



Event Report: East African Internet Governance Forum Panel Discussion

1. Executive Summary

The panel discussion, "*Artificial Intelligence and Digital Democracy: Tackling Behavior and Information Manipulation in Contemporary Democratic Processes*", took place on September 12, 2024, at Serena Hotel in Kampala, Uganda, as part of the East African Internet Governance Forum (EAIGF) 2024 Conference. Organized by EAIGF and curated by Kampala Analytica, with support from the Centre for Constitutional Governance (CCG) and Oxfam Uganda, the session addressed the pressing issues of misinformation and manipulation in digital democratic spaces, especially during elections. The session was moderated by *Canary Mugume*, an investigative journalist with NBS Television. Key speakers included Silver Kayondo, Timothy Kalyegira, Morine Amutorine, Dr. Philippe Reinisch, Raymond Mujuni, and Janet Machuka, each offering insights on AI's role in both challenging and supporting democratic integrity.

2. Introduction

The *East African Internet Governance Forum* (EAIGF) hosted this panel as part of its 2024 conference focused on internet governance issues impacting the region. The session, curated by Kampala Analytica, explored AI's role in democracy from multiple perspectives, including law, journalism, activism, media, and technical fields. With increasing misinformation and AI's influence on public discourse, the panel—moderated by *Canary Mugume*, a prominent journalist known for his investigative work—facilitated a dynamic exchange of ideas and solutions.

3. Event Summary

- **Description:** The session began with presentations by the experts, moderated by Canary Mugume, followed by an engaging Q&A. Discussions centered on AI-driven regulatory frameworks, media integrity, digital activism, and the use of AI for misinformation detection.
- **Highlights:** Noteworthy insights included Silver Kayondo's assertion that "free speech is essential, but not absolute," and Raymond Mujuni's analogy comparing AI's impact to that of historical technologies like fire. Audience members raised questions on AI's responsible adoption across Africa and the importance of policy in ensuring media integrity.
- **Outcomes and Impact:** The panel laid the groundwork for ongoing digital governance efforts. Planned post-event initiatives include a podcast and a policy brief summarizing the session's key points for broader public and policymaker access.

4. Key Discussion Points

- **Legal and Policy Perspective:**
 - *Silver Kayondo*, a dual-trained FDI lawyer, emphasized the importance of regulating speech abuses like hate speech, defamation, and child exploitation. He recommended “regulatory sandboxes” to test AI within local contexts and urged transparency in AI systems used for legal governance, stressing a principles-based approach to regulation.
- **Journalistic Perspective:**
 - *Timothy Kalyegira*, a seasoned journalist, explored AI’s role in newsrooms, discussing its potential to streamline processes while cautioning against over-reliance on automation. He emphasized media literacy as essential for both audiences and journalists, advocating for a balance between technological advancements and journalistic authenticity.
- **Activism Perspective:**
 - *Janet Machuka*, a social media strategist, shared her experiences in using AI tools to counter misinformation in digital activism, particularly during protests. She emphasized the importance of community-driven initiatives for promoting verified information and educating young activists in media literacy.
- **Media and PR Perspective:**
 - *Raymond Mujuni*, a governance and communication expert, highlighted AI’s potential impact on democracy, comparing it to historical transformative technologies. He urged Africa to leverage its resources strategically in AI development and

advocated for policies that prioritize
democracy-supporting technologies.

- **Technical Perspective:**
 - *Dr. Philippe Reinisch*, founder of SILKROAD 4.0, discussed current AI research in misinformation detection and emotional manipulation. He advocated for substantial investment in AI infrastructure in Africa and recommended ethics-centered AI education programs in universities.
- **Data Science and Communications Perspective:**
 - *Morine Amutorine*, a data science and communications expert, focused on AI's capabilities to streamline media data analysis while cautioning against its misuse in influencing public opinion. She emphasized responsible AI deployment and stronger oversight to prevent biased narratives in public discourse.

5. Feedback and Reactions

- **Audience Engagement:** The audience actively participated, raising insightful questions on AI's responsible deployment in Africa and discussing the importance of ethical guidelines for AI. Demonstrations illustrated AI's capabilities in detecting misinformation.
- **Panelist Feedback:** Panelists expressed appreciation for the forum's platform, noting that it enabled critical conversations and cross-sector collaboration on AI's implications for democracy.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

- **Conclusion:** The panel highlighted the dual potential of AI to either strengthen or undermine democratic processes. Panelists stressed the need for responsible AI frameworks supported by cross-sectoral collaboration.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Develop localized regulations allowing for safe AI testing and implementation.
 - Expand AI literacy programs that empower citizens to recognize and counter misinformation.
 - Promote academic-industry partnerships to support ongoing AI research aligned with democratic values.

7. Acknowledgments

Kampala Analytica thanks the *East African Internet Governance Forum* for inviting us to curate this session. We are also grateful to our partners, *Centre for Constitutional Governance (CCG)* and *Oxfam Uganda*, whose support was invaluable in realizing this event and promoting digital governance and civic engagement across East Africa.