

Somalia Internet Governance Forum 2025



SOMALIA INTERNET
Governance Forum



Dates: 4 – 5 November 2025

Venue: Jazeera Hotel, Mogadishu, Somalia

Organized by: Somali Internet Governance Taskforce (SIGF)



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Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary	4
2. Introduction and Context	5
3. Forum Overview	6
4. Pre-Forum Capacity Building: Somali School of Internet Governance (SSIG).....	8
5. Day One Proceedings.....	10
6. Live Interview with Internet Pioneers.....	13
7. Day Two Proceedings: Deepening Governance, Identity, and Global Engagement	15
8. Policy Actions and Recommendations	21
9. Closing Remarks and Way Forward	22
10. Annex A: SIGF 2025 Agenda	24
11. Annex B: Communiqué of the Event.....	25

1. Executive Summary



The Third Annual Somalia Internet Governance Forum (SIGF), held from 4–5 November 2025 at Jazeera Hotel in Mogadishu, marked a critical milestone in Somalia’s digital governance journey. Convened under the theme **“Shaping Somalia’s Digital Future: Inclusive, Secure, and Resilient Internet Governance,”** the forum brought together more than 300 participants from government, regulatory authorities, the private sector, civil society, academia, media, youth groups, and the technical community.

SIGF is a multi-stakeholder platform that aligns Somalia’s digital transformation agenda with global Internet Governance Forum (IGF) processes while remaining firmly grounded in Somali realities. The forum was built on outcomes from previous SIGF editions, with a deliberate focus on moving from dialogue to action, particularly in digital trust, rights-based governance, Somali identity online, and emerging

technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and data governance. Discussions throughout the two days emphasized that Somalia’s digital future must be people-centered, inclusive, and accountable. Participants acknowledged the country’s impressive progress in connectivity and innovation, while candidly addressing persistent challenges, including regulatory gaps, digital divides, data protection risks, and the marginalization of the Somali language and culture in global digital spaces.

The forum concluded with a strong national consensus on priority reforms, infrastructure investment, ethical technology adoption, and sustained multi-stakeholder collaboration. The outcomes of SIGF 2025 will inform Somalia’s engagement with regional and global IGF platforms and help shape national digital policies aligned with the National Transformation Plan (2025–2029).

2. Introduction and Context

Background of the Somalia Internet Governance Forum

The Somalia Internet Governance Forum (SIGF) is a national, multi-stakeholder platform that provides an inclusive space for dialogue on Internet-related public policy issues, bringing together diverse stakeholders on an equal footing. Since its inception, SIGF has sought to bridge the gap between global Internet governance debates and Somalia's local digital ecosystem. The third edition, SIGF 2025, came at a crucial moment as Somalia accelerates its digital transformation amid ongoing institutional reforms, infrastructure expansion, and growing engagement with regional and global digital policy processes.

SIGF 2025 was deliberately aligned with Somalia's National Transformation Plan (NTP) 2025–2029, which identifies digital transformation as a key driver of economic growth, service delivery, governance reform, and social inclusion. At the global level, the forum contributed Somali perspectives to debates on digital trust, rights, AI governance, and digital sovereignty, issues increasingly shaping international policy discussions. The forum also responded to the rapid expansion of internet access in Somalia, the rise of social media as a public sphere, and the growing influence of global technology platforms on Somali society, politics, and culture.

3. Forum Overview

The overarching theme of SIGF 2025 was **Shaping Somalia's Digital Future: Inclusive, Secure, and Resilient Internet Governance**. This theme underscored that connectivity alone is not enough to drive meaningful digital transformation. Equally important are robust governance frameworks, the protection of digital rights, inclusive participation across all societal sectors, and innovation guided by ethical principles. By framing the discussion around these pillars, SIGF 2025 aimed to chart a course for Somalia's digital landscape that is equitable, safe, and forward-looking.



The forum was organized by the SIGF Taskforce, in close collaboration with Digital Shelter, Somalia Association for Information Communication Technology (SAFICT), and Somalia Non-State Actors (SONSA). The event benefited from the support and sponsorship of the National Communications Authority (NCA), which reinforced the forum's alignment with national digital development strategies. Technical support was provided by the Somali Network Information Center (SONIC), ensuring that all digital platforms functioned seamlessly throughout the event.

The two-day agenda was carefully designed to balance high-level strategic discussions with practical, solution-oriented sessions. It began with opening remarks from key government officials, industry leaders, and civil society representatives, setting the stage for a collaborative dialogue on Somalia's digital trajectory. Following the opening, the forum featured three thematic panel sessions, each exploring critical aspects of internet governance, including cybersecurity, regulatory frameworks, stakeholder engagement, and the protection of digital rights. The panels were complemented by one live interview on Somalia's digital history

and six expert presentations, which provided participants with insights into emerging trends, best practices, and innovative approaches from both local and international contexts.

Beyond the formal sessions, SIGF 2025 also emphasized interactive engagement, offering participants opportunities for Q&A, case study discussions, and peer-to-peer learning. This approach reinforced the forum's commitment to inclusivity and knowledge sharing, ensuring that voices from government, the private sector, academia, and civil society could help shape actionable recommendations for Somalia's digital future.

Objectives

The core objectives of the forum were to:

- Provide a neutral national platform for dialogue on internet governance priorities
- Strengthen collaboration between the government, the private sector, civil society, academia, and the technical community
- Promote rights-based and inclusive digital policies

- Address emerging challenges related to AI, data governance, and content moderation
- Ensure Somali perspectives are reflected in regional and global IGF processes.

Participation and Stakeholder Representation

SIGF 2025 convened over 300 participants, including:

- Senior government officials and policymakers
- Regulatory authorities, including the National Communications Authority (NCA)
- Telecommunications operators and technology companies
- Civil society organizations and human rights advocates
- Academic institutions and researchers
- Media professionals, youth leaders, and digital innovators.

