address the country's infrastructure capacity.

Dr. Aburuotu Emmanuel appreciated and spoke about the importance of internet governance in helping build capacity for sustainable development in the digital space in Nigeria. He presented some data from a study by the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2023 that showed that 77% of youths in the country are enlightened and have received some skills due to them leveraging the internet. Businesses and those from the educational sector use the Internet more to run their institutions. For efficiency in utilizing the internet, standards need to be set for people to address the digital divide.

Dr. Ibiso Kingsley George highlighted the government's role in promoting digital inclusion through collaborative advocacy programs with the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) and the private sector. The NCC offers digital skills training for youth and encourages state governments to adopt national initiatives. Currently, broadband access is predominantly available in urban areas, with universities benefiting from projects aimed at improving connectivity. However, infrastructure deployment faces challenges, as only 16 out of 36 states comply with the approved right-of-way charges of 145 naira. She emphasized the need for federal and state governments, along with the education sector, to collaborate in advancing digital initiatives. She noted that the advantages states receive from improved digital infrastructure significantly outweigh the revenue generated from excessive right-of-way fees. To enhance digital inclusion, it is crucial for states to adopt federal policies and regulations effectively.

Dr Enoch Joseph emphasized the importance of collaboration with stakeholders to enhance and improve the digital divide within the country. There are 109 million internet subscribers according to a statistic from the NCC as of 2023. Collaboration with stakeholders is essential for establishing regulations that protect users' interests and promote responsible internet use. Continuous engagement will also help bridge the gap between urban and rural areas, enhancing the program's effectiveness and outreach.

Key Points Raised

1. More emphasis should be given to the development of infrastructure capacity in Nigeria.
2. Role of internet governance in sustainable development.
3. Data from NBS showed that 77% of youth have gained skills through internet use.
4. It is important to set standards to address the digital divide in the country.
5. NCC and NITDA to organize advocacy programs and digital skills training for youths.
6. Federal policies and regulations on right-of-way charges at the state level should be implemented.

Recommendations

1. Establish and carry out capacity-building programs to improve stakeholders' knowledge, especially in the areas of internet governance and digital infrastructure at the federal and state government levels.
2. State governments should be encouraged to adopt and implement national digital inclusion programs to ensure consistency and effectiveness across the country.
3. A robust regulatory framework that protects users' interests and promotes responsible use of the Internet should be developed.
4. Promote sustainable practices in digital infrastructure development to ensure long-term benefits and minimize environmental impact.
5. Collaboration should be promoted among stakeholders and operators to invest in and deploy digital infrastructure, especially in underserved and rural areas.
6. Stakeholders and Government should develop and promote digital literacy awareness initiatives, and online safety education programs, starting from the grassroots, and provide orientation on digital tool usage in workspaces, organizations, and MDAs.
7. The government and stakeholders should enhance Cybersecurity and Data Protection, enforce data protection laws, and review and update cybersecurity frameworks.
8. The government and stakeholders should ensure Child Online Safety, encourage parental involvement, implement parental controls, implement age verification systems, and enact laws to punish offenders.

3.4 Wrap Up Session

The wrap-up session was led by the moderators of the breakout sessions, who shared key insights and perspectives gathered during their respective discussions.

3.5 Closing Remarks

Dr. Wariowei D.S., Chairperson of the NIGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG), expressed his appreciation for the productive discussions held during the forum. He highlighted the significance of the sessions, particularly the high-level dialogue, which covered critical topics such as responsible Internet use, cybersecurity, and multi-stakeholder engagement. Dr Wariowei emphasized that the outcomes of the forum would contribute to broader regional and global Internet Governance Forums, playing a key role in shaping policies for sustainable socio-economic development. He commended the collaborative efforts of participants from government, private sector, and civil society, whose insights are crucial to influencing Internet governance strategies.

Dr Wariowei further reaffirmed the MAG's commitment to ensuring the forum's outcomes are effectively disseminated and followed up with relevant stakeholders, including government agencies. He acknowledged previous challenges with actionable follow-through on communiqués and assured attendees that this would not be repeated. Additionally, he announced plans to extend the reach of future forums to zones that are yet to host the event, thereby ensuring broader representation and engagement. Concluding his remarks, Dr Wariowei thanked participants for their contributions and reaffirmed the forum's dedication to driving impactful outcomes in Internet governance.

3.6 Zoom Participation Statistics.

Session	Participants	
	Physical	Online
Main Session	112	69
Session 1	16	18

Session 2	44	27
Session 3	20	24
NYIGF	130	70
Women IGF		-