

What

The Dynamic Coalition on Open Standards (DCOS) was created at the Athens Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in November 2006. Our mission is to provide government policy makers and other stakeholders with useful tools to make informed decisions to preserve the current open architecture of the Internet and the World Wide Web, which together provide a knowledge ecosystems that has profoundly shaped the multiplier effect of global public goods and improved economic and social welfare.

Why

IT standards, although not created by legislatures, states or courts, create regulatory structures that transcend international boundaries, affect numerous public policy issues and impact developing countries and many stakeholders who don't have an equal voice in their creation, management or adoption. There are significant problems in our global IT standardization ecosystem. In many regards, ICT standards are being privatized, and there has been little public debate on this development. Ultimately, this hurts consumer choice, equitable access, competition and innovation. One point of evidence to the growing problems are the requests by the People's Republic of China to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Technical Barriers to Trade committee and the Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation for these groups to review the issue of intellectual property licensing in international IT standards. Another point of evidence are the series of international policy-oriented conferences on the subject, such as a recent Standards Edge conference at Georgetown University (U.S.) that explored the economic role of IT standards and government policy responses.

Requests to the IGF Consultation

- We believe that these issues are not being adequately addressed and that they are outside the scope of any existing body. Thus, we believe that they firmly fit within the mandate of the IGF, and we continue to ask that the IGF work with the appropriate groups, including consumer groups and civil society, governments, the private sector, standards organizations, and intergovernmental organizations, to ensure that the global ICT standards ecosystem regains its health and its standards remain inclusive, non-discriminatory and supportive of interoperability. See our initial statement (link to "Open ICT Standards Statement" from the Athens meeting on new web site) for further elucidation of what supporting actions we feel are appropriate for IGF.
- We also believe that a continued thematic focus on "openness" and "access" is merited for IGF Rio.
- We request that a DCOS representative speak as part of the general plenary session
- We would also like to host a breakout session to update attendees on our work and widen DCOS participation We look forward to a timely publication of the IGF Rio agenda and meeting details
- Per the synthesis paper from the last IGF Consultation, we believe that "the exclusive use of proprietary formats in documents, the Internet café, and Web casts[are].... inconsistent with WSIS principles." We urge use of truly open standards – those that are supported by a robust array of competing applications, including open source-based applications – throughout the IGF meeting.

Update on DCOS Activities

In order to help IGF in this cause and in preparation for the Rio IGF, DCOS will hold its first formal meeting on July 9th in Geneva, Switzerland. This meeting will be devoted to reviewing the team's progress, including key principles, current policy responses to competition requirements & IT standards in ICT, and an outline of best practices (how countries have implemented these principles) to improve competition and lower trade barriers in IT. Part of DCOS' goals include the preparation of two

documents ready for distribution in Rio: 1) a paper on principles of openness in IT standards and 2) a paper on best practices/implementation of open IT standards.

On July 10th, the DCOS Steering Committee will host a briefing open to governments, press and other interested parties.

We have also created a new website (<http://igf-dcos.org>) that details our mission and provides updates on our work on open standards. On February 4, 2007, some members of the DCOS met informally at Yale Law School in the U.S. to conduct a stock-taking of activities on the tail end of the Yale Information Society Project's (Yale ISP) Open Standards International Symposium (<http://fromgeneva.blogspot.com/2007/02/icy-winds-and-open-standards-tempest.html>). At this meeting, DCOS members committed to holding a session at the Rio IGF that would present current best practices in government procurement policies that support full competition in IT and a paper articulating our platform's position on principles of open standards.

Summary

The members of DCOS are grateful to the IGF Secretariat, Advisory Board and all IGF supporters for their thoughtful attention to the pressing issues of Internet governance, and we look forward to a productive meeting in Brazil this November.