Africa must unite to protect its cybersphere

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While the continent has made progress in the effort to ensure an open, prosperous and safe cyberspace, more cooperation and inclusive discussion is required going forward. This is according to Dr Daniel Stauffacher, head of the ICT4Peace Foundation, who, together with the African Union (AU) Commission hosted a

cybersecurity workshop in Ethiopia last week.

Tagged International Cyber Security Policy: A Capacity Building Workshop for Diplomats, the event focused on the need for more inclusive and knowledge-based discussion to mitigate risks to both rights and security in the cybersphere through responsible state behaviour and international cooperation.

It also discussed how to better understand cybersecurity concerns, best practices, and institutional arrangements among stakeholders represented - governments, diplomats, industry, civil society, and academia.

"This is important, because this a totally new field, especially for diplomats and policy makers everywhere but also in Africa," Dr Stauffacher wrote via email.

On the need for more agreements at bilateral, regional at global level on norms, Dr Stauffacher stated that it is hoped that more African countries will be participating in international conferences on cybersecurity, especially on norms of responsible state behaviour, confidence building measures and international cooperation.

"This could be as part of the UN GGE in New York or in new working groups on cybersecurity of the AU or the African Regional Conferences, or in the London Conference Series (last in The Hague)," he added.

For these outcomes to best mirror the impact the workshop would have on the African cybersphere generally, he said there is a need to aim for closer cooperation among governments in Africa.

"Not only at the technical level (Computer Emergency Response Teams CERTs), but, and this is the new objective of our workshop, at the policy and diplomatic level to
cooperate better among governments to combat cybercrime, cyber hooligans, terrorists and state sponsored attacks," said Dr Stauffacher.

The workshop's overall objectives, which include building a network of alumni, lecturers and experts to update and exchange information, Stauffacher said, are closely connected to the international process conducted by the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts (UN GGE).

ICT4Peace is a Swiss non-profit organisation comprising industry experts and academics who are members or associates of the UN GGE and the OSCE working groups.