ANNEXURE I

INTERNET SHUTDOWNS BACKGROUND IN AFRICA

In reference to the new report by the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) titled Despots and Disruptions: Five Dimensions of Internet Shutdowns in Africa, internet shutdowns remain the preserve of Africa’s most despotic states. According to the report, 77% of the countries where internet shutdowns have been ordered in the last five years are categorized as authoritarian under the Democracy Index produced by the Economist Intelligence Unit. All the other African countries that have disrupted communications are categorized as hybrid regimes, meaning they have some elements of democracy with strong doses of authoritarianism.

The report also notes that countries whose leaders have been in power for several years are more likely to order internet shutdowns. As of January 2019, of the 14 African leaders who had been in power for 13 years or more, 79% had ordered shutdowns, mostly during election periods and public protests against government policies. The following link is relevant to the discussion and the report in question:


INTERNET SHUTDOWNS IN AFRICA DURING 2019

SUDAN

Sudan began 2019 in the middle of a 68-day blackout of all social media that did not end until Feb 26th. The government shut down social media services (including Twitter, Periscope, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Telegram) again on April 7th. These blocks were in response to demonstrations against Sudan’s long time president, Omar al-Bashir. On June 3rd, they shut down access to the Internet entirely to limit reporting on killings that took place at a peaceful sit-in protest in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum. After 36 days of implementing an Internet blackout, the Sudanese government began to restore Internet access on July 9th.

ZIMBABWE

On Jan 15th, 16th, and 18th, the Zimbabwean government ordered its telecom operators to completely shut down access to the Internet. Protests had been underway after the government doubled the price of gasoline in the country and critics alleged the government blocked the Internet to prevent people from circulating images of police brutality in their response to these protests.

GABON

During an attempted coup by military officers, the Gabonese government completely shut down the Internet for 28 hours, from Jan 7th and 8th. Once the coup attempt had been put down, Internet service was restored.

BENIN

Benin held parliamentary elections on April 28th this year. The morning of the elections, the government ordered the local ISPs to block social media. Later in the day, the government escalated to a full Internet shutdown for the whole nation for roughly 15 hours. Internet connections were then throttled and disrupted on May 1st.
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The Democratic Republic of the Congo also began 2019 amid a complete Internet shutdown that commenced on Dec 31st, 2018 and lasted 20 days. While the Internet blocks started as a patchwork across the different regions of Congo, it eventually evolved into an Internet blackout that encompassed all the major Congolese population cent.

MALAWI

On May 21st, the day of the presidential elections, the Malawian government shut down the Internet for several hours in the evening while votes were being counted and initial results announced. There was another brief Internet shutdown on May 22nd. The election workers relied on the Internet to conduct their work, and the blackouts impacted the electoral commission’s backup network.

EGYPT

Since the al-Sisi regime took power in 2017, it has worked to block or shut down websites that are critical of the government. On April 9th this year, the Egyptian government restricted access to voiceonline.net, an opposition campaign petition website, after it reached 60,000 signatures to protest proposed changes to the Egyptian constitution. A week later, over 34,000 different websites were suffering intermittent partial or complete blocks. Fortunately, citizens were able to use VPNs to access these sites.

CHAD

Chad holds the record for the longest complete social media blackout, surpassing one year. The blackout began on March 28th 2018, after protesters objected to a constitutional change that would allow the president to remain in power until 2033. For this entire time, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and other social media sites have been completely inaccessible to anyone not using a VPN service.

ALGERIA

Algeria has a checkered past of maintaining Internet freedom. On June 16th and 17th, from the morning until early afternoon (while exams were being taken) no one could access the social media sites of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Tinder. Messaging apps like WhatsApp, Telegram, Skype, Viber, and Line were also blocked. Earlier this year, on Feb 22nd, the Algerian government implemented regional blocks as protestors took to the streets to call for the Algerian president to step down. These regional blocks continued intermittently until March 2.

ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia also resorted to shutting down its Internet to combat cheating on exams on June 11th. The shutdown lasted nearly a week, and even after Internet access came back, the messaging app Telegram remained blocked. The government shut down the Internet entirely again on the evening of June 22 in response to an attempted coup in the Amhara region of the country. The block was lifted the morning of June 27 after roughly 100 hours.

