

**Statement by the Czech Presidency
of the European Union
IGF Open Consultations
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of the European Union

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It is important to recognise that the Internet Governance Forum is a unique platform for non binding multi-stakeholder dialogue on Internet Governance at global level. It started off as an unprecedented experiment and it is a measure of its success that it continues to evolve. After three meetings in different parts of the world there are already certain characteristics that can be identified.

Continuously high attendances at IGF meetings demonstrate that this forum continues to be perceived as useful. It is indeed the only forum that allows a gathering of representatives from all geographic regions across all stakeholder groups to discuss all aspects of Internet Governance. While there is room for improvement towards, for instance, more visibility of the outcomes of the IGFs and more outreach regarding participation, it should be stressed that the IGF is open to all stakeholders for participation on equal footing and we believe that this is another very important aspect that should be maintained.

The choice of themes has also proven to attract the attention of many participants which demonstrates that the issues addressed were relevant to stakeholders. At the same time the IGF has provided a space to address also controversial issues and have discussions on future developments.

Another characteristic of the IGF that is welcome and that has crystallised during the first three meetings is its impact on developments outside the IGF meetings. The IGF has triggered follow-up discussions in the context of dynamic coalitions and has inspired debates at regional and national level. It is important to make this positive impact of the IGF more visible while maintaining the non-binding character of the forum. In fact, the lack of pressure to negotiate binding outcomes contributes to frank and open exchanges.

We further consider the IGF as having a substantive role in broadening the debate on Internet Governance. In addition to encompassing a broad range of issues, the IGF continues to extend the debate also to those whose voices are usually not heard in other Internet Governance platforms. As there is no restriction on participation and involvement, it offers a platform to those who do not have the possibility otherwise to draw attention to their concerns or options for solutions.

The IGF model is deeply rooted in the network society paradigm, triggered by the Internet itself and it is based on its societal values of freedom and openness. We would therefore join in with those who see the IGF as complementing the existing structures dealing with the Internet Governance issues. It fulfils in its uniqueness an important function for all Internet Governance stakeholders.

It is for all those reasons that the European Union with its 27 Member States considers that the IGF, set up for an initial period of five years, is an important element of the agreement found at the World Summit on the Information Society, and has become a key framework for a global discussion of Internet related issues. The meetings of the IGF that have taken place up to now show, in our view, the value of having this type of forum. Therefore we would welcome an extension of the IGF beyond the initial timeframe. Also, the European Union with its 27 Member States would propose that the UN General Assembly, when deciding on the Forum's continuation, decides on its continuation for another period of five years. Once the second period of five years is over, another review of the desirability of a further extension should take place in the process of overall review of WSIS outcomes.