AFRICA IS NOT READY YET

POTENTIAL RISKS OF ICANN LIBERALIZATION OR PRIVATIZATION:

> "On this point, we note that at the time that Africa is starting deployment of its Internet network may in fact not be a good time to talk about any form of change in the governance or administration of the Internet. That might be as though you are pulling the rug from under us."
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> -- Nii Quaynor, Chairman of NCS, an ISP in Ghana.

There are many considerations and potential implications of liberalization or privatization of ICANN after the JPA terminated in September 2009, including disintermediation of the governments in the governance and management of the DNS.

Some governments in Africa recognized the potential benefits they can get from the information society and knowledge economy that is driven by ICTs. However, there are factors linked to the infrastructure and info-structure which inhibit their full participation in the information-intensive society that exploits new models of knowledge creation, distribution and interaction.

African countries in general have not yet adequately embraced and restructured public bureaucracies in response to the demands of the information society. Many governments are still hierarchical and lacking accountability and transparency. Government information systems are still rudimentaly, mainly manually operated and paper-based. Africa still has limited access to information and telecommunication technologies, Lack of information literacy and e-literacy and poor information management schemes.

Information-based society can be implemented successfully only if it is regulated by a solid legal framework. Legal issues revolve around cyber-security, digital signatures and personal data protection and confidentiality. Unfortunately, many African countries lack commitment, e-laws, strategy and vision. Many citizens are IT-illiterate and the quality of government information is poor. Standards to ensure interoperability and portability of local content development systems are also inadequate. Appropriate human resources are scarce due to the brain drain and lack of capacity building programmes.

The situation in Africa is compounded by the fact that some bureaucrats and politicians view the ICT revolution as a political affair and not a technological challenge. There is need for a comprehensive and systematic change management in order to change the mindsets of many governments in the continent if Africa wants to be benefited from the ICANN future reform.

Therefore, Africa is not ready yet and the management of DNS must not be fully disconnected from the current US-DoC oversight. There must be US Government involvement in this process and with ICANN in general at least for the coming 4 years.

The stability and security of the Internet is an issue of critical concern to millions of people that do business online. Evolution of ICANN into a responsible organization should be continued and we must ensure the continued involvement of the (DOC-NTIA) in governance of the Internet which means extending the JPA with ICANN.

Africans shouldn't find themselves in a situation where ICANN is fully liberalized or privatized, without a proper planning that will ensure equal and balance participation of all countries and ensure that those plans do not undermine the stable and effective oversight of the internet DNS system. Otherwise this will only lead to inventing a new domination system by the developed countries over ICANN, disguised by the name of international management structure of ICANN even with safeguarding ICANN against capture key area identified by the PSC.

More time is needed although there are a number of good ideas in the PSC documents. Comprehensive-analysis and proper planning needs to be undertaken before the ICANN transition can be implemented. I therefore kindly advocate for examining the status of the JPA-MOU to determine what the US-DOC can do to stabilize, safeguard and ensure equal and balanced participation in the future governance of this critical resource.

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