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Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union



INCLUSIVE AND RESILIENT DIGITAL TRANSITION: A NEW CHAPTER FOR THE AU-EU RELATIONS?

Co-organised by the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, EU Institute for Security Studies, Research ICT Africa and the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise

3 December 2021, 10:00 – 12:30, Online

Since the last AU-EU Summit held in Abidjan 2017, the digital transition has become the cornerstone of the trans-continental cooperation agenda. In 2020 the European Union (EU) put forth its joint communication Towards a comprehensive strategy with Africa, and the African Union (AU) published its 2030 Digital Transformation Strategy, both of which underlined a vision for a digital future strengthened by international and regional cooperation. The Joint Communiqué issued after the AU-EU Ministerial Meeting in Kigali in October 2021 further stressed the importance of “a safe, sustainable and inclusive digital transformation” and the need for a strong EU-AU partnership “to build an inclusive, sustainable digital economy and society for all citizens, preserving universal values in the digital age to build more democratic equitable and accountable societies for all”. Ahead of the 6th EU-AU Summit planned in 2022, this meeting will focus on discussing concrete ways through which these and numerous other commitments could be brought to life and provide a new impetus to EU-AU partnership that benefits the citizens on both continents. The main question that this meeting will aim to answer is the following: **How can Africa and the EU implement a deeper and more sustainable common agenda that secures an effective cyber-resilient, inclusive and human-centric digital transition, in line with mutual strategic interests and values?** The meeting will be structured along two specific themes:

1) Securing a Cyber-Resilient Digital Transition

Despite enormous potential for social and economic development, the digital transition is undermined by a broadening threat landscape of both malicious state and non-state actors. The AU Digital Transformation Strategy has highlighted the need for a greater capacity to detect and mitigate cyber-attacks, and the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) points to the cyber realm as a venue for strategic security challenges with an international dimension, emphasising the mitigation of cybercrime, the protection of critical infrastructure, and underscoring support for regional cooperation and UN-led processes. How can the EU and Africa leverage their partnerships, both at regional and multilateral level, towards securing a cyber resilient digital transition?

2) Securing an Inclusive and Human-Centric Digital Transition

The access and use of digital tools and services promise new ways to live and work, but they are also susceptible to abuse, and increase exposure to great power politics. The implementation of new technologies like Artificial Intelligence represents not only a technical undertaking, but also legal, political, and ethical challenges with significant consequences. A human-centric transition will require technologies that work for all people and reduce inequalities, an open internet where our fundamental rights and the rule of law are upheld, and a secure digital ecosystem that strengthens, rather than weakens, our democracies. In both African and European contexts, what does it mean to put the citizen at the centre of the digital transformation, and how do these challenges manifest at local, regional, and global levels?

PROGRAMME

10:00-10:05

OPENING REMARKS

Gustav LINDSTROM

Director, EU Institute for Security Studies

10:05-10:15

KEYNOTE OPENING REMARKS

Stanislav RAŠČAN

State Secretary, Acting as Minister for Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Slovenia

Albert ANTWI-BOASIAKO

Acting Director-General, Cyber Security Authority, Ghana

10:15-11:15

BUILDING A CYBER-RESILIENT DIGITAL TRANSITION

Chair

Patryk PAWLAK

Brussels Executive Officer, EU Institute for Security Studies; Project Director, EU Cyber Direct – EU Cyber Diplomacy Initiative

Speakers

Heli TIIRMAA-KLAAR

Ambassador for Cyber Issues, Estonia

Katherine W GETAO

Chief Executive Officer, ICT Authority, Kenya

11:15-12:15

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE AND HUMAN-CENTRIC DIGITAL TRANSITION

Chair

Nnenna IFEANYI-AJUFO

Senior Lecturer of Law and Technology at the School of Law, Swansea University; Vice-Chairperson of the African Union Cyber Security Experts Group

Speakers:

Tadej RUPEL

National Coordinator for External Aspects of Digitalization, AI & Cyber Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Slovenia

Arthur GWAGWA

Fellow, Strathmore University, Kenya; Doctoral Researcher, Dutch 4TU Ethics of Socially Disruptive Technologies Programme, Utrecht University Ethics Institute

Patti KACHIDZA

Senior Technology and Finance Lawyer at Axiom Global; Deputy Chair, InterLaw Diversity Forum; and IRCAI affiliate

12:15-12:25

KEYNOTE CLOSING REMARKS

Carla MONTESI

Director for “Green Deal, Digital Agenda”, Directorate General for International Partnerships, European Commission