Internet Society announces first ever Africa Regional Internet and Development Dialogue

- *Hosted in partnership with the Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Youth and ICT and UNESCO*
- *Conference to focus on Education, Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Africa through the Internet*

[Kigali, Rwanda– 22 March 2017] – The Internet Society today announced that it will hold the first ever Africa Regional Internet and Development Dialogue from 8-9 May 2017 in Kigali, Rwanda, in partnership with UNESCO and Republic of Rwanda Ministry of Youth and ICT.

The two-day meeting will bring together experts including government and inter-governmental organization officials, business and educational leaders from throughout the continent to discuss how Africa can use the Internet to advance education, innovation and job creation.

The event aims at gathering various organizations working on Internet and development across the region to identify synergies and create opportunities for coordination and collaboration.

"One of the key topics of discussion will be what needs to be done for Africa to benefit from the transformational opportunities of the Internet for the benefit of the African economy and education," explains Dawit Bekele, Regional Bureau Director for Africa at the Internet Society. "While there are many challenges, we know it can be done. Countries such as Kenya and Rwanda have created policy environments that enable innovation and they are now seeing the benefits of the Internet economy. Universities throughout the continent are also using e-learning opportunities to increase their reach as well as to give flexibility for their students."

"Africa is on an unstoppable move toward digital transformation. However, the room for increasing speed and impact is limitless," says Jean Philbert Nsengimana, Rwanda's Minister for Youth and ICT. "This can only be achieved if we are able to harness effectively the power of partnerships. We therefore welcome and are pleased to co-host this dialogue which is a great platform for advanced partnerships ahead of the transform Africa Summit that Rwanda will host from May 10 to 12, 2017."

The Africa Regional Internet Development Dialogue is an opportunity for key stakeholders to:
- discuss not only the challenges, but also the achievements in building the Internet economy and education in Africa
- review the successes and setbacks of various initiatives throughout the region and share lessons-learned
- identify the next steps different stakeholders need to take to build the Internet economy and improve education in Africa

"I am honored to participate in this very meaningful event. UNESCO is committed to working with all stakeholders to harness ICTs in a way that serves the interests of learners and the larger teaching/learning community," said Indrajit Banerjee, Director, Knowledge Societies Division, Communications and Information Sector, UNESCO.

This conference is part of a global series of Internet development conferences organized by the Internet Society with the aim of furthering the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) that aim at tackling the world's main development challenges by 2030. Regional Internet Development Dialogues were held last year in Asia Pacific, hosted by UNESCAP, and in Latin America & Caribbean in partnership with Inter-America Development Bank and hosted by the Government of Argentina.

For more information on the conference, please visit:
https://www.internetsociety.org/ridd/africa/2017.

About the Internet Society
Founded by Internet pioneers, the Internet Society (ISOC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring the open development, evolution, and use of the Internet. Working through a global community of chapters and members, the Internet Society collaborates with a broad range of groups to promote the technologies that keep the Internet safe and secure, and advocate for policies that enable universal access. The Internet Society is also the organizational home of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF).

About Rwanda's Ministry of Youth and ICT
The mission of the Ministry of youth and ICT is to address national priorities for economic growth and poverty reduction through the development and coordination of national policies and programs related to youth empowerment as well as Information & Communication Technology policies and programs.

Media Contacts:
Allesandra de Santillana
desantillana@isoc.org
+41-22-807-1451

Emmanuel Nshimiyimana
enshimiyimana@myict.gov.rw