



Statement by the Association for Progressive Communications at the Intersessional Meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on ICTs

Delivered by: Deborah Brown
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New York

Session E) Confidence-building measures and capacity-building. Engaging all stakeholders to enhance capacity-building efforts

Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to build on the points from a few previous speakers concerning the importance of regional cooperation and of bringing multistakeholder and multidisciplinary approaches to capacity-building initiatives. From APC's perspective, we feel it's important to integrate cybersecurity in our broader work on internet governance capacity building, because cybersecurity touches on so many other areas of internet governance.

In that context, I'd like to share our experience running the African School on Internet Governance (AfriSIG). AfriSIG is an annual five-day residential course whose goal is to develop a pipeline of African leaders from diverse sectors, backgrounds and ages with the skills to participate in local and international internet governance structures, and shape the future of the internet landscape for Africa's development.

APC agrees with other speakers that local contexts and knowledge are necessary for effective capacity building, so I'd like to point out that AfriSIG is designed, developed and run by colleagues in and from the region, together with partners like the African Union and Research ICT Africa.

Since AfriSIG's inception in 2013, cybersecurity has been part of the School's programme, and in recent years it has taken up increasing space on the agenda. In most years AfriSIG has taken place immediately preceding the African Internet Governance Forum (IGF), which has allowed the alumni to directly apply their learnings to an important regional multistakeholder process. I am pleased to say I see several AfriSIG alumni and faculty around the room, including colleagues who have intervened and set the scene in this session.

I also wanted to respond to a few points from other speakers.

First, to respond to the question from Canada, APC has recognised that women and gender-diverse people are often under-represented in internet governance spaces and that internet governance discussions lack gender analysis. In some years, we have co-located what we call "Gender and Internet Governance Exchanges" with AfriSIG. These Exchanges bring together women's rights, internet rights

and sexual rights activists to build awareness and understanding of the relationship between gender, women's rights and internet governance, including cybersecurity. We have also held these Exchanges ahead of other regional IGFs, for example in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

Second, I wanted to reinforce a point made by my colleague at ARTICLE 19, which is the disturbing trend we have seen of the criminalisation of technical expertise, expertise that can contribute to cyber capacity building. We have seen digital security experts and researchers arrested, detained and charged with criminal offences for imparting critical knowledge and skills that make people more secure online. Such measures are inconsistent with international human rights law and undermine cyber capacity-building efforts. Moreover, imparting technical expertise to enhance security online is not a crime.

Finally, a few states have mentioned the potential of state reporting on implementation of the agreed 11 norms, as an opportunity to identify gaps where capacity building is needed. In a previous intervention, we described our proposal for a multistakeholder periodic review mechanism to assess the implementation of norms. We see this mechanism as way to help close the accountability gap, but also to build confidence and trust, and to build capacity. Part of why we see stakeholder input into a review mechanism as so critical is because assessments can identify areas where technical assistance is needed and help provide that capacity building. Therefore, we underscore the importance of inclusive, bottom-up and transparent processes that involve the technical community, the private sector, academia and civil society in assessing implementation of norms and identifying needs for capacity building.

Thank you, Chair.