Agence Numérique de l'Etat
الوكالة الرقمية للدولة

Ministère de la Transformation Numérique et de la Modernisation de l'Administration

IGF INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM *North Africa*

8th Annual Meeting of the North Africa Internet Governance Forum (NAIGF-24)

Nouakchott - Mauritania
29-31 October 2024
Mauri Center Hotel

NAIGF-24 Report

Organizers

IGF INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM *North Africa*

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IGF Internet Governance Forum

NAIGF Overview:

The North African Internet Governance Forum (NAIGF) was established as a regional initiative in September 2012, following the model of the global Internet Governance Forum (IGF), and in accordance with principles outlined in the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society in Geneva, December 2003, as well as the principles, values, and commitments of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society 2005. NAIGF was officially launched in 2016, bringing together all stakeholders in internet policy from governments, the private sector, civil society, technical community, and other relevant stakeholders from seven North African countries (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan & Tunisia).

NAIGF serves as an open dialogue platform on public policy issues related to the internet and its governance. The forum represents an opportunity for all parties to meet within a framework conducive to addressing important issues and discussing practical solutions aimed at enhancing the sustainability, strength, security, stability, and development of the internet.

NAIGF is committed to incorporating the interests and perspectives of North African countries into the activities of the global Internet Governance Forum (IGF). NAIGF aims to involve all stakeholders concerned with internet affairs and governance. Additionally, the forum seeks to raise awareness and build capacity in internet governance for North African users. Among its annual activities, the forum organizes a capacity-building program "North Africa School on Internet Governance (NASIG) aims to enhance knowledge and develop skills related to internet governance, preparing participants for active involvement in various regional and global internet governance processes, particularly due to its impact on the sustainable development plans of Arab and African countries.

NAIGF-24:

The 8th Annual Meeting of the North Africa Internet Governance Forum (NAIGF-24) was held from October 29-31, 2024, graciously hosted by the Digital Agency of the State (AN-ETAT) at Mauri Center Hotel in Nouakchott, The NAIGF-24 seeks to strengthen regional collaboration to tackle the increasingly complex challenges in digital governance, which affect a wide array of societal and economic sectors.

During the opening session of the NAIGF-24, which was attended by more than 200 Participants, came from all stakeholders from governments, policy makers, experts and technicians from ministries of communications, bodies concerned with information technology, private sector, university academics, civil society bodies, international and regional organizations, and independent experts interested in the fields of Internet governance. H.E. Ahmed Salem Ould Beddah, Minister of Digital Transformation and Administration Modernization, highlighted that "enhancing communication networks and ensuring high-speed internet access not only enables greater access to digital services but also encourages companies to integrate digital tools, thus contributing to economic growth and resilience.

