**OPEN CONSULTATION ON THE DEVELOPMENTAL ASPECTS OF THE INTERNET**

**1. What are the developmental aspects of the Internet (for example, economic, social, regulatory and technical aspects), especially for developing countries?**

Governments in developing countries have policies on ICTs, Broadband connectivity, access to e-government services, etc. which are all aimed at helping developing the internet and its citizens through the internet. They have instituted plans in place to ensure that there is the availability of infrastructure to be accessed by its citizens. However, the infrastructure to be accessed are either not being used or not available to all communities or not affordable or the people have no interest in using or accessing them.

In my view, the key developmental aspect of the internet are but not limited to:

a). economic (economic viability of using the internet;

b). social (cultural, beliefs, willingness and interest of the people);

c). education (digital literacy);

d). local content (creating and developing contents that are of interests to a particular social group);

e). regulations (favourable and sustainable policies and regulations to ensure how the internet affects and develops people);

f). infrastructure (willingness of operators to share infrastructure in order to reduce capital expenditure and subsequently making access to these infrastructure affordable).

**2. How can governments and other stakeholders promote the developmental aspects of the Internet?**

a). Through Commitment: Governments should ensure that all the nice policies that have been put in place are actively working to achieving its purpose.

b). Through the Universal Service and Access Funds (USAF). The USAF in Ghana, is a fund set up by the government and contributions are drawn from Network operators including mobile network operators (MNOs) and Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and all telecommunications services operators and/or providers through the communications services tax (CST). The fund is to help support network operators to develop infrastructure in deprived and underserved communities and areas aimed at bridging the rural and urban digital divide. <http://gifec.gov.gh/objectives.php>

c). Organisations such as the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI), which engages all stakeholders including governments and network operators to discuss and come up with ways of instituting best policies and regulations aimed at ensuring availability and affordable access to the internet.

d). Digital Literacy: educating people on the use of ICT tools which will help them to enhance and empower themselves in their businesses, education, family and social lives. The infrastructure could be readily available, accessible, and affordable, but the people need to be educated to be able to use the tools in the right way and manner. Digital education is also required to guide the people on how to stay safe online and be responsible on the internet to help develop it properly.

e). Local content creation: Governments should support individuals and the private sector to be able to develop contents that local people will embrace. They should provide the environment favourable to sustain and host these local contents. Good infrastructure can be available, affordable, but the people need to have something that are of interest to drive them towards accessing and helping developing the internet.

f). Governments in Africa and other developing nations should partner with the technocrats and experts to build regional internet exchange points just like the Euro IX (European Internet Exchange Point). This will help promote internet development in Africa and promote local content development as well as reducing the cost of internet access. To this view, Governments should ensure that its agencies and ministries in charge of ICT issues attend and fully participate in forums whose activities are aimed at discussing and addressing internet issues such as the Internet Society (ISOC), Internet Government Forums (IGF), ICANN, IETF, etc.

**3. What are the challenges and opportunities?**

**Challenges**

a). Lack of digital education and tools (computers, laptops, smart phones, etc.) among the people.

b). Internet access in terms of data and tools are very expensive, in that only few people are able to afford.

c). Huge taxes on end-user communication equipment and telecommunications services.

**Opportunities**

a). Infrastructure sharing and open access which will cut down cost of capital and operation expenditures

b). Creating local contents that will interest and drive people to the internet.

c). Empowering and developing the capacity of the people to use internet in their education, as well as to market their products and services.

**SUMMARY**

The aspects of the internet that can help in its development are but not limited to Digital Literacy, creating contents that are of interest and will drive the local people to use the internet, critical access infrastructure such as Internet Exchange Points (IXPs), social, economic and policies/regulations.

Conscious efforts and the political will of governments in developing countries is very much required to institute favourable and sustainable polices and regulations for the development of the internet in their countries.

Governments need to engage and partner with organizations whose activities are aimed at ensuring internet development and affordability for everyone such as the Internet Society (ISOC), Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI), IEEE, ICANN, etc.