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ECOWAS and the Council of Europe join forces to help West African countries in the fight against cybercrime

11-13 September 2017

BON Hotel Grand Pela in Durumi, Abuja, Nigeria

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Council of Europe will jointly organize the conference "Harmonization of legislation on Cybercrime and Electronic Evidence with rule of law and human rights safeguards", gathering representatives of 15 countries in the region to develop and improve their laws on cybercrime.

The African continent lists among the fastest growing internet populations in the world. Faced with the new challenges of the digital world, more and more African states are calling for regional harmonization of laws, in line with international standards. With an increasing number of people using the Internet, governments need to address their capacity to protect the rights of their citizens in cyberspace.

Cybercrime is a borderless phenomenon and requires a coordinated response at regional and global levels. Legislation on cybercrime and electronic evidence in line with international standards is the first step to achieve this.

The Council of Europe's [Budapest Convention on Cybercrime](#) is the only international legal instrument in matters related to cybercrime and electronic evidence, and many national legislations across the world are drafted according to its standards. Among African countries, Mauritius and Senegal have already become Parties to the Budapest Convention and receive support to develop their institutional capabilities through the [GLACY+ project on Global Action on Cybercrime Extended](#), a joint initiative of the European Union and the Council of Europe. In the West African region, Ghana and Nigeria are also now invited to become Parties to this treaty.

Regional initiatives such as the [ECOWAS Community texts](#) on electronic transactions, personal data protection or the fight against cybercrime and the [African Union's Malabo Convention](#) are complementary and do not conflict with the Budapest Convention but they are also largely based on the latter. Furthermore, the ECOWAS Commission is implementing its ECOWAS Cybersecurity Agenda aimed at supporting Member States to better protect their national infrastructure and make the Internet safer for their citizens.

The [ECOWAS Commission](#) and the [Council of Europe](#) have joined forces to further support West African countries in strengthening their domestic legislation and policies related to cybercrime and cybersecurity, while respecting human rights and rule of law standards.

The **regional conference on "Harmonization of legislation on Cybercrime and Electronic Evidence with rule of law and human rights safeguards"**, co-organized by the two organizations and funded by the GLACY+ project, will gather around 50 representatives of all 15 ECOWAS Member States, as well as international experts and organizations.

Three messages are at the core of the event:

- (1) Cybercrimes undermine the development opportunities created by the information technologies, in West Africa as in the rest of the world. National laws on cybercrime in line with international standards are the first step to face this cross-border threat.
- (2) Electronic evidence is now part of almost any offence. Good practices to obtain and share digital evidence from/with international parties are available, should be shared and used.
- (3) Human rights and liberties must be protected while facing cybercriminals. Authorities have the obligation to maintain the rule of law in cyberspace and, at the same time, law enforcement powers must be subjected to safeguards.

The regional conference "Harmonization of legislation on Cybercrime and Electronic Evidence with rule of law and human rights safeguards" will take place at the [BON Hotel Grand Pela in Durumi, Abuja, Nigeria](#) between 11 and 13 September 2017. Media representatives are invited to attend the Opening session and the press briefing, on **Monday, 11 September, starting at 9h00 until 9h45.**

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About GLACY+ Global Action on Cybercrime Extended

GLACY+ (2016-2020) is a Joint project of the European Union and the Council of Europe, aimed at strengthening the capacities of States worldwide to apply legislation on cybercrime and electronic evidence and enhance their abilities for effective international cooperation in this area. Currently, 8 countries from Africa, Latin America and the Asia/Pacific region – namely, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, Mauritius, Morocco, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Philippines and Tonga – benefit from project support and share their experience within their respective regions.

About ECOWAS

ECOWAS is a 15 Member State regional group with a mandate of promoting economic integration in all fields of activity of the constituting countries. It was set up to foster the ideal of collective self-sufficiency for its Member States. In relation to cybersecurity and cybercrime issues, the aim of the ECOWAS Cybersecurity agenda is to efficiently fight cybercrime by enacting and implementing appropriate legislations, foster regional and international cooperation and to facilitate the improvement of the cyber security environment.