COMTELCA

A4AI ALLIANCE FOR AFFORDABLE INTERNET

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COMTELCA Prioritises Affordable Internet Access in Central America

The Regional Telecommunications Commission of Central America (COMTELCA) has become the newest member of the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) — an international coalition of organisations working to reduce internet costs and enable increased broadband access around the world. Through an official Memorandum of Understanding, signed today at the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, COMTELCA and the World Wide Web Foundation, which hosts the A4AI secretariat, agree to work together to develop and implement the policies and regulatory frameworks needed to expand access to affordable internet throughout the region.

A4AI is the world's broadest technology sector coalition, with 80 members from across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors, including Google, the US Agency for International Development, and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Through research, global advocacy, and on-the-ground work with national coalitions in seven member countries (Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Nigeria, Ghana, Mozambique, Myanmar, and Bangladesh), A4AI works to develop and implement the policies and regulatory frameworks needed to reduce the cost to connect.

Across the eight member countries of COMTELCA, the majority of the population (55%) is not online. Affordability remains a significant barrier to increased access in the region, with 1GB of data costing upwards of 4% of GNI per capita — a price that remains out of reach for the millions earning less than the national average income.[1] Reducing the cost to connect and developing the ICT sector across Central America is critical to enable wider opportunities for connectivity, and to underpin socio-economic growth in the region. COMTELCA and A4AI will collaborate on research, capacity building, and policymaking efforts to reduce prices for telecommunications service providers and consumers alike, and realise the goal of affordable internet access for all.

Commenting on its new membership in the Alliance, Allan Ruiz, Executive Secretary of COMTELCA, said:

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[1] 1GB of prepaid mobile data costs, on average, 4.47% of GNI per capita across 6 of the COMTELCA countries: Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, and Mexico.
http://a4ai.org/mobile-broadband-pricing-data/

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"At COMTELCA, we are committed to integrating ICT into national policies amongst our member countries, as well as to promoting a more robust ICT sector across Latin America. In order to achieve this, we must address one of the greatest barriers that the global community faces when it comes to access: affordability. Although the cost to connect in Latin America can be relatively affordable, when compared with other regions throughout the world, we still have a long way to go to ensure that all levels of income earners can afford a basic connection. By partnering with A4AI, we hope to see the cost to connect reduced to an affordable '1 for 2' level — 1GB for 2% or less of average income — and to make universal access a reality for all in the member countries of COMTELCA."

A4AI Executive Director Sonia Jorge added:

"Our new partnership with COMTELCA will help us to achieve our mission of affordable universal access by creating a unique opportunity to scale our successes in the Central American region, where the challenges brought on by great income inequality, language and socio-cultural barriers, among others, will determine citizens' ability to fully benefit from internet access. We look forward to further progressing policy change to bring about digital equality across Latin America."

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Notes to editors:

1. About the Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI): The Alliance for Affordable Internet (A4AI) is the world's broadest technology sector coalition working to drive down the cost of Internet access in less developed countries. Comprising over 80 member organisations from across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors in both developed and developing nations. The World Wide Web Foundation, founded by Web inventor Sir Tim Berners-Lee, initiated the Alliance in 2013. A4AI is currently working in seven countries — Nigeria, Ghana, Mozambique, Myanmar, Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Bangladesh — to drive down the cost of broadband internet through locally driven policy and regulatory change. A4AI global sponsors include Google and USAID. For more, please visit: www.a4ai.org.

2. Contact: Lauran Potter, Communications Manager, Alliance for Affordable Internet / World Wide Web Foundation, Washington, DC, USA / lauran.potter@webfoundation.org