4. Pre-Forum Capacity Building: Somali School of Internet Governance (SSIG)



Recognizing that meaningful multi-stakeholder engagement requires more than attendance, the Somali Internet Governance Taskforce, in collaboration with SIMAD University, held the Somali School of Internet Governance (SSIG) as a pre-forum capacity-building intervention ahead of SIGF 2025. The SSIG was designed to strengthen foundational knowledge, shared vocabulary, and critical thinking about internet governance among key stakeholder groups who would later participate in the national forum.

In the Somali context, where digital transformation has advanced rapidly in the absence of long-standing regulatory traditions, capacity gaps remain a significant barrier to inclusive and effective governance. The SSIG directly addressed this challenge by equipping young participants with the conceptual, technical, and policy literacy needed to engage substantively in national and global internet governance processes. Importantly, the SSIG marked a shift in SIGF's evolution from a convening-focused platform to a process-oriented ecosystem that prioritizes learning, leadership development, and long-term institutional memory.

Objectives of the Somali School of Internet Governance

The SSIG was guided by a set of clearly defined objectives aligned with both national priorities and global IGF best practices:

- To build a foundational understanding of internet governance concepts, institutions, and decision making processes at national, regional, and global levels
- To demonstrate the multi-stakeholder model and clarify the distinct but interdependent roles of government, private sector, civil society, academia, and the technical community
- To contextualize global internet governance debates within Somalia's political, cultural, economic, and post conflict realities
- To strengthen participants' ability to analyze digital policy issues through rights based, ethical, and inclusive lenses
- To prepare participants for informed, confident, and constructive engagement during SIGF 2025 sessions
- To cultivate a new generation of Somali internet governance practitioners capable of sustained engagement beyond the forum.

Participants and Inclusivity



The SSIG brought together a diverse cohort of participants drawn from civil society organizations, youth led initiatives, media houses, academia, technical communities, private sector actors, and emerging public sector professionals. Particular attention was paid to ensuring the inclusion of women, youth, and participants from varied professional and regional backgrounds. This diversity enriched discussions and reinforced the principle that internet governance is not the preserve of technical experts or policymakers alone, but a shared societal responsibility.

Learning Methodology

The SSIG was designed to balance theory, practice, and contextual analysis, utilizing core resources and frameworks from IGF School of Internet Governance. Sessions were delivered through a mix of expert presentations, facilitated discussions, interactive exercises, and case study analysis to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the digital landscape.

The curriculum was structured around four key thematic modules:

- **Introduction to Internet Governance:** An exploration of the historical evolution of the internet, various governance models, and the emergence and necessity of the multi-stakeholder approach in the digital age.
- **Cybersecurity in Internet Governance:** A deep dive into the technical and policy driven aspects of securing digital infrastructure, addressing data governance, and analyzing the implications of emerging technologies on national and international security.
- **Rights Aspects of Internet Governance:** A critical examination of digital rights, focusing

on freedom of expression, privacy, data protection, and the right to information, particularly within fragile or transitional contexts.

- **Stakeholders in Internet Governance:**

An analysis of the diverse roles and responsibilities of key actors, including governments, the private sector, civil society, technical communities, and international organizations.

Learning Outcomes and Impact

The Somali School of Internet Governance generated tangible outcomes that were evident during the main SIGF proceedings. Participants demonstrated:

- Improved understanding in internet governance terminology and policy debates
- Increased confidence in engaging with senior policymakers, regulators, and private sector leaders
- Greater ability to articulate rights based and people centered perspectives during forum discussions
- Enhanced understanding of how national policy processes connect to regional and global IGF platforms.

These outcomes contributed to richer, more substantive dialogue throughout SIGF 2025, particularly during open floor discussions and Q&A sessions.

Long Term Value and Sustainability

Beyond the immediate forum, the SSIG established the foundation for a growing community of informed Somali internet governance practitioners. Participants expressed strong interest in continued learning, mentorship, and engagement in future SIGF editions and regional IGF initiatives. By embedding capacity building into the SIGF process, the Somali Internet Governance Taskforce reinforced the principle that sustainable digital governance depends on empowered people, not only policy documents. The SSIG, therefore, represents a strategic investment in Somalia's long term digital leadership and governance resilience.

5. Day one of the SIGF Proceedings

Official Opening Ceremony and High Level Addresses



The forum opened with a Qur'an recitation and the Somali National Anthem, followed by welcoming remarks and a short documentary highlighting Somalia's internet journey. The forum was officially opened by H.E. Hamza Abdi Barre, Prime Minister of the Federal Government of Somalia, alongside, H.E. Ahmed Osman, State Minister of Communications and Technology, and Mr. Mustafa Yaasin Sheik, Director General of the National Communications Authority (NCA). Other distinguished speakers included Mr. Omar Hassan Yoolac (Dahabshiil Group), Dr. Ibrahim Mohamed (Mogadishu University), and Mr. Osman "Shatah" (SONSA), reflecting the forum's multi-stakeholder nature.

In his opening remarks, the Prime Minister emphasized the strategic importance of digital transformation for Somalia's state building, economic recovery, and global engagement. He underscored the government's commitment to fostering an open, secure, and inclusive digital ecosystem that serves all citizens.



Ministerial and Institutional Perspectives

The State Minister of Communications and Technology highlighted ongoing policy and regulatory reforms, including data protection legislation, cybercrime laws, and institutional strengthening efforts. He stressed that effective internet governance requires cooperation across

sectors and meaningful public participation. The Director General of the NCA reiterated the regulator's role in ensuring fair competition, consumer protection, and trust in digital services, noting the need to continuously adapt regulatory approaches to emerging technologies.