Mr. Ahmed Farag, President of the North Africa Internet Governance Forum, underscored the significance of the forum's agenda, which includes critical topics such as digital resource management, reinforcing regulatory and legislative frameworks, safeguarding human rights in the digital sphere, advancing cybersecurity, and fostering cooperation between governments, the private sector, and civil society. He further emphasized that since its inception, NAIGF has been committed to creating a participatory environment to ensure the initiative's success and achieve its objectives in advancing digital governance across the region.
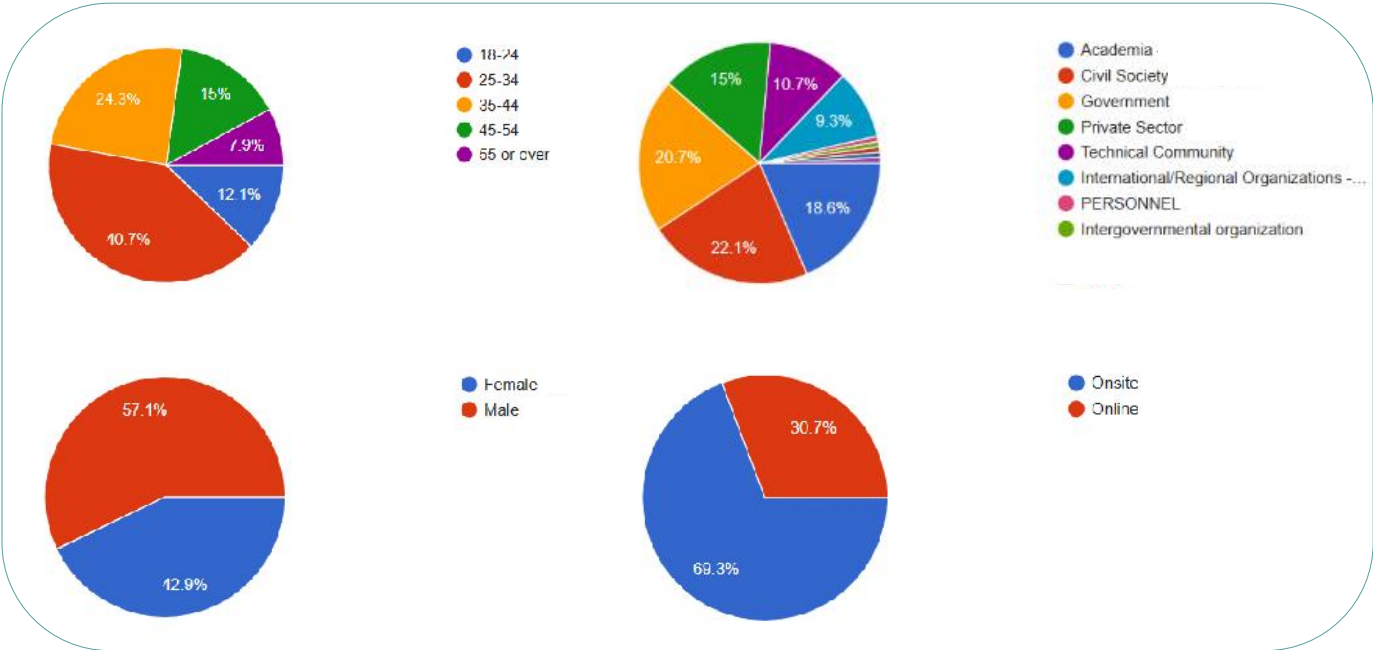
Ms. Anja Gengo, representative of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF-UN), emphasized the vital role of national and regional forums in advancing internet governance track. She reaffirmed the IGF's support for the activities and initiatives of the North Africa Internet Governance Forum, praising its contributions to capacity-building programs in the region.

Ms. Fatima Boubout, Deputy Director General of the Digital Agency of the State also welcomed the attendees and participants, assuring the Agency's pleasure in hosting the annual meeting of the Forum this year, especially in light of the distinguished topics of internet governance it contains that are important on the national and regional levels.

NAIGF-24 Participation Analysis:

The North Africa Internet Governance Forum (NAIGF-24) was attended by more than 200 participants physically and remotely from all stakeholders from governments, private sector, Academic, technicians, civil society international & regional organizations experts from bodies concerned about internet governance and information and digital policies. They contributed through their positive participation, engagement in discussions, and presenting diverse perspectives and point of views, enriching the NAIGF-24 sessions.

NAIGF-24 Agenda:

DAY 1: Tuesday, 29th October 2024	
09:00 - 10:00	**Opening Ceremony**
10:30 - 12:00	**Session 1:** Context in data protection law and data governance: Opportunities, challenges, and projects for the future.
14:00 - 15:30	**Session 2:** Broadband access and ICT infrastructure: updates & prospects for inclusive connectivity in North Africa.
16:00 - 17:30	**Session 3:** Cybersecurity metrics & most prominent issues.

