



**Information Technology Association of America (ITAA)  
Input on Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Hyderabad, India 2008**

*Comments to basic structure of the Draft IGF India Programme and Schedule in  
advance of May 13, 2008 Public Consultation*

May 2, 2008

ITAA thanks Mr. Markus Kummer, Executive Secretariat, and Mr. Nitan Desai, Chair of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) for the opportunity to provide input and consultation on the topics and structure for the upcoming IGF in Hyderabad, India. Our comments follow the basic structure of the Draft IGF India Programme and Schedule. We also take this opportunity to recognize the work of the Executive Secretariat, the Chair, and the Government of India for their efforts to ensure a well-attended and successful IGF 2008.

**Basic Structure of the Hyderabad Meeting**

ITAA welcomes the proposed structural approach intended to build on the Athens and Rio de Janeiro meetings. ITAA continues to suggest that emphasis should be given to including the perspectives and approaches that, in particular, address the interests and concerns of developing countries, while ensuring that the interests of all stakeholders are taken into account.

ITAA supports the efforts to increase the interaction and engagement of all participants in the main sessions. ITAA believes that the main sessions provide a critical contribution to enhancing the shared understanding of all participants, and supports the commitment to minimize conflicts between main sessions and workshops, taking into account the importance of still providing sufficient workshop and forum opportunities to meet the interests and needs of attending participants. ITAA also supports the importance of requiring accurate written reports on the workshops/forums which capture the diversity of views expressed, and suggests that a 'framework' be provided as guidance. ITAA notes that the summary of the IGF itself, prepared by the Executive Secretariat, has provided an essential contribution and ITAA supports its continuance. ITAA notes that the addition of workshop and forum reports to the meeting report will be an additional resource for interested stakeholders in understanding the work at the IGF itself.

ITAA agrees that time for 'networking' should be built into the formal agenda, such as providing a designated lunch time during which no formal meetings are scheduled. Furthermore, ITAA applauds the continued use of real time transcription and webcasting of the main sessions. These tools augment and extend the benefit of the IGF for parties who are not in attendance. The real time transcription provided in the main sessions provides a detailed record that can assist in spreading awareness of discussions that take place in the main sessions.

ITAA recognises the tight deadlines associated with the planning and execution of an event as complex and important as the IGF. We suggest that it would be helpful to finalize the main sessions by mid July 2008, and the remaining program by September 2008. Open Forum sponsors should adhere to an established schedule of providing the names of speakers; format, etc., just as workshop sponsors are required to do. It will be important to maintain a commitment to finalizing the programme so parties can seek approval and plan to attend.

While linkages of some workshops with the main sessions themes is an important element, ITAA suggests that flexibility continues to be needed to allow topics which may become 'emerging issues' for the next IGF to also be proposed for the workshops, consistent with the deadlines. Where there is a linkage with a main session topic, where possible it might be helpful to have the workshops take place before the main session.

ITAA did not find the use of 'respondents' to the panelists in the main sessions especially helpful. It appeared to merely be a way to maintain a large number of approved speakers with seating merely moved to the front rows. Obviously, preserving the multistakeholder nature of the panelists and ensuring the expertise of the panelists are major criterion for the selection of panelists. Furthering audience participation, both for onsite participants and for remote participants, is a challenge and a critical objective, and ITAA applauds the efforts made to explore new approaches to encourage active participation of participants. As the main session and workshops are organized, attention should be paid to allocating enough time for audience participation. The role of moderators of the main sessions should receive careful preparation so that the moderators can ensure effective interaction with the participants in the audience. There may be different formats suitable to the different topics selected for the main sessions, thus the MAG and the Executive Secretariat should not assume a 'one size fits all' approach to formulating the main sessions.

**Main Sessions:** ITAA recognises that main sessions cannot be used to address all issues or answer all questions. The IGF structure includes workshops and Open Forums/Best Practice Forums which are intended to provide more detailed opportunities to discuss issues and topics, present examples of approaches, challenges, solutions, or merely exchange information in more detail than provided in the main sessions. ITAA suggests that the main sessions should be reserved for topics that are suitable to a general session as they will be attended by all IGF attendees. At the same time, main sessions should be focused on a limited number of specific issues and questions, drawing as appropriate on the outcome of relevant workshops, thus providing so-called thematic threads throughout the IGF meeting. To the greatest extent possible, workshops should not be scheduled during the main sessions. We would also encourage that, where possible, main session speakers address best practices.

