

**CONSULTATIONS ON THE INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM
GENEVA, 16-17 FEBRUARY 2006**

OPENING STATEMENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA

Mr Chairman

1. Australia welcomes these multistakeholder consultations on the establishment and operation of the IGF.
2. The IGF has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the development and expansion of the Internet, but how it is set up will be crucial in this regard.
3. At this stage, rather than focus on details, Australia would like to make some comments on the principles that should underpin the IGF and what the IGF should aim to achieve. These two considerations are fundamental to the design of the IGF.
4. In doing this Australia will be adding its support for many of the points already made this morning.

[Multistakeholder involvement and openness are fundamental to the IGF]

5. The IGF is being established in the context of acknowledgement by WSIS that:
 - the spectacular rise of the Internet is the result of multistakeholder action, in which the private sector and civil society have played central roles;
 - there is value in ongoing dialogue on public policy issues; and
 - this dialogue, to be effective, must be ‘multilateral, multistakeholder, democratic and transparent’ [Tunis Agenda, para.75].
6. This acknowledgement recognises the new paradigm presented by the Internet that, while government may have authority in relation to public policy, the legitimacy and utility of that authority is questionable unless it is exercised in consultation with other stakeholders.
7. Multistakeholder involvement and openness are therefore fundamental to the IGF. They must be genuine and effective if the IGF is to be genuine and effective.
8. These principles mean the design of the IGF must have certain features. From Australia’s perspective, these include:
 - open and ongoing consultation – like that we are currently engaged in - on crucial issues;
 - a strong preference for the IGF to be run as a multistakeholder entity by a competent multistakeholder organisation or consortium;
 - any IGF secretariat and advisory group being multistakeholder;
 - accreditation and procedural rules that support inclusiveness, openness and equal participation;
 - active promotion of the IGF and its relevance, particularly to developing countries; and
 - the use of ICTs to maximise access and engagement.

[The IGF should be lightweight and cost-effective]

9. The second principle Australia would like to emphasise is that the IGF as a whole should be 'lightweight and cost-effective'. As many have noted, financial and other resources are limited and we all have competing priorities.
10. In terms of the IGF's design, this suggests:
 - a relatively flat structure, without a proliferation of sub-groups and committees;
 - relatively short, focussed annual meetings, possibly back-to-back with related events;
 - potentially, a fixed central location for meetings and the secretariat;
 - use of external expertise and voluntary contributions; and, again
 - effective use of ICTs.
11. From a broader perspective, that IGF discussions should be non-duplicative [para. 77] and should be productive. This leads us to our final theme, the aims of the IGF.

[The IGF needs to produce realistic, substantive, development-orientated outcomes]

12. Australia considers the IGF can make a valuable contribution to the development of the Internet, but this opportunity may be squandered if discussion is too abstract and diffuse. We may end up with fine principles but little of practical benefit to stakeholders, everyday users of the Internet, and the wider community, particularly in developing countries.
13. The IGF must consciously aim to produce, in reasonable timeframes, realistic and substantive outputs that are of real, practical benefit.
14. In terms of its design, Australia therefore considers that the IGF should:
 - have organisational and procedural questions resolved in advance;
 - focus on a key issue or theme at each meeting;
 - be responsive to real issues of relevance to stakeholders and Internet users generally, particularly those of developing countries;
 - be structured, focussed and rigorous in its operation so it delivers useful outcomes quickly;
 - make extensive use of input from experts and practitioners with on-the-ground experience, from all stakeholder groups but particularly from developing countries;
 - emphasise information sharing and the identification and promotion of best practice models; and
 - publish reports that are accessible, documenting its substantive discussions and concrete ideas, including best practice, and that provide a basis for action.
15. The question of broad aims inevitably leads to that of priorities.

[Spam, e-security and cybercrime should be the IGF's top priority]

16. Australia considers the IGF's top priority should be the issues relating to the use and misuse of the Internet and, in particular, spam, e-security and cybercrime, the interlinkages between them, and mechanisms for addressing them.

17. This is the top priority because of the significant financial and consumer harm these issues pose and, correspondingly, the benefits to be derived from tackling them. These benefits will accrue not only to developed countries but developing countries.
18. In addition, WSIS (and WGIG) identified a range of other issues – particularly with a development focus such as access and multilingualisation – which also warrant attention.
19. We consider identification and discussion of new and emerging issues in the IGF is also important to the Internet’s ongoing, inclusive development.
20. This is in contrast to a focus on issues that have been discussed at length throughout the WSIS and which are receiving attention in other processes. A focus on these issues in the IGF would divert limited and valuable resources from tackling issues of real significance to everyday users.

[Conclusion]

21. Australia looks forward to working constructively with other stakeholders to help ensure the IGF realises its full potential.