Dominican Republic Becomes First Latin American Country to Join Alliance For Affordable Internet

Santo Domingo, 22 September 2014. The Dominican Republic has today become the first Latin American country to join the Alliance For Affordable Internet (A4AI).

A4AI and the Dominican Telecommunication Institute (INDOTEL) have signed a memorandum of understanding, and will now work collaboratively to build a strong and diverse coalition of local stakeholders in the public, private and civil society sectors. This coalition will identify key impediments in public and regulatory policies that keep access prices high in the country - and then collaborate to create ICT policies and regulations designed to slash the cost of Internet access. To achieve this, A4AI will leverage the extensive international experience of its members, support and guide this process, and inform key decisions with strong and dynamic original research

Launched less than a year ago, A4AI is the world's broadest technology sector coalition. The Alliance is already working in Ghana, Mozambique and Nigeria, and has more than 60 members from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors, including the Internet Society, DIRSI, Google, Omidyar Network, UK DFID, US AID and the World Wide Web Foundation.

In the past decade the Government of the Dominican Republic has successfully implemented several programs to enhance access to and use of the Internet, in both urban and rural areas, but there is still some way to go, as more than 50% of Dominicans do not use the internet. By contrast, in nearby Puerto Rico and Trinidad & Tobago, those figures are 74% and 64% respectively (World Bank 2013). Affordable, high-quality mobile broadband is an effective way to increase penetration rates rapidly, but costs for these services in the Dominican Republic remain high — the average citizen would need to pay up over a quarter of their monthly income for a 500 MB package. In contrast, in El Salvador, citizens pay just 3.4%, whilst Jamaicans pay just under 5%. (Source: ITU)

A4AI will work with many organisations within the Dominican Republic to drive broadband prices down to the UN target of 5% or less of monthly income, thereby allowing millions more Dominicans to come online and access the life changing potential of the Internet.

Speaking at the signing of the MOU, Mr. Gideon Santos, president of the Board of lNDOTEL said:

"Indotel is committed to universal telecommunications/ICT services, especially broadband services across the entire national territory and for all Dominicans, regardless of geographic location, economic status, gender, age and physical ability."

Mr. Santos added:

"We recognize that developments have taken place and that the government and private sector have made efforts to promote policies focused on community and shared access. We just about reached the target established by the World Summit on the Information Society of 50% penetration in developing countries, but that is not enough. We still have another 50% of the population that is not connected; and there is a gap in access by low income households, households led by women, between regions and provinces, between cities and municipal capitals, between rural and urban areas.

"Working with A4AI to reduce prices of broadband in our country is yet another step towards achieving our goal to reduce inequality in access to ICTs in the Dominican Republic."

Sonia Jorge, Executive Director of the Alliance for Affordable Internet added:

"Affordable access to the Internet changes lives. It allows entrepreneurs to start successful businesses, students to access world class educational materials for free, women to have access to information about their rights and governments to deliver better services to their citizens.

Ms Jorge concluded:

"We are confident that policy and regulatory reform can unlock these benefits by driving prices down fast. We also know that successful reforms are shaped by all those they affect. A4AI is here to provide the technical and practical support required to make this a reality, shaped by broad global experience and robust data. Let's get to work!"

ENDS

Notes to Editors

The Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) is a global coalition committed to driving down the cost of internet access in less developed countries.

A4AI focuses on creating the conditions for open, efficient and competitive broadband markets via policy and regulatory reform. Through a combination of advocacy, research and knowledge-sharing, the Alliance aims to facilitate the achievement of the UN Broadband Commission target of entry-level broadband services priced at less than 5% of average monthly income. In doing so, A4AI will help to connect the two-thirds of people in developing countries who cannot access the internet.

A4AI members are drawn from both developed and less developed countries and include public, private and not-for-profit organizations. The World Wide Web Foundation, founded by Web inventor Sir Tim Berners-Lee, initiated the Alliance. Global sponsors are Google, Omidyar Network, USAID and the UK DFID and the Alliance has more than 60 members.

For more, please visit: www.a4ai.org.