DAY 2: Wednesday, 30th October 2024	
09:00 - 10:15	**Session 4:** Global Digital Compact - Main components & significance from the regional and global context
10:30 - 11:45	**Session 5:** Universal Internet indicators & digital transformation updates
11:45 - 13:00	**Session 6:** Multi-stakeholders Engagement - Shaping the digital future in North Africa
14:30 - 15:30	**Session 7:** Social effects of the digital and social media benefits & challenges
15:45 - 17:00	**Session 8:** North African Youth initiative on internet governance

DAY 3: Thursday, 31st October 2024	
09:00 - 10:15	**Session 9:** Digital Infrastructure; Are we ready for emerging technologies in North Africa?
10:30 - 11:45	**Session 10:** Artificial intelligence ethics and privacy: Convergence of ethical principles and legal requirements in the digital age.
11:45 - 13:00	**Session 11:** Women inclusion in Internet governance processes
15:30 - 15:45	Closing Remarks

16:00 - 17:00	NAIGF - General Assembly

NAIGF-24 Sessions Outcomes:

Session 1: Data protection law and data governance: Opportunities, challenges, and projects for the future.

Speakers:
- Mr. Mohamed Fadel Limam, Legal Director, Data Protection Authority
- Dr. Mohamed Hegazy, Senior Legal Consultant
- Mr. Chawky Gadas, INDP Former president - Remotely
- Mr. Mohamadad Farouk Alnana, Ministry of Digital Transformation and Administration Modernization, North Africa IGF MAG Member
- Moderation: Ms. Aicha Jeridi, North Africa IGF, Vice Chair

Session objectives:
Provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of data governance and data protection laws across the MENA region. Identify and analysis the challenges and opportunities in implementing effective data protection measures. Discuss the alignment of regional data protection laws with international standards and best practices.

Session highlights:

- Current Regulatory Landscape gave an overview of existing data protection laws and regulations in MENA countries, with comparison with international frameworks such as the GDPR and their impact on regional practices.
- Data Protection challenges, with examination of common challenges faced by MENA countries in enforcing data protection laws, in addition to discussion on issues such as data breaches, non-compliance, and inadequate regulatory frameworks.
- Best practices and success stories within the region and globally, exploring the innovative approaches and technologies to enhance data governance.
- Covering the stakeholder roles and collaboration process analyzing responsibilities of governments, businesses, and civil society in strengthening data protection, and the opportunities for collaboration and partnerships to improve data governance.
- Future Trends and Developments, with Insights into emerging trends and future directions in data protection law and governance in the region. The impact of technological advancements, such as AI and big data, on data protection.

Session 2: Broadband access & ICT infrastructure: updates & prospects for inclusive connectivity in North Africa.

Speakers:
- Mr. Mohamed Lemine Salihi, WARDIP Project Coordinator
- Mr. Fahd Batayneh, Middle East Stakeholder Engagement Director, ICANN
- Ms. Soumaya Benbartaoui, Chief Information security officer - Remotely
- Ms. Xianhong Hu, Information for All Programme (IFAP), UNESCO
- Moderation: Mr. Ahmad Farag, Chair, North Africa IGF

Session objectives:
The session aimed to track the characteristics of Africa's broadband network, listing the major digital obstacles in North Africa, and determine the main players and projects that are enhancing internet access.

Session highlights:

A great proportion of Africa faces critical challenges for digital development, including underdeveloped digital infrastructure, lack of accessible and affordable connectivity, a stubborn digital gender gap, limited skills for digitally enabled industries, and inadequate regulatory and policy environments. However, in the last decade, the region has made substantial strides toward digital transformation, with hundreds of millions of people gaining access to the internet and productively utilizing a wide variety of digital services, such as mobile payments and online learning platforms. The availability and use of digital technologies are strongly linked to economic growth, innovation, job creation, and inclusion, at both the national and regional levels. Unfortunately, many countries in Africa, however, still face significant challenges in digital development.

- Main international objectives in the field of telecommunications and digital infrastructures, gave some figures from the telecom sector (Evolution of uses)
- ICANN role in Internet Infrastructure, and The Coalition for Digital Africa (CDA), also explain ICANN vision on how the Internet infrastructure in North Africa can be improved?
- A modern telecoms infrastructure Broadband access as a catalyst for digital transformation in Algeria, and the data protection ecosystem in the telco fields.
- Challenge of Global digital divides and gender divide, UNESCO-IFAP's response to foster inclusive and meaningful connectivity and encourage MENA countries to establish IFAP national committees for achieving that goal. UNESCO invites Mena region and stakeholders to join global advocacy and capacity building initiatives such as IGF Dynamic Coalition on measuring digital inclusion and Policy network on meaningful access.