High Level Panel Discussion 1: Digital Trust – Governance, Rights, and Responsibility

This substantive session set the tone for SIGF 2025 by interrogating the foundations of digital trust in Somalia. The discussion was anchored on the understanding that trust in digital systems is not accidental but is built through clear governance frameworks, respect for rights, transparency, and accountability across all stakeholders.



A Presentation was delivered by Liban Abdulkadir, representing the National Communications Authority (NCA) and the chair of SIGF. Liban provided an institutional perspective on the evolving role of regulation in Somalia's digital ecosystem. He emphasized that as connectivity expands, the responsibility of regulators must extend beyond infrastructure oversight to include consumer protection, data governance, and platform accountability. He highlighted the importance of clearly defined mandates between institutions to avoid regulatory overlap and build public confidence. Liban also stressed that combating misinformation and ensuring data protection require cooperation between regulators, telecom operators, and digital platforms.

The presentation was followed by a High level panel discussion, moderated by Mr. Aweys Hassan Mohamed, Media and Communications

Specialist. The panel brought together senior decision makers and sector leaders to reflect on trust, rights, and governance from multiple angles.



The panel brought together key actors from government, academia, civil society, and the private sector to reflect on trust from multiple vantage points:

- **H.E. Ahmed Osman**, State Minister, Ministry of Communications and Technology (MOCT)
- **Eng. Mustaf Abdullahi Muse**, Advisor for Digital Transformation and e-Governance Innovation, Office of the Prime Minister
- **Mr. Osman Moalim Muhyadin (Shatah)**, Chairperson of Somali Non-State Actors
- **Dr. Ibrahim Mohamed Mursal**, President, Mogadishu University
- **Awale Abdi Ereg**, CEO at SOMTEL

H.E. Ahmed Osman, State Minister, Ministry of Communications and Technology (MOCT), emphasized that trust in digital government initiatives depends on transparency, inclusive policymaking, and open communication with citizens. He highlighted ongoing efforts to harmonize digital policies and strengthen regulatory institutions, while acknowledging public concerns around surveillance, misinformation, and data misuse. Eng. Mustaf Abdullahi, Advisor for Digital Transformation and e-Governance Innovation in the Office of the Prime Minister, focused on trust in digital public services. He noted that fragmented systems, poor design, and weak cybersecurity can undermine confidence even when policy intentions are sound. He emphasized interoperability, institutional coordination, and user centered design as prerequisites for trustworthy e-governance.

Mr. Osman Moalim Muhyadin (Shatah), Chairperson of Somali Non-State Actors, framed trust as a social relationship between institutions and citizens. He stressed “the role of civil society is ensuring accountability, amplifying community voices, and preventing exclusion particularly for marginalized groups.” Dr. Ibrahim Mohamed, President of Mogadishu University, highlighted the role of knowledge and research in building trust. He called for stronger collaboration between academia and policymakers to ensure digital decisions are informed by local evidence, ethical reflection, and skilled human capital. Awale Abdi Ereg, CEO of SOMTEL, offered a private sector perspective, noting that user trust is essential for service adoption and sustainability. He emphasized predictable regulation, consumer protection, and public-private dialogue as key drivers of investment and innovation.

Government representatives outlined progress and gaps in key legal frameworks, including:

- Data Protection Act (2023) and the operationalization of the Data Protection Authority
- Cybercrime legislation currently before Parliament
- Ongoing discussions around access to information and media law reforms.

A key theme that emerged from this session was shared responsibility. Trust was framed not as the sole responsibility of government or regulators, but as a collective outcome shaped by policymakers, service providers, civil society, academia, and the technical community. The discussion emphasized that rights protection, transparency, and accountability must move in parallel with innovation and service expansion.

The session also interrogated the balance between governance and rights. Participants debated how Somalia can counter misinformation and harmful content without undermining freedom of expression, and how data can be governed in ways that protect privacy while enabling innovation. There was broad agreement that overly reactive or opaque governance approaches risk eroding trust further, while inclusive and consultative processes help build legitimacy.

Expert Presentation: The State of Digital Rights and Inclusion in Somalia

The first panel discussion was followed by an expert presentation to deepen the forum's rights based lens by presenting Somalia's contribution to the Londa 2024 Report, a continental assessment of digital rights and inclusion produced by Paradigm Initiative. The presentation was delivered by Abdifatah Ali, Director of Digital Shelter.

