

The following text is excerpted from an ongoing discussion on the IGF Advisory Group mailing list thread on its own future. The only changes made relate to an effort to anonymize the comments in respect of the Chatham House rule. The discussion took place between 11-17 March, 2008.

(Markus Kummer)

Dear colleagues,

We are planning to post a Web-based form, as last year, to facilitate the selection procedure of workshop. Please find attached the template for submitting proposals. It is the same as last year, with two exceptions:

(a) we re-ordered the questions and put the names of the panellists in second position, taking account a suggestion made last year.

(b) we added a question relating to different perspectives with regard to the issue under discussion, taking up a suggestion made by several colleagues at the last MAG meeting.

Please let us know should you have any suggestions for further improvements. We would like to post the form early next week.

Best regards

Markus

(See attached file: WorkshopTemplate.doc)

(Writer A)

Dear Markus,

About the questions -- perhaps question 2 (names of people invited) and question 7 (main actors and have you approached them) could be combined?

Question 2 might read:

"Provide the Names and Affiliations of the panellists you are planning to invite: describe the main actors in the field and whether you have you approached them about their willingness to

participate in proposed workshop?"

One of the civil society caucus' contributions to the February consultation suggested the multi-stakeholder principle in organizing workshops should be coupled with measures to ensure a diversity of views are represented. i.e. emphasize diversity of opinion in the workshop rather than the more formulaic ticking off of stakeholders willing to have their name associated with it (a panel of different stakeholders may still present a narrow range of views on a particular subject.) Adding an introductory paragraph (more below) to explain the diversity of opinion angle would be helpful.

Question 6, referring to the Tunis Agenda and mandate. I think this is fine, but we have also been stressing that all discussions in the IGF should be tied to notions of Internet governance (I think we've allowed workshops in particular to move into general themes of information society and IT for development.) Question 6 might read:

"Please explain how the workshop will address issues relating to Internet governance and describe how the workshop conforms with the Tunis Agenda in terms of substance and the mandate of the IGF."

Add a short introductory paragraph. A preamble explaining that workshops should be organized and supported by a number of different stakeholders and are expected to include a diversity of views representing the main actors in the field. That workshops should be held on issues of Internet governance and the organizers should be able to both identify those Internet governance and explain why their proposal is relevant to the mandate of the IGF. Organizers should expect to be asked to merge their proposals with other like proposals, or to work with the organizers of proposals on related themes so that workshops are complementary and not overlapping. All workshop organizers must submit a report of their completed event. I think it would be helpful to

have a reminder of this kind at the top of the form.

Hope this helps,

(Writer A)

Dear Markus,

Is there a deadline for stakeholders/interested parties to submit names for the MAG? Do you intend to put out a call for names, and explain what is expected to happen? We spoke about a "job description" (what a MAG member might be expected to do) etc.

Taking some text from the summary of the MAG meeting last month, key points seem to be about:

"Rotating up to 1/3 of the members within each stakeholder group each year".

Size "approximately 40".

That "50% of its members proposed by governments and 50% by other stakeholder groups, would be maintained. As governments had their own selection mechanisms through their regional groupings, they would be asked to forward their proposals to the Secretariat." (i.e. any call for names would be for "other" stakeholders.)

"approximately 2/3 of the members of the current group be carried over into the new group." (one third rotation each year. As one third of 20 is about 7, it seems we are looking for just 6, 7 or 8 new names from the public call? If the MAG remains at 45 then 8 names.)

"generally agreed that there was room for improvement with regard to the gender balance as well as representation of developing countries."

Would be helpful to know exactly what to tell the various civil society groups about the process and how to proceed.

And I should say again, civil society as it has been participating since WSIS feels under represented in the current MAG. I understand recent comments on the list about people being involved in different groups: I've been an ISOC member since 1992 (which may be longer than all except George), involved in the pre-ICANN process, participated in various ICANN groups and committees, but representation is very much about perception. And civil society groups that have been active in this process since WSIS feel under represented in the MAG.

(Writer B)

I would also like to express concern about the under-representation of public interest groups (civil society) in the composition of the MAG and hope we can work towards a more equitable distribution between stakeholders in the MAG.

I believe that a 50% make-up of government representation within the MAG is not the balance to strike for IGF. The lack of equality among stakeholders has been problematic until now and will continue to provide fuel to criticism about IGF going forward.

I propose a MAG balance of: 30% govt / 30% civil society / 30% business / 10% other

The other 10% could be those needed from the academic or technical communities for example.

Whatever we ultimately decide, we need more equality among stake-holders.

(Writer C)

I raised the same concern about the percentages in the meeting in Geneva. That is the reason because the minutes of the meeting say that the "MAG was told" that the group would be formed maintaining those percentages.

