

AFRICAN ALLIANCE ON ACCESS TO DATA AND INFORMATION MEETING MINUTES:

Meeting Type : Alliance Monthly Meeting (Virtual / Zoom)

Date : 11 June 2026

Chair : Liz Orembo

Minutes Taken By : Belinda Matore

Also present: Osei Kagyah, Liz Orembo, Stephen Moore, Prof Guy Berger, Dr Ivy Gikonyo, Commissioner Geereesha Topsy-Sonoo, Laeed Zaghlami, Michael O'Donovan, Izak Minnaar, Emmy Okwir Ogale, William Bird, Peace Oliver Amuge, Bulanda T. Nkhowani, Zoe Titus, Ompha Tshamano, Marystella Simuyu, Jerry Sam, Tshepiso Hadebe, Tshiamo Motshegwa, V. Ochola, Aurelia Ayisi, Olunifesi Suraj, Christine Ajulu, Elias Mane, Belinda Matore, Anriette Esterhuysen, Peace Oliver Amuge, Bulelani Jili. 15 AI agents were in attendance, some duplicating human in-person attendees listed above.

Apologies: Mukelani Dimba

New Members: [Elias Mane](#), Digital Rights focal person for Ghana's Human Rights Commission (CHRAJ)

1. Welcome remarks

The Chair opened the meeting, welcomed participants and the agenda as circulated through the calendar invite was adopted without objections.

2. Adoption of Previous Minutes (April Meeting)

The minutes were formally adopted without objections.

3. Presentation by guest speaker: [Prof Bulelani Jili](#) "Thoughts about sovereignty and data access in Africa"

Key Points

- a) Prof Jili explained that sovereignty is both a legal and political concept concerning authority, control and decision-making within defined jurisdictions.
- b) He noted that digital sovereignty is interpreted differently across jurisdictions:
 - The United States largely views digital sovereignty through private-sector innovation and market-led solutions.
 - China advances a state-centric model of internet and digital sovereignty, where the state exercises primary control over digital infrastructure and online activities.
 - Many African countries adopt approaches that place the state at the centre of digital development and governance strategies.
- c) The presentation examined the concept of the "digital stack", encompassing:

- Fibre optic infrastructure;
 - Data centres;
 - Operating systems and technical infrastructure;
 - Applications and digital services.
- d) Prof Jili observed that complete digital sovereignty is difficult to achieve because digital ecosystems are characterised by interdependence. He argued that few countries possess full control over all layers of the digital stack.
- e) In discussing Africa's digital ecosystem, he noted that:
- Local internet service providers typically operate at the foundational level;
 - Significant infrastructure is supplied by Chinese firms;
 - Many applications and digital services remain dominated by American companies.
- f) Prof Jili identified four recurring themes in data governance debates: Ownership of data; Location and storage of data; Economic value and commercial returns derived from data; Access to data.
- He noted competing perspectives regarding data:
 - One view treats data as an economic asset analogous to a natural resource.
 - Another views data as a public good or cultural resource that should be accessible and beneficial to communities.
 - He cautioned against simplistic comparisons between data and oil, arguing that data derives value primarily through aggregation, interoperability and use.

Agency and Development : Prof Jili concluded by emphasising the importance of agency, arguing that meaningful sovereignty requires both technical infrastructure and enabling policy environments. He highlighted the need for African countries and communities to strengthen their capacity to influence how data is collected, governed and utilised.

Members discussed:

- The prominence of sovereignty in emerging national AI strategies across Africa.
- Concerns around cultural preservation, human rights protections and value extraction from African data.
- The concept of "managed dependency" in AI and digital ecosystems.
- Africa's position within global technology supply chains and the risk of remaining primarily a source of raw materials and data rather than participating in higher-value activities.
- The need for equitable arrangements governing access to African data and technology transfers.

The Chair thanked Prof Jili for his insightful presentation and engagement with members. A report on the input is available on the [Alliance website](#).