Session 3: Cybersecurity metrics & most prominent issues.

Speakers:
- Mr. Cheikh Oumar Elimane Ly, Director of Systems Administration and Security
- Dr. Abdoul Hakeem Ajijola, Chair, Strategic Road Map Action Plan Committee(NDPB)
- Dr. Martin Koyabe, Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE) Africa
- Dr. Sidi Biha, SUPNUM MD Security Expert
- Dr. Souhaib Yousfi. Assistant Professor of Cyber Security Science at Efrei, Paris, France

- Moderator: Dr. Aroua Hdhili, PHD-Senior Software Engineering, AI Consultant

Session objectives:

Cybersecurity was identified as a growing challenge, with the increasing adoption of digital technologies accompanied by more sophisticated cyber threats. The speakers highlighted the lack of skilled professionals, weak cybersecurity frameworks, and limited metrics to assess vulnerabilities. Key topics discussed included evolving threats, where panelists addressed common cyber threats such as malware, phishing, and social engineering, which are exacerbated by poor digital literacy in the region. Capacity building was emphasized as critical to addressing skills gaps through cybersecurity education and training programs. Additionally, the importance of emerging technologies like ethical hacking, cloud security, and AI in countering cyber threats was underscored.

Session highlights:

Cyberattacks occur when individuals gain unauthorized access to digital systems and information for malicious purposes. Their enormous cost to people and organizations makes it critical to protect systems, software and data against those attacks. The term of cybersecurity refers to efforts to protect corporate or personal electronic equipment against these costly attacks. Understanding the vulnerabilities that can allow unauthorized and damaging access to digital systems is a key component in cybersecurity research. An advanced degree in information security management can help professionals learn how cybersecurity risks are evolving, what cybersecurity risks looking for in their own organizations and how to address them.

- Develop national cybersecurity strategies with measurable objectives.
- Increase investments in cybersecurity training programs and certifications.
- Promote cross-border collaborations to share knowledge and best practices on cybersecurity.
- Create awareness campaigns to educate the public about cyber threats and safe practices

Session 4: Global Digital Compact - Main components & significance from the regional and global context

Speakers:
- Amp. Amr Al-Jowaily, Assistant Foreign Minister for multilateral affairs – Remotely
- Mr. Mohamed Mokhtar, Associate Professor
- Mr. Belaid NOUAR, ICT expert and Moroccan GAC/ICANN alternate representative – Remotely
- Mr. Faysal Bayouli, Director, Ministry of Communication Technologies

- Moderation: Mr. Mohamed Farahat, Lawyer, Legal & Internet Governance consultant

Session objectives:
Presenting an overview of the Global Digital Compact (GDC), presenting update about the Summit of the future main outcomes and GDC Future procedures and framework.

Session highlights:
Following the political declaration adopted at the occasion of the United Nations' 75th anniversary in September 2020, the Secretary-General in September 2021 released his report Our Common Agenda.

The Common Agenda proposes a Global Digital Compact agreed at the Summit of the Future in September 2024 through a technology track involving all stakeholders: governments, the United Nations system, the private sector (including tech companies), civil society, grass-roots organizations, academia, and individuals, including youth.

The Global Digital Compact is expected to outline shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all. The Common Agenda report suggests issues that it might cover, including digital connectivity, avoiding Internet fragmentation, providing people with options as to how their data is used, application of human rights online, and promoting a trustworthy Internet by introducing accountability criteria for discrimination and misleading content.