So, I think that the issue is closed for us since it is not matter of discussion for us.

(Writer D)

If MAG members selections criteria based on the basis of different stakeholders group in that case i also agree Writer B proposal 30% govt / 30% civil society / 30% business / 10% others.

I think for better representation we also need to include MAG members on the basis of Geographical Distribution (My main concern is to include more representative from Africa, South America & Asia).

(Markus Kummer)

Dear Writer A,

Right now the matter is not in our hands - please be patient. I hope to get news soon from New York. However, it is never too early to start the process.

Best regards

(Writer E)

Writer C is correct in stating we will have a hard time in trying to change this, and probably this will stay as such at least for IGF III.

But I do not agree we cannot continue discussing it and trying to change it. I understand the MAG is an advisory group to the SG regarding the organization of each IGF, that the SG could (formally) kick all of us out of it and do whatever he pleases etc (let us remind ourselves that what we proposed in the last MAG meeting are just recommendations, not decisions...), but we cannot just say "yes" when any WSIS-related process violates a basic tenet of Tunis -- all processes should be carried out on a multistakeholder basis with balanced representation.

(Writer F)

I agree with Writer E. While we may have to live with 50% government-appointed participation this year, those of us who feel strongly that this is an over-representation should not feel shy about expressing this.

Several of us have done so earlier in suggesting a 25-25-25-25 split, while others have suggested different algorithms. the common factor is a reduction in government-appointed participation as they are only one of several stakeholder groups involved in the process.

(Writer C)

Writer E,

I obviously agree with you. My point was that at the last meeting there was not too much complaint and we accepted the text as it is now. "the MAG was told....."
I agree that we can continue raising this concern as I did in Geneva.

(Writer G)

Writer F,

to this I would add that the asymmetry is not only in numbers.

Rarely if ever does a government representative from anywhere take part in online discussions of this group.

Double and triple representation arises when intergovernmental organizations take part in the processes of the group, as they again are expected to carry positions that have been voted by their members.

And we have at least one instance in which abuse of the co-chair position, as well as a generous serving of speaking slots in the Forum session, has compounded the asymmetry to an outrageous extreme.

There is an honorable way for some governments to proceed which is to designate civil-society, business and technical people for their slots in the Advisory Group and leaving them in freedom to act according to reason and conscience (all within the broader definitions they may have of their national interest.)

Because a well-functioning, stable, open, free, global, one Internet should be seen as part of every country's own national interest. Now of course no-one who thinks differently will say so openly and by email in this list, right?

(Writer H)

I support Writer A's suggestions on question 2, and question 6, and the idea of having a 'preamble' to explain the process to potential organizers. Specifically 2)"Provide the Names and Affiliations of the panellists you are planning to invite: describe the main actors in the field and whether you have you approached them about their willingness to participate in proposed workshop?"

6)"Please explain how the workshop will address issues relating to

Internet governance and describe how the workshop conforms with the Tunis Agenda in terms of substance and the mandate of the IGF."

I have also made a few other suggestions in the attached tracked changes document.

Thank you and the IGF secretariat team for working on this proposal form, and for hopefully posting it early next week.

(Writer F)

Writer G,

You are absolutely correct. I have often wondered why most of the government-appointed representatives do not contribute to this list? Is there nothing to discuss? Are positions established and not subject to discussion or modification? That is NOT a sign of a healthy process.

Perhaps government-appointed representatives could comment on whether this list is of use to them, and if not, why not.

I resonate to Writer I's remarks (and he IS a contributor, an exception to the rule):

- >Who are the most active participants in the MAG, in face to face or by email?
- >
- >Who have been able to influence the direction of the process?
- >
- >I may be wrong, but my perception and answers to
- >both questions do not lie with Governments.
- >
- >And again, if we are acting in individual
- >capacities, there are two additional points.
- >What is most important is who you are and not
- >where you come from and stakeholder
- >representation is almost irrelevant.

Several of us made this point in a submission just before the end of the year - it is who we are and what communities we are connected to that

is more important for the good of the Internet than the tribal labels that we as individuals are associated with.

(Writer E)

I was surprised by this lack of reaction in the last meeting -- but as "special advisor" to a temp co-chair I felt I had already overstepped my role and did not want to go further. But the "official" MAG members keeping mostly silent on this was really a surprise to me.

(Writer C)

Dear colleagues:

I am in the CITELE (www.citel.oas.org) meeting in Washington DC.

Brazilian government has presented here a proposal to be submitted to the World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly. That proposal is attached.

I am sharing this with you since among other things, the proposal talk about the role of ITU in supporting the IGF secretariat.

I don't have an opinion about this, at least by now. This is just for sharing the information.