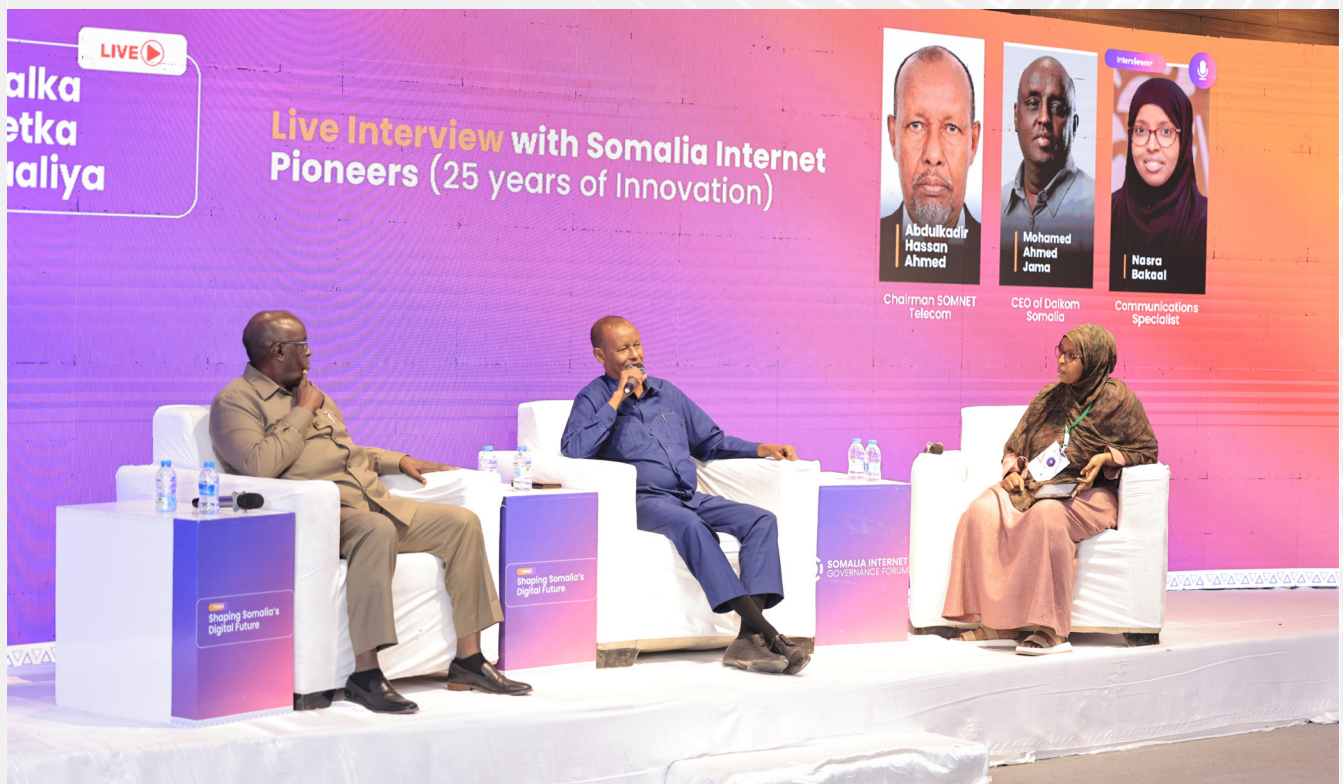


Abdifatah began by situating the Londa Report within Africa's broader digital rights movement, explaining its methodology and indicators, which include internet access, freedom of expression, data protection, gender inclusion, and civic participation online. Turning to Somalia, he highlighted key findings that reflect both progress and persistent structural challenges. These included uneven access between urban and rural areas, limited enforcement of data protection principles, and the growing influence of social media on political and social discourse.

He also discussed emerging risks, such as online harassment, misinformation, and the exclusion of vulnerable populations from policy conversations. At the same time, he pointed to opportunities, particularly the growing digital engagement of Somali youth and increasing interest from policymakers in rights based digital frameworks. Abdifatah emphasized that the Londa findings should not be viewed as static assessments but as tools for accountability, advocacy, and reform. Participants reflected on how research based evidence can strengthen policy dialogue and ensure that digital transformation does not deepen existing inequalities.

6. Live Interview with Internet Pioneers

This session provided historical depth to SIGF 2025 by reflecting on 25 years of internet innovation in Somalia. It offered a rare and reflective pause, grounding contemporary policy debates in the lived history of Somalia's digital journey. Rather than focusing solely on frameworks or future strategies, the discussion revisited the origins of internet connectivity in Somalia, tracing how innovation, resilience, and local entrepreneurship laid the foundations of today's digital ecosystem. The session emphasized that understanding Somalia's internet origins is essential to shaping its future.



The discussion explored how Somalia's internet evolved in a context marked by institutional absence, insecurity, and fragmented infrastructure. Participants reflected on how early internet initiatives were driven not by state-led digital strategies but by private-sector actors responding to community needs. The session highlighted how trust between providers and users, and between businesses and communities, became a defining feature of early adoption. In the absence of formal regulation, trust functioned as an informal governance mechanism, enabling services to operate, scale, and endure.

The live interview format, moderated by Nasra Bakaal, allowed for an intergenerational exchange that combined technical history

with personal experience. Nasra guided the conversation in a way that connected past challenges to current policy questions, prompting reflection on which lessons from the past remain relevant to today's regulatory and governance debates.



The session featured two of Somalia's internet pioneers:

- Abdulkadir Hassan Ahmed Kadle, Chairman of SOMNET Telecom
- Mohamed Ahmed Jama, CEO of Dalkom Somalia

Both Abdulkadir and Mohamed were instrumental in establishing the first Internet Service Provider in 1999, with Abdulkadir serving in senior leadership roles, including Chief Executive Officer/Managing Director, and Mohamed serving as an Advisor. Abdulkadir Hassan reflected on the earliest days of internet deployment in Somalia, a period marked by limited infrastructure, a lack of legal frameworks, and ongoing security risks. He described how early connectivity efforts were often improvised, driven by determination rather than policy support. He emphasized that community trust was central to sustainability; users relied on providers not only for services but for reliability in an uncertain environment. He noted that the absence of formal governance structures forced providers to develop their own norms around service delivery, accountability, and user protection, many of which continue to influence the sector today.



Mohamed Ahmed Jama focused on the sector's evolution as competition increased and infrastructure expanded. He discussed how collaboration among telecom operators

often viewed as competitors was essential to expanding national coverage and maintaining service continuity. He highlighted how innovation emerged out of necessity, with Somali companies adapting technologies to local realities rather than importing models wholesale. Mohamed emphasized that as the sector matured, the need for adaptive and forward looking regulation became increasingly clear, particularly to support investment, protect consumers, and manage emerging risks.



Across the discussion, both speakers stressed that Somalia's digital growth has been driven by local capacity and ingenuity rather than external blueprints. They cautioned that future governance frameworks should recognize this history and build on existing strengths, rather than erasing or overlooking them. The session reinforced the idea that policy and regulation are most effective when they are informed by lived experience and institutional memory.

