CONCEPT NOTE

EAST AFRICA INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM 2026

DATES: DECEMBER 02 - 03, 2026

HOST COUNTRY: KAMPALA, UGANDA

THEME: ***GOVERNING EAST AFRICA'S DIGITAL FUTURE IN THE AGE OF AI: OUR SHARED RESPONSIBILITY.***

INTRODUCTION

The East Africa Internet Governance Forum (EAIGF) has been a pivotal platform for dialogue on Internet governance in the region since its inception in 2008. This annual multi-stakeholder initiative brings together governments, the private sector, civil society, the technical community, and academia to address key digital policy issues affecting East Africa. The region's digital landscape has undergone a remarkable transformation. Internet penetration has soared, mobile technology has become ubiquitous, and digital services are now integral to daily life and economic activity. This digital revolution has unlocked unprecedented opportunities for growth, innovation, and social development, while also introducing new challenges in cybersecurity, data protection, digital inclusion, and regulatory frameworks.

As the digital economy becomes a central pillar for regional integration, the EAIGF plays a crucial role in harmonizing policies and fostering a secure, inclusive, and resilient digital future. The forum's importance is further underscored by global developments, including the adoption of the UN Global Digital Compact and the confirmation of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) as a permanent UN forum. These milestones reflect a renewed international commitment to an open, free, and secure digital future—one that requires active local and regional participation.

As we approach the 13th edition in 2026, The EAIGF continues to shape the region's digital trajectory. East African nations are actively pursuing ambitious digital transformation agendas, making coordinated and inclusive approaches to internet governance more critical than ever.

EAIGF 2026 SUB-THEMES:

The EAIGF 2026 will serve as a vital platform for stakeholders to collectively address pressing issues and opportunities, including:

AI REGULATION, GOVERNANCE & HUMAN RIGHTS

To ensure technology serves as a tool for empowerment rather than control, AI systems must be built on a foundation of robust governance. This means embedding human rights—such as privacy, non-discrimination, and accountability—directly into their design. The focus is on creating clear AI

regulations, transparent governance frameworks, and effective auditing and redress mechanisms to safeguard these rights. Additionally, it is also essential to address the technological and human capacity needed to develop, oversee, and responsibly use AI.

- **Questions to Explore:** How can regulation strike a balance between innovation and the protection of rights? What accountability standards are necessary for AI-driven decision-making? Who has the authority to set the rules, and whose rights are being protected? What skills are needed to effectively develop, use, and govern AI, and how can we build the capacity required to support its responsible adoption?

DIGITAL INCLUSION & EQUITABLE ACCESS

The promise of technology remains unfulfilled if vast populations are excluded. True digital inclusion means ensuring that the benefits of AI, digital services, and connectivity reach everyone, regardless of their location, income, ability, or gender. This involves a focus on affordable connectivity, accessible design, and building digital literacy and capacity for marginalized groups. By closing these participation gaps, we can turn the rhetoric of "human-centered" design into a reality.

- **Questions to Explore:** What policy and market interventions can accelerate equitable access? How can we design digital services that are effective in low-resource contexts?

DIGITAL ECONOMY & THE FUTURE OF WORK

As AI reshapes industries and labor markets, we must proactively design economic systems that foster dignified work, support lifelong learning, and combat rising inequality. A truly human-centered future is one where technology empowers people rather than displacing them. This requires focusing on the future of platform labor, facilitating skills transitions, strengthening social protections, ensuring algorithmic fairness in hiring and pay, and promoting inclusive economic policies.

- **Questions to Explore:** How can education and social policies help smooth the transition for workers? What regulations are needed to ensure fairness in the gig economy and in algorithmic hiring practices?

DIGITAL TRUST, SAFETY & RESILIENCE

Trust is the bedrock of the digital world; without it, the goals of inclusion, innovation, and human rights are unattainable. Cybersecurity, data protection, content integrity, and system resilience are the essential pillars that allow individuals and societies to confidently embrace digital tools. The aim is to build a trustworthy and resilient digital environment by strengthening cybersecurity, improving content moderation, combating misinformation, and utilizing privacy-preserving technologies to create a space where everyone can flourish safely.

- **Questions to Explore:** How can we combine technical, regulatory, and community-based approaches to counter online harms while preserving the freedom of expression?

Through fostering regional dialogue, building stakeholder capacity, and promoting multi-stakeholder collaboration, the forum aims to share best practices and contribute regional perspectives to the

global IGF process. The EAIGF 2026 offers a timely opportunity for East Africa to reflect on its progress, navigate emerging challenges, and collaboratively chart a course toward a digital future that is inclusive, secure, and conducive to sustainable development for all.

FORMAT AND PARTICIPATION

The EAIGF 2026 will follow a bottom-up, multi-stakeholder approach, bringing together representatives from governments, private sector, civil society, academia, and technical communities. The forum will feature:

- East Africa School on Internet Governance (EASIG)**:** a dedicated track that seeks to build and strengthen the capacity of key actors to better understand Internet governance and policy in the region.
- High-level panel discussions
- Interactive workshops and capacity-building sessions
- Youth-focused activities to engage the next generation of digital leaders
- Networking opportunities for stakeholders
- Judiciary Dialogue on Digital and Internet Governance dedicated for Judges

TARGET PARTICIPANTS (STAKEHOLDERS)

- Government ministries and regulatory authorities
- Internet Service Providers and telecom operators
- Civil society organizations
- Academic and research institutions
- Technical community
- Private sector and technology companies
- Media and content creators
- Youth and student groups

Expected Attendance: 200-300 participants

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- **A Communiqué/Outcome Document:** A summary of recommendations to be shared with the EAC Secretariat and member state governments.
- **Enhanced Collaboration:** New partnerships formed for regional infrastructure or capacity-building projects.
- **Increased Awareness:** A better-informed public regarding their rights and responsibilities in the digital space