Session 5: Universal Internet indicators & digital transformation updates
Speakers:
- Ms. Tatevik Grigoryan, Associate Programme Specialist, Digital Policies and Digital Transformation
- Dr. Abdessamad Moutei, Deputy Director of continuing Education and Internships – Associate Professor
- Ms. Camila González, Digital Policies and Digital Transformation, UNESCO
- Mr. Mohamed Mokhtar, Associate Professor

- Moderation: Dr. Ahmedou Haouba, University professor

Session objectives:
This session examined a summary of the key ideas contained in Universal Internet indicators, provided an update on UNESCO's Second-Generation Internet Universality Indicators and identifying the mechanisms for implementing Universal Internet indicators in Africa.

Session highlights:
The idea of Internet universality reflects UNESCO's revised perspectives in the digital era and refers to the four core R.O.A.M. principles, which state that the Internet should be open, human rights-based, accessible to everyone, and supported by involvement from a variety of stakeholders

Session 6: Multi-stakeholders Engagement - Shaping the digital future in North Africa.

Speakers:
- Mr. Fahd Batayneh, Middle East Stakeholder Engagement Director, ICANN
- Mr. Omar Shoran, Chair, Libyan Internet Society
- Dr. Martin Koyabe, Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE) Africa
- Dr. Abdoul Hakeem Ajijola, Chair Strategic Road Map Action Plan Committee, Nigeria

- Moderation: Mr. Mohamed Lemine Salihi, WARDIP Project Coordinator

Session objectives:
This session emphasized the importance of involving all stakeholders in internet governance, including governments, the private sector, civil society, and end-users, to ensure policies address diverse needs and realities. Speakers highlighted the critical need for better representation of youth and women in decision-making processes, recognizing their unique perspectives and potential contributions. While the private sector plays a significant role in governance, its tendency to prioritize profits over societal goals underscores the need for oversight to balance interests. Additionally, the session explored strategies for harmonizing policy frameworks across the region to reduce disparities and foster governance that is more cohesive.

Session highlights:
- Empower marginalized groups, including youth and women, through targeted funding and training.
- Facilitate regional dialogues to align internet governance policies.
- Foster transparency and accountability in multi-stakeholder processes.
- Select a unified language in Africa to facilitate communication

Session 7: Social Effects of the Digital and Social Media Benefits & Challenges
Speakers:
- Mr. Mourad Blel, Fact Checker, journalist, CMO (Chief Media Officer)
- Mr. Ahmed Farag, President, North Africa IGF
- Ms. Asma Awad, Data center engineer, North Africa IGF MAG Member
- Ms. Mana Sid Ahmed, Innovation & startupper

- Moderation: Mr. Omar Shoran, Chair, Libyan Internet Society

Session objectives:

This session examined the digital transformation in an era of change. The world is changing as a result of digital transformation, introducing modern digital technologies into our lives As a result of the introduction of digital technologies, all spheres of life and production are changing: in the sphere of economic relations, a digital economy is emerging, in the sphere of interaction between society and the state – a digital government, in the sphere of high – tech infrastructure – a digital space, in the sphere of state development a digital society.

Session highlights:
- Digital transformation relies on the automation of all business processes, has an impact on human relationships and individual behavior.
- Digital transformation can lead to serious social consequences, such as increased unemployment, reduced labour force, the disappearance of companies, cybercrime, social anomie, and other impacts that should be avoided and community awareness are needed to confront its harms.
- The importance of raising community awareness about the circulation of fake news, Misinformation & disinformation.
- The importance of enhancement of self-monitoring concept for end users, to avoid using them as a channel of circulating Fake news and Misinformation & disinformation on social media platforms.

Session 8: North Africa Youth initiative on Engagement in Internet Governance.

Speakers:
- Mr. Mohamed Lemine ATHIE, Co-founder and IT engineer, Youth IG Mauritania
- Ms. Asma Awad, Data center engineer, North Africa IGF MAG Member
- Mr. Islam Tawfik, North Africa IGF MAG member
- Ms. Sarah Hannachi, NASIG-24, Tech & Society fellow at Mozilla Foundation

- Moderation: Mr. Shady Hamed, Computer Science Specialist, North Africa IGF MAG member

Session objectives:

Youth engagement was recognized as a cornerstone for sustainable internet governance, with young people bringing unique perspectives and driving innovation as frequent users and early adopters of technology. However, challenges such as a lack of awareness about governance opportunities and initiatives, coupled with limited financial support, significantly restrict their participation. Despite these barriers, youth hold immense potential to act as key drivers of change by leading initiatives in areas such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and policy development, making their inclusion in governance processes essential for shaping the digital future.

