

## Lightening Talk Proposal TNC17

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**Title: NRENs and RRENs as Barometer of Market Competitiveness**

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### **Abstract:**

An NREN represents a knowledgeable purchaser of telecommunications, mainly within its national boundaries. Regional network procurers such as GÉANT or the regional R&E networks in Africa, UbuntuNet Alliance and WACREN are knowledgeable procurers in the telecommunications markets of their regions and the global market. NRENs and RRENs, typically, do so from the position of advanced requirements and as demanding users of service. As such an NREN is in a strong position to act as a barometer for the competitiveness of the relevant telecommunications market.

Like Europe pre-liberalisation in 1997, the West and Central African telecommunications market suffers from lack of deregulation and subsequent very high pricing.

West and Central Africa is one of the regions in the world with the lowest rate of Internet penetration. This is not related to lack of infrastructure – various cable systems are available on the West coast of Africa. As a knowledgeable purchaser of telecommunications GÉANT together with WACREN have the possibility but also the duty to advise national governments in the West and Central African region, but also regional bodies such as ECOWAS, international bodies such as the African Union Commission, the World Bank and the United Nations about the need to reduce pricing and thus increase the overall connectivity and Internet penetration rate in the West and Central African region. Results received through the AfricaConnect procurements in West and Central Africa hold up the mirror to these bodies, showing with clear numbers how the development of an entire region is held up by unaffordable pricing – and how the digital divide is growing on a daily basis through continuous price reductions in the rest of the world vs unaffordable pricing in the West and Central African region.

This is a case in which the NREN and RRENs play a significant role: the NRENs and regional R&E networking bodies do not only strive towards better R&E networking connectivity, but work towards the overall improvement of Internet penetration through access and affordable pricing – through advocacy based on facts with government, international organisations and regulatory bodies.

The lightening talk will give examples of the role NRENs can play in the developing world and will be based on examples from LA, as well as the West and Central Africa.