**Workshops:** ITAA feels that a diverse number of workshops will be helpful to meet the interests and needs of the attendees at the IGF. We recognise the difficult position of the Secretariat in choosing workshop applications from such a wide pool of qualified proposals. Furthermore, we recognise and commend the Secretariat's efforts to merge workshop proposals of similar goals, objects, content and speakers. We encourage the Secretariat to continue this approach, as appropriate, in preparation for Hyderabad.

ITAA suggests that the criteria previously set forth by the Secretariat (geographical diversity and multistakeholder participation) remain key criteria in the selection of workshops. However, ITAA suggests that the process of developing workshops in and of itself is time and resource intensive. Many parties are able to accept invitations to participate, but may have time or resource limitations to devote to organizing a workshop. If sufficient workshop proposals that

fulfill the established guidelines (e.g. deadlines) are received, ITAA suggests that the MAG prioritize the workshop proposals in order to ensure that all proposing groups have at least one workshop included, and then proceed to allocate, where space and time permits, a second workshop to an organizing group.

We also believe it is important to remember that many IGF participants will want to have an active role in participating, not merely listening to other experts. As a result, all workshops and Open Forums/Best Practice Forums should allow sufficient time for audience participation.

**Open Forums:** ITAA supports the continuance of 'Open Forums', to be organized by different groups, including intergovernmental and international organizations. However, these sessions need to be well organized, publicized, and have speakers identified in an established time frame, as noted above.

**Best Practice Forums:** ITAA also supports the continuance of Best Practice Forums, which should include challenges faced, and 'lessons learned'. These Forums should be focused on topics of relevance to the main themes' discussion of best practices or related to topics relevant to Internet Governance. We believe that lessons can be learned from initiatives that have encountered challenges, and have found ways to adapt and move forward; for example, the lessons learned from challenges should be included in the in-depth best practices discussions. These sessions, and the Open Forums should also provide brief reports of their events.

### **Deadlines for Submission of proposals for Workshops, Open forums and Best Practice Forums**

ITAA recognises the challenges in reconciling the need to reach agreement on the programme early in the year while still demonstrating enough flexibility to allow all interested parties to develop and submit workshop applications. To address this problem, ITAA recommended in a letter to the Secretariat, Marcus Kummer, on 23 April 2008 that the deadline for submission of workshop proposals be extended by two weeks.

### **Meeting Topics for Main Sessions**

ITAA supports the focus on "Expanding the Internet: Reaching the Next Billion". In this broad category, we see the importance of considering several topics, including addressing the challenge of affordable local and international access to the Internet and the Information Society, multilingualization of the Internet, and the impact of ICTs on the environment. For instance, the next billion users will not only be largely emerging economies, but many of the devices accessing the Internet will be mobile devices. In addition, the next billion users will be almost certainly be comprised mostly of non-English speakers. Finally, as a third example, the issue of 'e-waste' - disposal of outdated, or 'dead devices' - is an important challenge to even developed countries, as is the issue of energy consumption for such devices and the servers and systems that support them. This and other related topics are on the minds of leaders from business, governments, and civil society in both developed and developing countries. We suggest that this be included as a subtopic in the main session and workshops encouraged furthering exploring the perspectives of different participants.

ITAA also supports the theme "Using the Internet." We would prefer to use a title that is broader than "Managing the Internet". We believe that within this context it will be possible to encompass additional issues such as: critical Internet resources; security and stability challenges; education and support of end users; approaches to protecting children online; and,

discussions about new kinds of applications, such as social networks, and other forms of the participative Web. Furthermore, we support the encouragement, by the Secretariat, of workshops on these and related topics.

ITAA also supports the two proposed sessions on “Taking Stock and the Way Forward”; and “Emerging Issues”. However, in consideration of the format to be used for the further main session, we feel that “discussion” rather than “debate” is far more appropriate to the IGF context. The purpose of the IGF is to provide opportunities to build awareness and deepen understanding through the exchange of information, descriptions of challenges, and exploration of possible solutions. In fact, the emphasis of the IGF should be on ‘dialogue’, rather than ‘debate’, and to encourage exchange of views, facts, and observations in an environment that furthers understanding, rather than one that risks to create divides or ‘sides’.

### **General comments**

The resolution of on-site logistics and the provision of information as early as possible is extremely helpful to those who can attend in person. ITAA thanks the host country of India for their efforts and contributions toward addressing critical elements related to the logistical details. If it is possible to establish a waiver of visa fees and streamlining of the visa application process, this will be of assistance to all attendees. In addition, ITAA encourages efforts to enhance and continually extend the support for remote participation mechanisms.

ITAA looks forward to participating in the IGF in Hyderabad, India in December 2008.



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