Session highlights:

- Enhancing education and awareness for youth: Launching local programs focused on digital education, internet governance, and cybersecurity to raise awareness among youth about their rights and responsibilities online.
- Creating accessible knowledge-sharing platforms: Developing multilingual platforms and tools to enhance communication and collaboration among African youth across regions.
- Supporting local talents to prevent brain drain: Implementing policies and incentives to retain skilled professionals in the region, particularly in the fields of artificial intelligence and digital innovation.
- Providing financial support for youth initiatives: Establishing funding opportunities for youth-led projects in internet governance to promote active and sustainable participation.
- Encouraging youth advocacy for policy participation: Facilitating youth involvement in policymaking processes to ensure their perspectives and needs are integrated into internet governance frameworks.

Session 9: Digital Infrastructure; Are we ready for emerging technologies in North Africa?

Speakers:
- Mr. Ahmedou Ghazouani, Telecommunication Regulatory Authority
- Dr. Abdessamad Moutei, Deputy Director of continuing Education and Internships – Associate Professor
- Ms. Khadija Rammah, Associate Professor

- Moderation: Dr. Aroua Hdhili, PHD-Senior Software Engineering, AI Consultant

Session objectives:

Digitalization of modern life is becoming a global reality. By 2024, every state plans to carry out digital transformation of all spheres of activity and social life of the state. The implementation of new technologies are based on the development and approval of a legislative framework in the field of digital technologies, modernization of the existing digital infrastructure, and the introduction of digital practices in all sectors of the economy and public administration, as well as training personnel for the transition period. Digital transformation refers to the introduction of digital technologies in production and business activities, the infrastructure of public relations, which requires fundamental changes in all areas of activity: technology, culture, production, etc. Many states have started introducing projects, which represent the beginning of digitalization based on digital technologies, the introduction of which will bring changes to production and human life. However, other states still lag behind to bridge some fundamental access to information

Session highlights:
- Assess the current status of internet connectivity, broadband penetration, and data centers across the region.
- Highlight disparities between urban and rural areas and their implications for equitable access to technology.
- Evaluate whether the region's digital infrastructure can support AI, IoT, blockchain, and other emerging technologies.
- Discuss barriers such as outdated infrastructure, energy constraints, and lack of local innovation ecosystems.
- Explore existing policies and regulations affecting digital infrastructure and readiness for emerging tech.
- Emphasize the collaboration between all stakeholders to address challenges.
- Emphasize the importance of regional partnerships and investment in upgrading infrastructure.
- Highlight successful case studies or ongoing initiatives within North Africa that can serve as models.

Session 10: Artificial intelligence ethics and privacy: Convergence of ethical principles and legal requirements in the digital age.

Speakers:
- Dr. Mohamed Hegazy, Senior Legal Consultant
- Dr. Aroua Hdhili, PHD-Senior Software Engineering, AI Consultant
- Dr. Sidi Hmetty, University Professor
- Mr. Mohamed Farahat, Lawyer, Legal & Internet Governance consultant

- Moderation: Mr. Ahlal Hadea, Vice chair, Libyan Internet Society

Session objectives:

This session examined the ethical implications of artificial intelligence (AI) and its impact on human rights, highlighting concerns about algorithmic biases, lack of transparency, and inadequate legal frameworks in the region. Speakers emphasized that, without careful monitoring, AI systems can perpetuate discrimination and inequality, exacerbating existing social divides. North African countries were noted to lag behind the West in developing AI-specific regulations, underscoring the urgency of establishing comprehensive legal frameworks. The panel also stressed the importance of involving diverse perspectives in AI development to ensure inclusive and equitable outcomes, making ethical considerations central to the region's AI strategy.