The session concluded by underscoring that Somalia's internet ecosystem is not a recent phenomenon, but the result of decades of perseverance, risk taking, and community centered innovation. These lessons remain highly relevant as Somalia navigates complex debates around digital governance, regulation, and investment. By reconnecting current policy discussions with historical context, the session provided valuable insights for shaping a resilient and inclusive digital future.

7. Day Two Proceedings: Deepening Governance, Identity, and Global Engagement

Day Two of SIGF 2025 built on the foundational governance and trust discussions of the first day, shifting the focus toward long term digital resilience, cultural sovereignty, and Somalia's positioning within regional and global internet governance processes. While day one centered on institutional trust and rights, day two explored how identity, emerging technologies, and global engagement intersect with national digital priorities.

The discussions on the second day emphasized that Somalia's digital future cannot be shaped in isolation. With a focus on how global power structures, platform governance, and technological trends influence local realities, often in ways that are invisible yet deeply consequential, day two sessions encouraged participants to think beyond immediate policy challenges and consider how Somalia can assert agency culturally, technologically, and diplomatically within an increasingly interconnected digital world.

A recurring theme across the day was intentional participation. Whether in shaping online cultural narratives, governing artificial intelligence, or engaging in international digital diplomacy, participants emphasized the need for Somalia to move from being a passive consumer of digital systems to an active shaper of digital norms, policies, and futures.

Keynote Address: Regional Perspectives on Internet Governance and Digital Rights

The day two programme was anchored by a keynote address from Lillian Nalwoga, Chair of Africa Internet Governance Forum (AfIGF) and Programmes Manager, Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA). Her keynote situated Somalia's digital governance journey within broader continental and global conversations, offering both reflection and forward looking insight.

Lillian emphasized that Africa's digital transformation is unfolding within complex political, economic, and technological power dynamics. She highlighted how internet governance debates across the continent increasingly revolve around issues of digital rights, platform accountability, data governance, and the concentration of power among global technology companies. In this context, she stressed that national IGFs, such as SIGF, play a critical role in ensuring that local voices inform regional and global policy processes. Drawing on AfIGF experiences, she underscored the importance of multi stakeholder participation as a practice, not just a principle. She noted that meaningful inclusion requires deliberate efforts to elevate voices that are often underrepresented in digital policy spaces, including youth, women, civil society, and technical communities.

Lillian reflected on Somalia's progress in convening diverse stakeholders and sustaining dialogue through SIGF, noting that such platforms contribute to institutional memory, policy coherence, and regional solidarity. She encouraged Somali stakeholders to actively engage in continental forums, contribute research and perspectives, and align national



priorities with Africa wide digital rights and governance agendas.

The keynote concluded with a call to action for Somalia to position itself not only as a participant but as a contributor to Africa's digital future, leveraging its experiences, innovations, and lessons to inform collective approaches to inclusive, rights based internet governance.

Panel Discussion 2: Strengthening Somali Identity Online through Local Content and Language

This session addressed one of the most fundamental yet often overlooked dimensions of internet governance in Somalia: cultural sovereignty and linguistic inclusion in digital spaces. Moving beyond questions of infrastructure and regulation, the discussion examined how Somali identity, language, and collective memory are represented or marginalized within global digital ecosystems largely designed outside the Somali context.

The discussion centered on the idea that the internet is not a neutral space. Participants explored how global platforms, algorithms, and content moderation systems actively shape what is visible, searchable, and amplified online. In this context, Somali language and culture often exist at the margins, constrained by limited language support, weak content classification, and algorithmic systems that fail to understand Somali history, nuance, and social dynamics. The session emphasized that without intentional intervention, Somalia risks digital cultural erasure even as connectivity expands.

A key thread throughout the discussion was digital sovereignty as a form of cultural agency. Participants reflected on how local content creation, language preservation, and platform localization are not merely cultural goals but governance priorities that influence participation, representation, and power in digital spaces. The conversation also highlighted how young people, educators, and creators are central to reclaiming Somali identity online.

The session opened with a presentation titled "Who Decides What We See Online?" delivered by Ayaan Khalif, Co-founder of Digital Shelter. Her presentation framed the discussion by critically examining global content governance

systems, including algorithms, platform policies, and moderation practices. Ayaan explained how these systems, often developed with little linguistic or cultural diversity, determine what content is promoted, suppressed, or removed. She highlighted that Somali content is frequently misclassified, under-moderated, or rendered invisible due to a lack of Somali-language datasets and contextual understanding.



She further explored how algorithmic invisibility affects access to information, civic participation, and cultural expression, particularly for Somali users whose narratives are shaped by external interpretations. Ayaan argued that without deliberate local intervention, Somali digital spaces risk being shaped almost entirely by external actors, reinforcing dependency rather than empowerment. Her presentation positioned local content governance as both a rights issue and a strategic necessity for Somalia's digital future.

Following the presentation, a panel discussion, moderated by Ayaan Khalif, explored concrete strategies for strengthening Somali identity online through multi-stakeholder action. The panel brought together perspectives from language development, education, technical infrastructure, and public communication.



The panel featured:

- **Mr. Mohamed Abdimalik**, Founder of Jaantus
- **Sumaya Abdirashid**, Gender and Inclusive Education Advisor, Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education
- **Mohamed Ali**, CTO of SomaliREN and Technical Officer at the ISOC Somalia Chapter
- **Abdishakur Ali**, Director of Communication Strategy, Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism at the Federal Government of Somalia

Drawing on Jaantus' work, Mohamed Abdimalik focused on the foundational role of language infrastructure in digital inclusion, he discussed the development of Somali language lexicons, terminology frameworks, and datasets, particularly in relation to generative AI systems. He mentioned "language inclusion is not symbolic, but technical and must be treated as a core component of digital development." He also emphasized that without structured linguistic resources, Somali language will remain underrepresented in AI, search engines, and content moderation tools.

