

• Programme

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Potsdam Spring Dialogues 2021 (online)

Making Digitalisation Work for Peaceful Development

Opportunities for regional cooperation in and with Africa

10-12 May 2021, via Zoom

Conference language: English

Cooperating partner



german
cooperation
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



#Potsdam21

BACKGROUND

Digitalisation has long since reached almost all areas of life and the economy. It is not only changing the everyday lives of the 60% of people with internet access worldwide (in Africa around 40%). This rapidly advancing process affects everyone, directly or indirectly. Furthermore, access to and wise use of digital tools are not only decisive for economic success and social progress. Digitalisation also has an impact on conflict situations within and between societies.

The African Union (AU) sees the digital transformation of the continent as the driving force for the inclusive and sustainable growth in the spirit of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2030. The Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have also taken up the cause of digitalisation of the continent, whereby the main focus is on the development of a regional infrastructure as a prerequisite for economic growth, e-commerce, e-learning, e-government etc. The peace and security policy implications of digitalisation have so far been less at the centre of debates. For example, the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection of 2014, which should enter into force in 2020, has so far only been ratified by eight states (15 ratifications would be required).

This is the starting point for the Potsdam Spring Dialogues 2021, which will be held online due to the pandemic. The focus will be on the conditions that the AU and RECs need to create and enforce in order to strengthen the peace-building effect of digitalisation on the continent and mitigate negative impacts. At the same time, the event serves as an opportunity for an exchange of experience between Africa and Europe. Finally, we would like to reflect on how the different regional forums and international partners, especially the AU and the European Union, can support each other in the practical realisation of digitalisation for peaceful development.

Over the course of three days, the Potsdam Spring Dialogues will focus on specific topic areas, which will be discussed interactively from the perspective of local practice as well as from a political and research perspective. The first session will look at measures for conflict and violence prevention in the narrower sense. The second session will focus on the connection between digital rights and new opportunities and on challenges of democratic participation and good governance. Finally, the third session will address the crucial question of how digitalisation can be used to open up prospects for economic development and social integration for Africa's youth and to identify alternatives to violence.

: Monday, 10 May 2021, 2pm - 5pm (CEST)

SESSION I

DIGITAL CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN AFRICA: FRAMEWORKS AND REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Digital tools can help to promote more peaceful coexistence, for example by opening up new ways of bringing people into dialogue across political and social boundaries. They can help to identify smouldering conflicts at an early stage – and to remove the breeding ground for violence by offering alternative prospects. It will therefore be impossible to imagine the toolbox of violence prevention without digital instruments in the future.

However, digital tools can also be misused to fuel and exacerbate conflicts. Hate speech and fake news are spread via social media, societies are polarised, and media violence is on the rise and repeatedly translates into real violence. The dark sides of the internet provide a platform for criminal activities such as trafficking of people, arms and drugs. Extremist and violent groups use it to recruit new members.

Which digital tools for conflict and violence prevention are already being used? What are the challenges? Which frameworks should be put in place and what contribution can and should regional and international actors make?

14.00 hrs Welcome by the chair

Ute Lange

Moderator and Communication Coach
i3kommunikation, Bonn

14.05 hrs Introduction to the Potsdam Spring Dialogues 2021

Martin Gorholt

Former State Secretary, Potsdam
Deputy Chair of the Executive Committee
Development and Peace Foundation (sef:), Bonn

14.10 hrs Opportunities and challenges of digitalisation for the prevention of violence within societies

Dr Nicole Stremlau

Head of the Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy
Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, University of Oxford,
Research Professor in the Humanities at the University of Johannesburg

Poll among participants

14.20 hrs Practitioners' Round: Flagships of digital violence prevention in Africa

Nelson J. Kwaje

Director Of Programs for South Sudan
#defyhatenow, Juba

Monica Nthiga

Regional Director for East Africa Hub
HOT - Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team,
Former Director of Implementation, Ushahidi

Followed by Q&A

15.00 hrs Break and opportunity for informal networking

- 15.30 hrs Roundtable: Regional cooperation for digital violence prevention
- Marc Fiedrich**
Head of Unit “Stability and Peace”, Foreign Policy Instruments
European Commission, Brussels
- Amb. Fred Ngoga Gateretse**
Ag. Head of Conflict Prevention and Early Warning Division
African Union Commission, Addis Ababa
- Dr Nicole Stremlau**
Head of the Programme in Comparative Media Law and Policy
Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, University of Oxford,
Research Professor in the Humanities at the University of Johannesburg
- Followed by Q&A
- Poll among participants*
- 16.55 hrs Farewell and outlook on the following part of the programme
- 17.00 hrs Opportunity for informal networking

