Internet Society to support African Internet exchange project

The African Union (AU) has appointed the Internet Society to conduct community mobilisation and technical aspects workshops to support the establishment of Internet exchange points (IXPs) in AU member states as part of the African Internet Exchange System (AXIS) project.

The AXIS project aims at keeping Africa's Internet traffic local to the continent by providing capacity building and technical assistance to facilitate the establishment of national and regional Internet exchange points in Africa. The project is funded by the Euro-Africa Infrastructure Fund and the government of Luxembourg.

The Internet Society is committed to organising 60 community mobilisation and technical aspects workshops in 30 African countries. To this effect, the Internet Society will also contribute its own resources for the implementation of this component of the AXIS project.

Africa pays overseas carriers

Currently much of Africa's Internet traffic is routed through Internet exchange points external to the African continent. As countries establish their own IXPs, Internet traffic will be routed locally, creating a downward pressure on costs and stimulating growth in and distribution of local Internet content. Through the AXIS project, the interests of the AU and the Internet Society, working with other African Internet organisations such as AfriNIC, AfNOG and AftLD, will be realised in this collaborative effort to assist in the development of a more locally operated and, hence, more robust and economically accessible pan-African Internet.

Moctar Yedaly, head of information society division of the African Union Commission said Africa is paying overseas carriers to exchange local traffic. "This is both a costly as well as an inefficient way of handling inter-country exchange of Internet traffic. Independent analysis has shown that Africa pays over US$600 million to developed countries every year for inter-African traffic exchange that is carried outside the continent. We are therefore pleased that the AXIS project will address this challenge by facilitating optimisation of Internet traffic to support intra-continental traffic flows in Africa."

Dawit Bekele, Internet Society regional bureau director for Africa said: "We believe the AXIS project is extremely important to the continued health of the Internet ecosystem in Africa, and building the technical infrastructure and training the people to sustain it are fundamental to extending the Internet in Africa. Partnering with the African Union on the AXIS project is central to the Internet Society's mission to ensure the open development, evolution, and use of the Internet for the benefit of people everywhere."