Delivered by: ICANN’s Bob Ochieng
Manager, Stakeholder Engagement – Africa.

The Internet Governance Eco-System can be compared a little bit to the rainforest. In the rainforest an uncountable number of diverse plants and animals live together in a very complex system. In the "virtual rainforest" we have also an endless and growing diversity of networks, services, applications, regimes and other properties that co-exist in a mutual interdependent mechanism of communication, coordination and collaboration.

One thing that can be learnt is that the rainforest as a whole is not manageable. It can be neither governed nor controlled, but it can be damaged and destroyed. In the Internet Governance Eco-System many players with very different legal status operate on many different layers, on local, national, regional and international levels, driven by technical innovation, user needs, market opportunities and political interests.

As a result we see a very dynamic process where — from a political-legal perspective — a broad variety of different regulatory, co-regulatory or self-regulatory regimes emerge, co-exist and complement or conflict each other. The system as a whole is decentralized, diversified and has no central authority. However, within the various subsystems there is an incredible broad variety of different sub-mechanisms which range from hierarchical structures under single or inter-governmental control to non-hierarchical networks based on self-regulatory mechanisms by non-governmental groups with a wide range of co-regulatory arrangements in between where affected and concerned stakeholders from governments, private sector, civil society and technical community are working hand in hand.

There is no "one size fits all" solution. The specific form of each sub-system has to be designed according to the very specific needs and nature of the individual issue. In such a mechanism, traditional national legislation and intergovernmental agreements continue to play a role but have to be embedded into the broader multistakeholder environment while new emerging mechanisms have to take note and recognize existing frameworks and regulations on various levels. One of the key central players in the Internet governance space is the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers - ICANN.

For more about how the Internet works including an update on the current status of the various global and regional processes affecting the Internet, please come listen to ICANN’s regional stakeholder manager for Africa – Mr. Bob Ochieng as he shares his perspectives on the role of the academia in Internet policy development and the general Internet Ecosystem.

**What Does ICANN (ww.icann.org) Do?**

To reach another person on the Internet you have to type an address into your computer -- a name or a number. That address must be unique so computers know where to find each other. ICANN coordinates these unique identifiers across the world. Without that coordination, we wouldn't have one global Internet.

In more technical terms, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) coordinates the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) functions, which are key technical services critical to the continued operations of the Internet's underlying address book, the Domain Name System (DNS).