Sumaya Abdirashid brought an education and gender lens to the discussion, emphasizing that schools and learning institutions play a critical role in shaping digital citizenship. She highlighted how curricula, teacher training, and digital literacy programs can normalize Somali language use online while empowering youth as content creators and storytellers. She stressed that cultural preservation and inclusion must begin early, and that education systems are key to sustaining Somali identity across generations.

Addressing the technical underpinnings of localization and access, Mohamed Ali discussed how infrastructure, open standards, and community networks can support the hosting and distribution of local content. He emphasized that technical communities have a responsibility to ensure that systems are built to support Somali language content, including domain names, localization tools, and community driven technical solutions.

On the government's role in shaping narratives and supporting cultural representation online, Abdishakur Ali outlined initiatives by the Ministry of Information to promote Somali-language media, digital storytelling, and public communication. He noted the importance of collaboration between government, creators, and civil society to ensure that digital spaces reflect Somali realities rather than external interpretations.

Throughout the discussion, panelists emphasized that strengthening Somali identity online requires coordinated action across sectors. Language development, education, technical infrastructure, and policy must move together to counter digital marginalization. The session reinforced that cultural inclusion is not a secondary concern but a central pillar of inclusive internet governance.

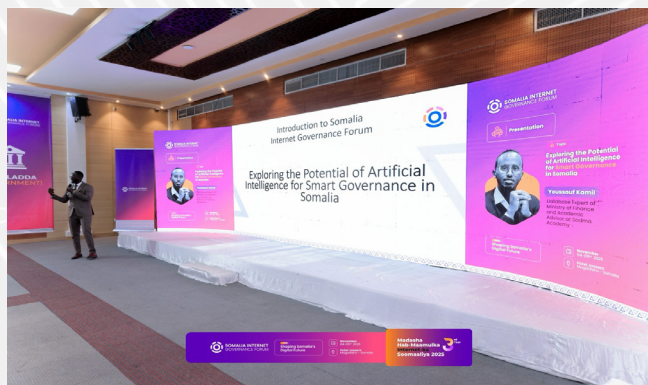
The session concluded with a shared recognition that Somalia's digital future depends not only on access and innovation, but on the ability of its people to see themselves, their language, and their stories reflected online. By centering Somali identity within internet governance discussions, the session positioned cultural sovereignty as essential to meaningful digital participation and long-term resilience.

Expert Presentation: Exploring the Potential of Artificial Intelligence for Smart Governance in Somalia

This presentation examined artificial intelligence (AI) as a governance tool rather than a purely technological innovation. The discussion centered on how AI can support smarter, more responsive, and more accountable public institutions in Somalia, while also raising critical questions around readiness, ethics, and inclusion. The presentation highlighted that AI adoption is neither inevitable nor value-neutral; it must be intentionally shaped to serve public-interest objectives.

The presentation explored the meaning of "smart governance" in the Somali context, particularly in a country where institutional capacity, data systems, and infrastructure are still evolving. At the same time, the discussion cautioned against viewing AI as a shortcut to governance reform, stressing that technology cannot compensate for weak institutions or unclear policy frameworks.

The presentation examined whether Somalia currently possesses the foundational elements necessary for responsible AI deployment, including reliable data systems, skilled human capital, legal safeguards, and inter-institutional coordination. The discussion highlighted that without these prerequisites, AI systems risk reinforcing inequality, exclusion, or opacity rather than improving governance outcomes.



The presentation was delivered by Youssouf Kamil, from the Ministry of Finance and serving as an Advisor at Sodma Academy. Drawing on both policy and academic perspectives, Youssouf approached AI governance as a strategic long term investment rather than a short term technological upgrade.

He began by assessing Somalia's digital and institutional landscape, noting both progress and persistent gaps. He highlighted the expansion of digital public systems, increased use of data in government processes, and growing interest in innovation across ministries. However, he also pointed to fragmented data governance, limited technical capacity, and the absence of comprehensive AI-specific regulatory frameworks as significant constraints.

Youssouf emphasized that data is the backbone of AI, and that smart governance depends on data quality, interoperability, and protection. He cautioned that without strong data governance mechanisms particularly around privacy, security, and consent, AI systems could undermine public trust rather than enhance it. He stressed the importance of aligning AI adoption with existing and emerging data protection principles.

In outlining recommendations, the presentation called for a phased and inclusive approach to AI adoption. Key priorities included developing a clear national vision for AI governance,

investing in human capital, strengthening data infrastructure, and fostering collaboration between government, academia, the private sector, and civil society. Youssouf emphasized that Somalia has an opportunity to learn from global experiences and avoid common pitfalls by embedding ethics, accountability, and inclusivity from the outset.

The presentation concluded by reinforcing that AI should be viewed as a means to strengthen governance, not an end in itself. When aligned with institutional reform, rights-based frameworks, and national development goals, AI can support a smarter, more transparent, and more responsive Somali state. However, realizing this potential requires deliberate policy choices, sustained investment, and broad stakeholder engagement.

Panel Discussion 3: Advancing Somalia's Digital Future with AI and Data Governance

This session explored how Somalia can shape its digital future through artificial intelligence and responsible data governance, while remaining grounded in ethics, accountability, and social inclusion. Rather than treating AI as a purely technical solution, the conversation framed it as a governance challenge, one that requires clear policy direction, institutional coordination, and public trust.

The discussion examined how AI systems are increasingly influencing decision-making, service delivery, and policy planning worldwide, and what this means for a country like Somalia, which is still strengthening its digital foundations while acknowledging the risks of exclusion, misuse, and opacity if safeguards are not put in place early.

Attention was also given to data as the backbone of AI. The session highlighted that, without robust data governance frameworks covering data collection, storage, sharing, and protection, AI systems risk amplifying existing inequalities and undermining public confidence. Discussions repeatedly returned to the question of trust: how governments can adopt advanced technologies while ensuring that citizens' rights, privacy, and agency are protected.

