



Internet Society comments:

Taking stock of the 2011 Nairobi Meeting of the Internet Governance Forum and Suggestions for the Agenda and Format of the 2012 Meeting

The Internet Society (ISOC) would like to congratulate the IGF Secretariat and the host country for the successful organization of the sixth Internet Governance Forum (IGF), held from 27-30 September 2011 in Nairobi, Kenya.

The record attendance, the highest of all IGF meetings so far, bears witness to the Forum's value to all stakeholders. There was a shared understanding of the importance of holding the sixth meeting of the IGF – the first since the renewal of its mandate – in Kenya. Not only did the meeting allow new perspectives to be shared and new audiences to participate, but it also showcased the considerable strides that have taken place in the Kenyan Internet landscape in recent years and which have made the country a leader in its region. Above all, the Kenyan multistakeholder model provided leadership by example. We would like to thank the Kenyan hosts for their generous hospitality, which helped stimulate discussions.

We welcomed the selection of the United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON) as the venue for the meeting. UNON, as one of the main UN conference sites, provided the IGF with state of the art infrastructure and services. The Internet Society would like to acknowledge the technical know-how that enabled the engineering of a stable IPV6 network at the meeting venue.

Last but not least, we would like to pay tribute to the work of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) in planning the meeting, the workshop organizers and contributors, and all the participants who contributed to making the sixth IGF such an outstanding success.

Format

The 6th edition of the IGF remained faithful to its unique format, well adapted to the Internet model, which relies on processes and organizations that are local, bottom-up and accessible to users around the world. The flexibility that has characterized the IGF's format since its inception has allowed the Forum to evolve and improve from year to year, taking into account the needs of its participants and adapting to new technological and policy environments. This ongoing refinement has been possible thanks to the input of stakeholders through the open consultation process, and through stakeholders' time and effort in

organizing workshops and other events under the guidance of the MAG. This evolutionary, open, transparent, bottom-up, collaborative and distributed model is in line with the guiding principles of the Internet itself and should be continued as an essential feature of the IGF.

Remote participation

The IGF has evolved into a role model for the successful use of remote participation to make its sessions available around the world. The IGF Secretariat and the volunteers helping with remote participation deserve to be commended for their efforts and innovative spirit to make this possible. The use of remote hubs has proved particularly successful in promoting the digital inclusion of stakeholders who were not able to attend the meetings in person. The remote participation tools ensured that external participants could follow and engage in discussions, and also provided a channel for remote panelists' participation. The growth in the number of remote hubs and the increase of remote participants that went with remote hubs is a basis to build on to overcome the challenge and cost of travel to attend meetings.

National and regional IGFs

We were pleased to see the continued growth of national and regional IGFs in 2011. These meetings provide a useful bottom-up interface between local and global Internet issues, allowing for more in-depth discussions around relevant regional challenges. All of these events replicated the multi-stakeholder model of the IGF, adopting inclusive and open multistakeholder dialogues. National and regional IGFs are in line with our vision that the IGF is not only a series of stand-alone events, but rather an ongoing process which builds on an ongoing multistakeholder policy dialogue, both at the local and the global levels. There is a need to enhance the exchange of reports between these two interfaces to continue and grow going forward.

Funding

Building on the profoundly distributed nature of the Internet ecosystem, we strongly support the continuation of multi-stakeholder voluntary funding for the IGF Secretariat, via the trust fund established for that purpose. This model acts as a feedback mechanism, demonstrating that the IGF is of value to its participants. Financial support goes to the IGF Secretariat which is responsible for central operations. The Internet Society continues to support and trust the independent Secretariat based in Geneva, where it is linked to the history of the WSIS and Internet policy networks, and we will significantly expand our contribution to the trust fund this year. We encourage other stakeholders who are concerned by the future of the Internet to expand their contributions to ensure the sustainability of the IGF. In addition, we have also made considerable in-kind contributions through the funding of participants between the ages of 20 and 40 years old as part of the Internet Society's Next Generation Leaders programme.

The Internet Society also pays tribute to all the host countries which have made a major contribution to the success of the IGF by bearing all the local costs of the conference.

Outcomes

The IGF was constituted as a neutral, non-duplicative and non-binding process, and we strongly recommend that the IGF continue operating according to these well-established and functioning parameters. This model gives every stakeholder an equal footing during open discussions, free from the implications that could arise if stakeholders felt the need to defend their positions in a negotiating environment. These parameters continued to prove their value in Nairobi and allowed for open and frank discussions among all stakeholders on new proposals for new institutional arrangements for Internet governance. It is our firm conviction that such open and dynamic debates would not have happened in more rigid and formal settings.

The IGF archives, including real-time transcriptions and audio and video webcasts, are important outcomes of the IGF and provide useful material for furthering the multistakeholder dialogue on Internet governance. We would encourage all stakeholders to make full use of these resources and find solutions for more effective reporting and analysis amongst those who participate in the process.

We would also suggest giving a higher profile to the Chairman's Summary of the annual IGF and urge all stakeholders to use this document in national, regional and international policy development processes. The 2010 Chairman's Summary was made available as an official UN Document to the General Assembly and we hope that this will also be the case for the Chairman's Summary of the Nairobi IGF and all the future annual IGF meetings.

Suggestions for the agenda of the 2012 IGF meetings

The Internet Society is looking forward to contributing to and participating in the next meeting of the IGF in 2012. As already stated at the Nairobi meeting and echoing comments by other stakeholders, we view the Internet as an enabler for a wide range of human rights, such as the right to freedom of expression and opinion and access to information and knowledge as well as the right to association. 2011 highlighted the relevance of the Internet and of social networks in voicing individuals' aspiration for freedom. However, the open, global and accessible Internet, which can be instrumental in fulfilling people's aspirations, cannot be taken for granted. In this context, we suggest that filtering¹ be part of the main agenda of the 2012 IGF. DNS filtering is increasingly used by governments to combat allegedly illegal online activities, and this technical measure raises strong concerns, not only with regard to the underlying Internet architecture, but also with regard to due legal process and human rights, while not solving the problems at their source. This topic has seen increasing attention

¹ ISOC perspective on DNS filtering :
<http://www.internetsociety.org/internet-society-perspectives-domain-name-system-dns-filtering>

in recent months, with the discussions around proposals for protecting online copyright in the United States, the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the Protect IP Act (PIPA)², which have generated strong reactions from the Internet community. In addition, the proposed plurilateral Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA)³ is also the source of concerns for the future of the Internet. The IGF can provide the platform for all stakeholders to share their views on these issues and work together to ensure that the people enjoy the same fundamental rights, whether online or offline.

Conclusion

Since 2006, the IGF has grown and gained maturity to become one of the major annual events related to Internet governance where all stakeholders can meet, learn from each other and discuss Internet related public policy issues in an open and inclusive setting. As we celebrate the success of the IGF meeting in Nairobi, the Internet Society looks forward to the process of planning for a successful event in 2012.

² ISOC perspective on SOPA :
<http://www.forbes.com/sites/ciocentral/2012/01/18/beyond-sopa-why-easy-solutions-dont-stop-net-crime/>

³ ISOC perspective on ACTA :
<http://www.internetsociety.org/internet-society-submission-ustr-consultation-acta>