

IGF Rio Workshop 27

Multi-Stakeholder Policy Development

Lessons from actors engaged in existing institutional processes

**Summary Report on the Workshop held at the Second Internet Governance Forum (IGF),
on Wednesday 14 November 2007, 12.30-14.00**

The IGF is about Internet-related public policy issues but also about the working methods to address them. In a way, its innovative multi-stakeholder process is one of the major outcomes of the IGF. From that perspective, a workshop took place during the second IGF in Rio to focus on the early stages of policy development workflows (particularly agenda-setting, issue-scoping and framing, setting up of working groups and formalization of methods). It gathered 11 panelists with very different experiences with policy development and about 90 attendees, half of whom signed in to be updated on future discussions, which is very encouraging.

In parallel with a more detailed report soon to be posted and circulated, this summary note highlights four key elements that emerged from the sharing of experiences among participants.

1) The multi-stakeholder approach is most appropriate when actors need to address an issue but cannot do it on their own without the cooperation of others. Open and informal agenda-setting should encourage formulating such issues in terms of a common concern or interest. Workshop participants confirmed that bringing the different actors together very early on is a key success factor. This enables them to identify the technical, economic, social and policy dimensions of the issue before even defining common goals or discussing possible solutions.

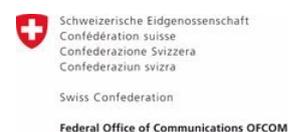
2) Early stage discussions aim at producing a common understanding of a problem, with different actors eventually "sharing the same vernacular", as one participant put it. The outcome is not necessarily an agreement: it can simply map the respective viewpoints and reveal the different mental frameworks or implicit assumptions that people have. The multi-stakeholder approach is not limited to occasional consultations: repeated interaction is needed to progressively build the necessary trust and respect among actors.

3) Relevant stakeholders are different for each issue and participation should not be limited to those who just happen to come to the table: special efforts are needed to identify and engage with actors who have an impact on or are impacted by a given issue. This can include special measures to facilitate their participation and their access to relevant information.

4) Multi-stakeholder processes must be somewhat structured. Documenting their working methods in particular can enhance transparency and accountability and facilitate participation. Various organizations have established charters or process documents for that purpose, sometimes using their own process to elaborate them in a bootstrapping manner. But flexibility is key in that respect. The benefit of having a trusted convenor that can guarantee the respect of the process and the need to pay attention to future implementation and enforcement was also mentioned.

The excellent interaction during the workshop and the interest it raised among panelists and attendees is an encouragement to further develop this dialogue on multi-stakeholder working methods on the basis of this preliminary experience.

This workshop was co-sponsored by :



WHY THIS WORKSHOP ?

Inclusive and participatory processes for the development of Internet-related policies are essential for a multistakeholder governance approach. Defining modalities acceptable by all stakeholders is one of the main challenges in fulfilling the Tunis Agenda. To help improve processes (described differently in various organizations, but commonly called Policy Development Processes or PDP), it is important to draw lessons from existing methods in organizations such as IETF, W3C, ICANN, ITU and others, that have tested various modalities of involving stakeholders in the agenda-setting, drafting and adoption phases of a PDP workflow. A better common understanding of the different phases of policy development will also facilitate interaction between different organizations dealing with common issues. The workshop aimed at sharing experiences among a diversity of actors.

WHAT WAS THE FOCUS ?

The focus of the workshop was to illustrate in a concrete manner the different processes used in various groups to develop positions, recommendations, and other forms of output, in particular the three very early stages of such processes :

- Agenda-setting : how is discussion conducted on an initial topic suggestion ? What iterations are used to find a formulation of the issue that is satisfactory for all participants ? How is the decision to launch a more formal process taken ?
- Issue-scoping and framing : how are the different dimensions of the issue and relevant stakeholders identified ? Are initial issues papers or background documents developed?
- Setting up of working groups : how do different organizations and groups compose them, develop terms of reference, identify convenors, and manage decision-taking and deliverables?

A fourth transversal element was about the corresponding Charters : how are such processes documented ? In what kind of documents are they described ? How are these documents updated ?

WHO WERE THE PANELISTS ?



David APPASAMY
Chief Communications Officer of Sify Limited



Karen BANKS
Network Development Manager for the Association for Progressive Communications (APC)



Renate BLOEM
President of the Conference of NGOs in consultative relationship with the United Nations (CONGO)



Valerie d'COSTA
Program Manager, InfoDev, World Bank



Daniel DARDAILLER
Associate Chair of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)



Peter DENGATE THRUSH
Barrister, Chairman of the Board, ICANN



Avri DORIA
Adjunct professor at Luleå University of Technology (LTU) in Sweden



Augusto Cesar GADELHA Vieira
National Secretary for Information Technology Policy in the Ministry for Science and Technology of Brazil



Arthur K. REILLY
Senior Director, Strategic Technology Policy, Cisco Systems



Mogens SHMIDT
Director of UNESCO's Division of Freedom of Expression, Democracy and Peace



Thomas SCHNEIDER
Coordinator of Information Society issues, Swiss Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM)

MODERATOR



Bertrand DE LA CHAPELLE
Special Envoy for the Information Society in the French Foreign and European Affairs Ministry