Ghana IGF 2020-1: Keynote: internet and e-government solutions during pandemic (planning 7 minutes)

17 July 09:00-09:45

Ladies and gentlemen,
It is a pleasure for me to participate in Ghana IGF 2020

Having been a member of IGF MAG during founding years of IGF it's pleasing to see success of NRIs, we asked you take IGF home and it's happening. Being able to hold the meeting virtually is testimony of the value of the Internet and its benefits to society.

The internet pioneers in Africa knew this and embarked on techno liberation struggle to ensure we did not miss these benefits. We wanted access to technical know how.

We had feared that lack of internet technical know how can result in capture of Africa's economy and erode freedoms

We relied on the openness of the internet engineering community to include ourselves by initiating action on the ground in Africa. Many countries did not have capital city internet connectivity when Ghana attained capital city connection in 1993

We felt a sense of urgency and activists were helping each other to meander our way in education, policy, business and social impact, at the time

There was Openness, community oriented approach, a yearning for capacity, infrastructure and access. We seem to have lost some of that determination or have we become complacent

The pandemic has brought some of this back and permanently changed how we live, to include more Internet and we should plan for it

We should move from the euphoria to understanding the meaning of network of networks, Internetworks, and develop a real local network, before joining the international network. This will boost local services on the Internet

An e-government infrastructure is an Internet service for government, agencies and citizen communications. The sustainability and effectiveness of this type of network is yet to be understood

The economy we have during the pandemic has come from use of the Internet. The gains in e-commerce are obvious but there have been gains in health, education,

industry, science, research and entertainment

The Internet filled in the gap for us in implementing social and physical distancing with remote work

Managing the pandemic itself relied on the robustness and stability of the internet. It scaled to accommodate increased traffic and sudden change in traffic patterns. The Internet has been a friend in time of need

People continued with permission less innovation on the internet

We have seen pandemic solutions supporting:
- patient interviews using robots on the internet; drone surveillance in lockdown
- efficient testing regimes
- Contact tracing based of telecom

- Quarantine bracelets to track affected
- 3D printing parts to supplement equipment
- Etc

The list is unending and all need to secure our presence on the internet

It appears countries that mobilized their people and resources quickly made better headway. Since the internet literally saved the global economy, we might learn how the internet was able to mobilize networks during pandemic. The bottom up multi stakeholder approach to decision making, used by the internet, keeps communities together and ready to respond globally.

We also did a lot more online than we had previously thought

As the Internet is this good, it should be accessible to all as public good with a minimum guaranteed free access (data) and minimum speed. That is, instead of taxing internet we should be investing in affordable Internet. Likewise regulation of providers should avoid creating instability

Interestingly, the Africa that was noted for shutdowns, did not witness significant internet disruptions during the pandemic. This is simply because we all needed the internet! Shutdowns are very bad and cripples economies

What makes the Internet work so well is the open participation by engineers, businesses, civil-society organizations, and governments in how it is governed. In recent times we have seen government interests making a new Internet Protocol proposal through an intergovernmental

Organisation. We have also seen attacks on end to end encryption while other governments are directly interfering in content policy. We have seen others ignore privacy while tackling phone based contact tracing and so forth

These interventions are counter to the spirit of one safe Internet for all

A free and open communication is insurance for continued participation of emerging internet economies. We need the Internet open so we late comers can join the internet uninhibited; it is not a threat

Thank you very much for your attention