Session highlights:
- Advocate for Contextualized Data Privacy and Protection Laws: region-specific policies that address digital rights, ethical and legal challenges, while adapting to the resources and limitations specific to North Africa in the field of AI.
- Promote Data and Digital Literacy: Foster a culture of data literacy and capacity building, emphasizing data protection policies, ethical considerations, cybersecurity, and AI governance and ensure their practical implementation in institutional workspaces.
- Human-Centric AI Responsibility: Integrate human-centric technical development in AI systems, with accountability for algorithm reviews and policy-driven oversight.
- Ensure Transparency in AI Deployment: Establish mechanisms for constant regulation and revision of concept notes and development protocols to ensure ethical considerations.

Session 11: Women's Inclusion in Internet Governance.

Speakers:
- Ms. Fartimetou Bouboutt, Deputy Director General, Digital Agency of the State (AN-ETAT)
- Ms. Anja Gengo, representative of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF-UN)
- Ms. Mariame Bah, Deputy General Director of ANDE

- Moderation: Ms. Aicha Jeridi, North Africa IGF, Vice Chair

Session objectives:

The session highlighted the underrepresentation of women in internet governance while emphasizing their critical role in shaping inclusive digital policies. It stressed the need for greater efforts to bring women's diverse perspectives to the forefront within all stakeholder groups, recognizing that a rights-based approach to internet governance is essential for women to fully enjoy the benefits of the digital world. Key barriers to participation include cultural norms, lack of resources, and gender-biased technologies, which collectively hinder women's involvement in digital governance. However, their inclusion ensures that governance policies become more equitable and better address societal needs.

Session highlights:
- Empowering Women and Advocating Gender Transformation: Create initiatives to increase women's participation in internet governance forums.
- Enhancing Digital Inclusion Through Evidence-Based Approaches: Dynamic coalitions should apply data-driven methods and frameworks to advance inclusive digital governance.
- Improving Technological Accessibility: Continuous efforts must enhance accessibility for all, ensuring equal access to technologies for women, girls, and the elderly and young persons with disabilities.

- Addressing Gender Issues in Artificial Intelligence: It is essential to tackle male predominance in AI development, mitigate algorithmic discrimination and gender-biased datasets, address the risks of deep fake videos, and counter systemic prejudices embedded in large language models

NAIGF-24 Closing Session:

Mr. Boide Ould Sghair, head of the Digital Agency of the State (AN-ETAT), expressed profound satisfaction with the resounding success of the North Africa Internet Governance Forum (NAIGF-24), extending heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed to this achievement. He highlighted the event as a testament to collective collaboration and innovation, emphasizing the Agency's eagerness to host future editions of the NAIGF and reaffirming its commitment to advancing digital transformation in the region.

Mr. Ahmed Farag, Chair of the North Africa Internet Governance Forum (NAIGF) echoed these sentiments, expressing deep appreciation to the Mauritanian Ministry of Digital Transformation (MTNMA), AN-ETAT, and all Mauritanian stakeholders for their gracious invitation and pivotal role in preparing and organizing the event. He commended the local organizing committee for their exceptional efforts and extended special recognition to the Forum's sponsors, whose support was instrumental in bringing the event to fruition. Furthermore, acknowledged the invaluable contributions of participating experts—both onsite and remote—whose insights enriched the discussions and fostered dynamic, inclusive exchanges among attendees.

The NAIGF-24 concluded with the signing of an official cooperation agreement between the North Africa Internet Governance Forum (NAIGF) and the Digital Agency of the State (AN-ETAT). This landmark agreement designates AN-ETAT as the NAIGF Executive Secretariat, underscoring a shared commitment to fostering stronger internet governance initiatives and driving digital inclusion across the North African region. The partnership represents a significant step forward in addressing the region's digital challenges while leveraging opportunities for growth and collaboration.

The 8th Annual Meeting of the North Africa Internet Governance Forum (NAIGF-24)

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