4. Presentation by Commissioner Geereesha Topsy-Sonoo

Commissioner Sonoo provided an update on the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Guidelines on Access to Information and Data.

Key Updates:

- Finalisation: The Guidelines are approaching finalisation and are expected to be considered by the African Commission later in 2026.
- Member Contributions: She highlighted the significant contribution of Alliance members to the drafting process, noting that the Guidelines draw on existing instruments, including work on content moderation and public interest content.
- Future Process: Following adoption, she intends to present the Guidelines to State Parties in early 2027 to discuss implementation mechanisms, including the possibility of a model law, regulations, or other legal and policy instruments. She emphasised that the Guidelines are intended to be the foundation for more concrete legal and policy frameworks across the continent.

Members welcomed the update and expressed appreciation for the Commissioner's leadership.

5. Postponed Agenda Items

The following items were postponed to the next meeting due to time constraints:

- Report on the Africa Media Convention (Lusaka, 5 May) – Esha Mwijuma.
- Online presentation at the UNECA ARFSD 12 side event on Data Visitation for Health and Precision Public Health (30 April) – Guy Berger.
- Update on the UN CSTD working group on data governance – Olunifesi Suraj, Nenna Nwakanma.
- Outreach to solicit comments on the draft ACHPR Guidelines – Raymond Amumpaire, Mukelani Dimba, Guy Berger.

6. Announcements:

Data Sovereignty, Governance and Trust - including in the context of International Data Governance theme at the International Data Week 2027 in Africa will be a key theme undoubtedly <https://eudat.eu/events/third-party-event/international-data-week-2027>

Articles by Dr Stephen Moore:

The Geopolitics of Artificial Intelligence in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Systematic Review of Funding Dynamics and Digital Sovereignty (2019-2025)
<https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.6539198>

Mapping the Landscape of Large Language Model (LLM) Adoption in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Systematic Cross-Database Bibliometric Study
<https://ssrn.com/abstract=6782344>

7. Moving To Implementation

Prof Guy Berger shared [the results from the Alliance's implementation survey](#).

- **Shift in Focus:** Much of the Alliance's continental-level advocacy work is nearing completion. Future efforts should focus on national-level implementation of the forthcoming Guidelines.
- **Potential Priorities:** Access to government data and public contracting information; access to platform data relating to elections and gender-based violence; access to language data for AI models; and access to scientific research data.
- Members agreed that implementation strategies must be tailored to national contexts.
- It was proposed that the Alliance should prepare for input into the updating of the ACHPR's ATI model law, for including a section on access to data.

8. Upcoming Events

- **FiFAfrica Proposal:** Raymond Amumpaire is developing a proposal and will provide further details.
- **International Day for Universal Access to Information (IDUAI):** Prof Berger informed members that the global commemoration on **28 September 2026** will take place in Freetown, Sierra Leone. UNESCO has invited Commissioner Sonoo to participate. UNESCO will consider sponsoring 1 or 2 Alliance people to take part as well, and motivations should be sent to the Alliance convenor.
- **Africa Fact Check Summit:** Members were reminded that the deadline for proposal submissions is **30 June 2026** and were encouraged to submit proposals on behalf of the Alliance.

9. Future Meeting Arrangements

Prof Berger proposed, and members supported, holding Alliance business meetings every six weeks rather than monthly, given the transition from continental advocacy to national implementation. Separate webinar sessions featuring guest speakers and learning opportunities will be organised in the intervening weeks. Members also encouraged continued sharing of collaboration opportunities between organisations and countries.

10. AOB

No further matters were raised.

11. Closure

In closing, Prof Berger reflected on the significant progress achieved by the Alliance over the past two years, particularly in developing the ACHPR Guidelines. He emphasised the opportunities ahead for national-level implementation and encouraged members to continue advancing access to data and information across Africa.

The Chair thanked all participants for their contributions and closed the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 15:06