The session began with a presentation on the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy (2025–

2030) by Dr. Fuad Mire Hassan, Professor at Somali National University. His presentation outlined the strategic direction Somalia is considering for AI adoption over the next five years.

Dr. Fuad presented the strategy as a roadmap rather than a fixed blueprint, emphasizing flexibility and learning as key principles. He outlined the core pillars of the strategy, including governance and regulation, capacity development, innovation ecosystems, ethical standards, and sector-specific applications. He stressed that Somalia's approach must be context aware, prioritizing public value and institutional strengthening over rapid, unregulated deployment.



He also addressed readiness, noting gaps in technical expertise, data infrastructure, and coordination across institutions. Dr. Fuad underscored the importance of investing in local research, universities, and training programs to build a pipeline of Somali professionals capable of designing, managing, and regulating AI systems. Without this investment, he warned, Somalia risks becoming a passive consumer of externally developed technologies.

Following the presentation, the panel discussion deepened the conversation by bringing together perspectives from government, civil society, academia, and the private sector. The panel was moderated by Abdifatah Mohamed, General Manager of Bluecom Somalia, who guided the discussion toward practical governance questions and policy trade-offs.

The panelists included:

- **Zakarie Ismael**, Digital Development Specialist at the **Ministry of Communication & Technology**
- **Abdifatah Ali**, Director of **Digital Shelter**

- **Ahmed Osman Ali**, Deputy Rector of **Zamzam University of Science and Technology**
- **Hasina Goosaar**, Founder of **GacaloTech**



Zakarie Ismael spoke from a public-sector perspective, discussing the challenges governments face in integrating AI into existing systems. He highlighted the need for clear institutional mandates, coordination across ministries, and alignment between AI initiatives and national digital policies. He noted that without strong leadership and policy coherence, AI risks being adopted in fragmented and inconsistent ways.

Abdifatah Ali brought a civil society lens to the discussion, raising concerns around rights, accountability, and transparency. He stressed that AI governance must be grounded in human rights principles, particularly around data protection, surveillance, and algorithmic decision-making. He argued that civil society plays a critical role in monitoring AI deployment, advocating for safeguards, and ensuring marginalized communities are not left out of digital transformation processes.

From an academic perspective, Ahmed Osman Ali highlighted the role of universities in shaping Somalia's AI future. He emphasized curriculum development, research capacity, and partnerships between academia and government. He noted that universities can act as neutral spaces for experimentation, critical inquiry, and evidence-based policy advice, helping bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Hasina Goosaar contributed a private sector and innovation viewpoint, discussing how startups and technology entrepreneurs can support

responsible AI development. She emphasized the importance of creating an enabling environment for innovation through access to data, funding, and skills while also respecting regulatory boundaries. She highlighted the need for women to be actively included in AI innovation ecosystems, not only as users but as designers and leaders.

The session reinforced that Somalia's digital future will not be defined by technology alone, but by the choices made around governance, inclusion, and accountability. AI was presented as a powerful tool with transformative potential, but only if guided by clear policies, strong institutions, and sustained multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Expert Presentation: Digital Diplomacy and Somalia's Global Standing

This presentation unpacked digital diplomacy as a strategic tool for reshaping Somalia's international presence, influence, and engagement. The discussion positioned digital platforms not merely as communication channels, but as instruments of statecraft that can amplify Somalia's voice in global affairs, strengthen bilateral and multilateral relationships, and reconnect the country with its global diaspora.

The presentation reflected on how diplomacy is increasingly conducted in digital spaces through online engagement, strategic messaging, data-driven communication, and real-time public diplomacy. In this context, Somalia's digital presence was discussed as both an opportunity and a responsibility. The conversation highlighted that digital diplomacy allows countries with limited traditional diplomatic reach to participate more actively in global dialogues, provided their messaging is coordinated, credible, and grounded in national priorities.

A key thread in the discussion was narrative ownership. The presentation addressed how Somalia has often been represented internationally through externally constructed narratives focused on conflict and fragility. Digital diplomacy was presented as a means to shift this dynamic, enabling Somalia to project a more nuanced narrative that reflects progress, resilience, cultural richness, and political agency.

This, it was noted, requires deliberate investment in digital communication strategies and institutional capacity.



The presentation was delivered by Ambassador Yusuf Garaad, Presidential Special Envoy to the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and the Horn of Africa. Drawing on extensive diplomatic experience, Ambassador Garaad framed digital diplomacy as an extension of traditional foreign policy rather than a replacement for it.

He spoke about the evolving nature of diplomatic engagement, noting that embassies, ministries, and envoys now operate in an environment where public perception is shaped instantly and globally. He emphasized that Somalia must engage consistently in these spaces to articulate its positions on regional security, maritime governance, climate challenges, and development priorities.

Ambassador Garaad highlighted the role of youth and diaspora engagement as a cornerstone of digital diplomacy. He described how Somali communities serve as informal ambassadors, influencing public opinion, investment flows, and political relationships. Digital tools, he argued, offer structured ways to engage the youth in policy dialogue, cultural promotion, and national development initiatives. Ambassador Garaad emphasized the need for Somalis to actively participate in digital conversations to advance dialogue, building partnerships, and responding swiftly to misinformation or misrepresentation.

The presentation concluded by stressing that digital diplomacy is not optional in today's global environment. For Somalia, it represents a pathway to greater visibility, influence, and agency in international affairs. However, realizing this potential requires sustained investment in skills, institutional frameworks, and strategic communication ensuring that Somalia's digital presence reflects its aspirations, values, and evolving role on the global stage.

8. Policy Actions and Recommendations

The discussions and deliberations at SIGF 2025 pointed to a shared understanding that Somalia's digital transformation has reached a stage where intentional policy action is required to consolidate gains, address risks, and ensure that digital development serves the public interest.