(Attached file: P1!T-1286_i.doc)

(Writer G)

thanks Writer A and Writer H for these insightful edits. They go far beyond form.

I think that based on past experience we also need to ask workshop organizers to clarify one aspect of the workshops. Are they meant for instructional-type purposes (introduction to a subject, update to state-of-the-art knowledge, update the parameters of present-day debate as

a preparation for a main session, share best current practice) or are they meant as mini-debates, for subjects that the organizers could not make into plenaries for reasons like insufficient interest or lower priority?

I also notice that a number of workshops have been more like advocacy rallies but that is harder to distinguish, and to have clear reasons to prioritize for or against. What do other members think?

(Writer J)

I heartily support the suggestions of Writers G, H and A (having completed the "A" group, we now move to the "B"s). Incorporating these ideas will make the intro to the form a little longer, but shows that we've been learning from two years experience. That said I don't have a problem with the mini-debates. There has to be a place those can take place, and the IGF seems able to handle them reasonably well without being overtaken or having its overall atmosphere tainted. Assuming the size remains sufficiently large to continue on this path I think it's constructive.

(Writer G)

Writer J, (distro list pared),

I don't have a deep opposition in principle to mini-debates; what I think we all could agree upon is that there is clarity to be gained in distinguishing between what most people understand as a workshop - generally an instructional activity - and both mini-debates and rallies.

Thanks for your clear position! Let's hear it from other B's and certainly from the yet missing A's, Q's, the whole set.

(Writer K)

As a "C" I hope I'm not being too hasty in adding my support to the suggestions made by the "A"s.

(Markus Kummer)

Dear colleagues,

As in the previous two years, we have prepared a draft programme paper, conceived as a rolling document, to provide an input into the next round of consultations. Please find attached a first draft which takes into account last month's discussions.

Let us know should you have any comments or suggestions for improving the paper.

Best regards
Markus

(Attached file: DraftProgramme.Hyderabad-draft1.doc)

(Writer I)

Although I hesitate to participate in this thread of discussion because I think it does not advance the substantive work, let me put on the table some questions that could offer some interesting answers:

Who are the most active participants in the MAG, in face to face or by email ?

Who have been able to influence the direction of the process ?

I may be wrong, but my perception and answers to both questions do not lie with Governments.

And again, if we are acting in individual capacities, there are two additional points. What is most important is who you are and not where you come from and stakeholder representation is almost irrelevant.

For me, this topic make a lot of noise without contributing in the same proportion and making us find differences among us instead of commonalities.

Finally, everybody can everytime and everywhere express its disagreement with the 50%, 50% proportion although following the discussions in history about this matter, I think it wont be changed, if at all, before 2011.

(Writer L)

I have been reading, listening and thinking about this issue of some proposing that Government representation should be reduced for quite some time. If you all recall the genesis of the formation of the IGF at the Tunis WSIS summit, this will give you a better understanding on the main issues meant for discussion during the IGF: Public Policy issues as regards the Internet. This area is core to the Governments. I also recall the IGF

secretariat clarifying to us during the last face to face meeting that the Secretary General, after studying the weighty issues leading to formation of IGF, decided on the 50% Government representation.

In view of the above, I think we need to focus on the actual work of the Advisory group, rather than dwelling so much on percentages, and particularly on Governments.

I also need to introduce an issue here which appears not to be getting good attention: How to facilitate and enhance and indeed increase representation of developing countries in both advisory Group and the IGF meetings, particularly funding their attendance (travel, etc.). I think this should be discussed once and for all.

(Writer M)

- > I heartily support the suggestions of Writers G, H and A
- > (having completed the "A" group, we now move to the "B"s).

I directly jump ahead and add a "P".

Writer M -- think this is good as well

(Writer N)

Dear colleagues,

I agree with the changes suggested to the form.

Let me share with you my experience, as I was kindly invited to be panellist in four workshops during the IGF in Río, and also attended some others.

These activities were very dynamic and focused in more specific issues (new gtlds, security, IG and development, IG and public policy)

As there were less attendees than in the main sessions, all ended with a "mini debate" in between panellist or a questions and answers session with panellist and attendees, that made these activities even more interesting.

(Writer O)

Thanks Writer C

this is really helpful and important. What an ITU-I2G could be?

I also want to draw the attention to the ITU World Telecommunicaiton Policy Forum, scheduled now for March 27 - 29, 2009 in Geneva. Another IGF?

http://www.itu.int/osg/csd/wtpf/wtpf2009/documents/dm_1003-wtpf-e.pdf

Did the 1st meeting of the "Group of Experts" (scheduled for spring 2008) already take place and is there a report available?

(Writer P)

Regarding the ITU WTPF, no, the first meeting of the group of experts has not yet taken place, and all available reports are posted on the web site referenced below.