: Tuesday, 11 May 2021, 2pm - 5pm (CEST)

SESSION II

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND DIGITAL RIGHTS – BUILDING BLOCKS FOR PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT

Inclusive and transparent governance is an important prerequisite for lasting peace. Digitalisation opens up a wide range of new opportunities for transparent governance and for broad participation in public debates and the shaping of the community. Previously underrepresented groups, for example, can network more easily and raise their voices. A prerequisite for this, however, is that digital rights are defined and their exercise guaranteed, as demanded, for example, by the African Commission on Human Rights in its „Guidelines on Access to Information and Elections in Africa“.

What progress has been made in the areas of transparency and participation with the help of digitalisation in African countries? Where are the biggest challenges at the moment? How can the AU and regional organisations contribute to strengthening the guarantee and implementation of digital rights on the continent?

14.00 hrs	Welcome by the chair Ute Lange Moderator and Communication Coach i3kommunikation, Bonn
14.05 hrs	Introduction: Digitalisation opportunities for African democracies – and current challenges Nanjala Nyabola Independent researcher and author, Nairobi <i>Poll among participants</i>
14.15 hrs	Practitioners' Round: Examples of strengthening democracy through digital tools Nehemiah Attigah Principal Lead Odekro, Accra Tidiani Togola Founder and CEO Tuwindi, Bamako
Followed by	Q&A
15.00 hrs	Break and opportunity for informal networking

- 15.30 hrs Roundtable: Regional approaches to promoting digital rights and transparent governance
- Dr Julia Leininger**
Head of Research Programme „Transformation of Political (Dis-)order“
German Development Institute/Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE),
Member of the Executive Committee, Development and Peace Foundation (sef:), Bonn
- Dr Khabele Matlosa**
Director for Political Affairs
African Union Commission, Addis Ababa
- Nanjala Nyabola**
Independent researcher and author, Nairobi
- Followed by Q&A
- Poll among participants*
- 16.55 hrs Farewell and outlook on the following part of the programme
- 17.00 hrs Opportunity for informal networking

: Wednesday, 12 May 2021, 2pm - 5pm (CEST)

SESSION III

DIGITALISATION: OPPORTUNITY FOR AFRICA'S YOUTH – AND FOR PEACEFUL DEVELOPMENT ON THE CONTINENT

Africa is the continent with the world's youngest population. However, the much-vaunted opportunities for the continent's development will only be realised if these young people have prospects of earning a sufficient and stable income. With a de facto unemployment rate of around 20% and an extreme working poverty rate of 40%, the large proportion of disadvantaged young people still have no prospect of achieving this. This makes them more vulnerable to the influence of extremists or criminals – factors in destabilising societies. Digitalisation is currently seen as a possible game-changer when it comes to opening up development prospects for Africa's youth.

What conditions must be created so that the opportunities of digitalisation can be seized by as many young people in Africa as possible? What are the main challenges? And what contribution can regional and international actors make?

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| 14.00 hrs | Welcome by the chair

Ute Lange
Moderator and Communication Coach
i3kommunikation, Bonn |
| 14.05 hrs | Introduction: Preventing violence through new opportunities

Muneinazvo Kujeke
Research Officer
Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Pretoria

<i>Poll among participants</i> |
| 14.15 hrs | Practitioners' Round: Opening up access to the digital world for young people

Abdihakim Ainte
Co-founder
iRise Hub, Mogadishu

Simi Olusola
Executive Director
Aspilos Foundation + Nuach Consulting, Abuja |
| Followed by | Q&A |
| 15.00 hrs | Break and opportunity for informal networking |

- 15.30 hrs Roundtable: Development prospects through digitalisation - Regional initiatives for young people and disadvantaged groups
- Dr Thomas Helfen**
Head
Division „Coordination of operations in Africa; African Union“
Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ), Bonn
- Muneinazvo Kujeke**
Research Officer
Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Pretoria
- Pempho Chabvuta**
Programme Associate, Human Resource and Youth Development
African Union Commission, Addis Ababa
- Followed by Q&A
- Poll among participants*
- 16.45 hrs Key findings of the Potsdam Spring Dialogues 2021
- ‘Gbenga Sesan**
Executive Director
Paradigm Initiative, Yaba
- 16.55 hrs Farewell by the organisers
- 17.00 hrs Opportunity for informal networking