MAURITANIA

Mauritania held presidential elections on June 22. This election was being hailed as a return to democracy after Mauritania suffered a coup in 2008. While the candidate representing the current party in power won the election by a comfortable margin, both opposition candidates allege that there were numerous voting irregularities. As protests began, the local ISPs put a complete Internet shutdown in place on the evening of June 25. Internet access was partially restored on the evening of July 3, but several regions of the country are still enduring a complete Internet shutdown.
ANNEXURE II

BACKGROUND SUMMARIES OF DELEGATE AND SPEAKERS ORGANIZATIONS

1. The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA) is part of the global network of Open Society Foundations (OSF) and operates in eleven (11) southern African countries: Angola, Botswana, DRC, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. OSISA promotes open society values by working towards building vibrant and tolerant democracies across the region, through our various thematic and country programmes.

2. The South African Women in ICT Forum was established by women who operate businesses within the ICT sector to ensure equitable and sustainable representation of women in the sector, where women are playing a vital role and making significant contributions, and impacting lives.

3. The Worldwide Web Foundation is an international organization fighting for digital equality — a world where everyone can access the web and use it to improve their lives. To deliver digital equality, the organization aims to change government and business policies for the better. And believes that everyone has the right to access the internet and use it freely and fully — and these principles underpin all its work. In recent years, the Web Foundation influenced policies in over a dozen countries, helping to unlock the benefits of the web for hundreds of millions of people.

4. Association for Progressive Communications (APC) is a non-profit association of member and partner networks around the world, committed to making the internet serve the needs of global civil society. In May 1990, seven international organizations (Sweden (NordNet), Canada (Web), Brazil (IBASE), Nicaragua (Nicarao) and Australia (Pegasus), IGC and GreenNet) founded the APC to coordinate the operation and development of this emerging global network of networks. The networks were founded by people with experience in communication and international collaboration in the NGO world, and a deep commitment to making new communication techniques available to movements working for social change.

5. Wireless Access Providers Association (WAPA) is an association that is dedicated to governing the responsible use of wireless technology in South Africa. WAPA’s primary objective is to promote the growth of the wireless industry by facilitating self-regulation, promoting best practices, and educating both members and the market about new wireless technologies and business models. WAPA offers its members regulatory advice, technical training, a code of conduct, a forum for knowledge-sharing and business-enablement opportunities.

6. The Southern Africa Litigation Centre (SALC) promotes and advances human rights and the rule of law in southern Africa, primarily through strategic litigation support and capacity building. SALC provides technical and monetary support to local and regional lawyers and organizations in litigating human rights and rule of law cases in the region. SALC also provides training in human rights and rule of law issues and facilitates networks of human rights lawyers and organizations throughout southern Africa. SALC works in the following countries:


7. Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Malawi is one of 11 chapters of the Media Institute of Southern Africa, which promotes and defends media freedom and freedom of
expression across southern Africa in line with the Windhoek Declaration of 1991. MISA Malawi is a membership-based advocacy organisation. The organisation’s National Governing Council, which is elected by members, provides policy direction to the Secretariat.

8. The Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) is one of two centres established under the Catalysing Access to Information and Communications Technologies in Africa (CATIA) initiative, which was funded by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID). CIPESA focuses on decision-making that facilitates the use of ICT in support of development and poverty reduction.

- CIPESA’s establishment was in response to the findings of the Louder Voices Report prepared for DFID and the G8 Dot Force Implementation Team, which cited the lack of easy, affordable and timely access to information about ICT-related issues and processes as key a barrier to effective and inclusive ICT policy making in Africa.

- CIPESA’s mission is to increase the capacity of East and Southern African stakeholders to participate in ICT policy-making. The aim is to promote the effective representation of African interests in policy-making processes, and to see that international policy decisions can effectively be translated into positive outcomes for Africa. Besides, CIPESA promotes policy-making that is inclusive and contributes to poverty alleviation.