The following policy actions and recommendations reflect the collective insights emerging from the forum:

- Institutionalize inclusive, multi-stakeholder consultation mechanisms that bring together government institutions, regulators, the private sector, civil society, academia, youth, media, and the technical community as a routine part of digital policy development and review.
- Ensure that outcomes and recommendations from the Somalia Internet Governance Forum are formally documented, tracked, and reflected in national digital strategies, regulatory reforms, and implementation plans.
- Accelerate the development, adoption, and enforcement of legal and regulatory frameworks related to data protection, cybersecurity, online safety, and consumer rights, in line with constitutional principles and international human rights standards.
- Strengthen the technical, legal, and institutional capacity of regulatory authorities, law enforcement bodies, and the judiciary to effectively interpret and enforce digital laws and respond to emerging technologies.
- Implement the National Artificial Intelligence Strategy (2025–2030) through phased and context-sensitive approaches that reflect Somalia's institutional readiness, infrastructure, and development priorities.
- Embed ethical principles, transparency, and human oversight into the design, deployment, and use of AI systems, especially those applied in public administration and service delivery.
- Promote the meaningful inclusion of women, youth, and marginalized communities in digital policy processes, technology development, and innovation ecosystems.
- Support the creation, preservation, and visibility of Somali language digital content, datasets, and knowledge resources, including those relevant to artificial intelligence and emerging technologies.
- Encourage collaboration between government institutions, academic institutions, technology developers, and content creators to strengthen Somali cultural and linguistic representation online.
- Integrate digital literacy, critical media literacy, and Somali-language digital skills into formal and informal education systems to empower citizens to participate as informed digital citizens.
- Expand and sustain initiatives such as the Somali School of Internet Governance to build long term national capacity for informed engagement in the internet.
- Encourage private-sector investment aligned with national digital priorities, consumer protection standards, and inclusive development goals.
- Strengthen Somalia's participation in regional and global digital policy platforms, including the Africa Internet Governance Forum and the Global IGF, to ensure Somali perspectives are reflected in international discussions.

9. Closing Remarks and Way Forward

The closing session of SIGF 2025 brought together reflections from key stakeholders across regulation, civil society, government, and justice institutions. The remarks served both as a synthesis of the two-day discussions and a forward-looking articulation of Somalia's digital governance priorities.

Communiqué of the Event

Liban Abdulkadir, ICT Regulatory Expert at the National Communications Authority (NCA) and SIGF Coordinator, delivered the official communiqué of SIGF 2025. His remarks consolidated the central themes that had emerged throughout the forum, including trust, inclusion, rights based governance, cultural representation, and emerging technologies.



Liban outlined how the discussions reflected a growing national consensus on the need for coordinated, multi-stakeholder approaches to internet governance. He noted that participants repeatedly highlighted gaps in policy implementation, capacity, and public awareness, while also acknowledging the progress made in regulation, connectivity, and stakeholder engagement. The communiqué emphasized collective responsibility, calling on regulators, policymakers, private-sector actors, civil society, academia, and the technical community to move beyond dialogue and undertake practical, measurable actions. He also reaffirmed SIGF's role as a sustained national process rather than a one-off event, stressing that the outcomes of SIGF 2025 would inform Somalia's engagement at regional and global IGF platforms, as well as ongoing national policy discussions.

Civil Society Reflections



Mohamed Aded Ali, Director of Somali Civil Society (SONSA), spoke on behalf of civil society organizations, underscoring the importance of meaningful participation in digital policymaking. He reflected on the forum as a space where civil society voices were not only present but actively shaping conversations around rights, accountability, and inclusion. He highlighted civil society's responsibility to continue engaging with communities, documenting lived digital experiences, and advocating for policies that protect vulnerable groups. He also called for stronger institutional mechanisms to ensure that civil society input is reflected in national strategies, particularly regarding digital rights, access, and online safety.

Government Perspective on Digital Transformation



Mahdi Sheikh Abdullahi, Director General at the Ministry of Communications and Technology (MOCT), reflected on the discussions from a government implementation perspective. He acknowledged the complexity of governing a rapidly evolving digital ecosystem, particularly when technology adoption often outpaces policy and institutional readiness. He reiterated MOCT's commitment to collaboration and stakeholder engagement in shaping Somalia's digital future. He emphasized that forums such as SIGF provide valuable insights that help government institutions align policies with public needs, technical realities, and global standards. He also noted the importance of investing in institutional capacity and human capital to ensure that digital transformation delivers tangible benefits for citizens.

Rule of Law and Rights-Based Governance

The forum concluded with remarks from H.E. Hassan Moalim Mahmoud, Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs of the Federal Republic of Somalia. His address placed digital governance firmly within the broader framework of justice, constitutionalism, and the rule of law.



The Minister emphasized that as Somalia's digital ecosystem expands, legal frameworks must evolve to protect rights, ensure accountability, and uphold public trust. He spoke about the importance of aligning digital policies with constitutional principles, particularly in areas such as data protection, access to information, and due process in digital spaces. He underscored that justice institutions have a critical role to play in safeguarding citizens' rights online, just as they do offline.

Networking and Informal Engagement

The closing session was followed by a networking reception, official group photographs, and media interviews with speakers and participants. These moments provided space for informal exchange, partnership building, and reflection beyond the formal sessions. Participants engaged in conversations on future collaborations, research initiatives, and capacity-building opportunities, reinforcing SIGF's role as both a policy platform and a community of practice.

SIGF 2025 concluded with a shared sense of responsibility and momentum, recognizing that shaping Somalia's digital future requires sustained dialogue, coordinated action, and continued investment in inclusive, secure, and people-centered internet governance.



10. Annex A: SIGF 2025 Agenda

11. Annex B: Communiqué of the Event