9. Africa Freedom of Information Centre “AFIC” is a pan-African NGO and resource centre that promotes the right of access to information through comparative research, coordinating regional advocacy, facilitating information-sharing and capacity building. AFIC (Africa Freedom of Information Centre) is a membership civil society organization promoting the right of access to information. We strive to become a reliable, dependable and all round freedom of information support centre on the African continent.

10. The African Freedom of Expression Exchange (AFEX) is a continental network of some of the most prominent freedom of expression and media rights organisations in Africa that are also members of the global free expression network, IFEX. The network is currently made up of 15 member organisations spread across West, East, Central, and Southern Africa. Some of the members operate in more than on African country in a particular region. AFEX seeks to promote freedom of expression and human rights on the continent through advocacy and campaigns, capacity building to ensure effectiveness of members and other free expression groups in the region.

11. Communications Regulators’ Association of Southern Africa (CRASA) focusses on harmonization of the Postal and Information Communications and Technologies (ICT) regulatory environment in the SADC region in order to improve the Postal and ICT business environment and investment climate in SADC. Its objectives are to;

- Develop appropriate model ICT and Postal regulatory frameworks and tools; and to facilitate their implementation by Member States;

- Promote and coordinate implementation of key regional ICT and Postal regulations, standards and equipment type approval to improve the business environment and investment climate in the region;

- Promote capacity building of the Members, broaden participation in the ICT and Postal sector and enhance lobbying activities with ICT and Postal policymakers at national and regional level;

- Act as an effective and common voice of the Region on ICT and Postal regulatory matters;

- Act as an effective administration structure and mobilise necessary resources to pursue goals of CRASA and long-term sustainability;
• Exchange ideas, views and experience on all aspects of ICT and Postal regulation;

• Promote reforms in the postal sector; and

• Promote operation of efficient, adequate and cost effective ICT and Postal networks and services which meet the diverse needs of customers while being economically sustainable.

12. The Freedom of Expression Institute (FXI) was established at the birth of South Africa’s new democracy in 1994. Freedom of expression was deemed sufficiently important for our democracy that it is protected under the Bill of Rights in Section 16 of the Constitution. FXI enforces, promotes and protects section 16 through the following services and activities:

• EDUCATION: promoting and disseminating information on freedom of expression and the right to protest, through community engagements, information sessions at schools, sharing on the internet and social platforms, newsletters to individuals and institutions, interviews on radio and television, and roundtables. Bullying has become a key issue in schools.

• Also popularise the Regulations of Gatherings Act (RGA) 1993 and The Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) 2000, in all of our education work.

• OPINIONS: giving input and opinions on draft legislation to parliamentary committees and whenever it is requested.

• MONITORING: freedom of expression issues like internet shutdowns, litigation, harassment, detention and killing of journalists and artists.

• LEGAL SERVICES AND STRATEGIC LITIGATION: on free expression which includes defending the right to assembly and protest, artistic freedom, academic, access to information and media freedom.

• MEMBERSHIP AND SOLIDARITY: network and do solidarity work with organisations locally, on the African continent and Internationally as members of AFEX (African Freedom of Exchange) and IFEX (International Freedom of Exchange)

13. SADC Council of Non-Governmental Organisations (SADC-CNGO) is a regional umbrella body of NGOs operating in all the 15 Member States of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). SADC-CNGO was formed in 1998 with the aim of facilitating effective and meaningful engagement between civil society in the region and SADC institutions at both national and regional levels. These include: the Summit of Heads of State and Government, Organ on Politics, Defence and Security Cooperation; SADC National Committees (SNCs), SADC Tribunal and the SADC Secretariat. The SADC-CNGO mission is to facilitate sustainable, constructive and effective NGOs’ engagement with SADC, its Member States and respective institutions at national and regional levels.

14. The Southern African NGO Network SANGONeT’s mission is to support the effective use of ICTs in Southern African CSOs by providing quality services and initiatives. The organization exist for the purpose of facilitating access, sharing information, building capacity, raising awareness, enhancing reach and impact, and linking people and organisations through the use of ICTs in Southern Africa. SANGONeT is still one of very few non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Africa involved in the field of information communication technologies (ICTs) and continues to serve civil society with a wide range of ICT products and services.