



Contribution to the Internet Governance Forum Open Consultations

February 2008

General comments

The Internet Society (ISOC) is pleased to provide the following comments to the first open consultation on the Internet Governance Forum of 2008. This comment builds on ISOC's previous contributions on the IGF, and draws from ISOC's experiences as a participant in the WSIS process and in the IGF since its inception. The document addresses two topics: first, our recommendations for the third IGF meeting to be held in New Delhi in 2008; and second, our views on the rotation of members of the IGF Advisory Group.

The Internet Society's mission is "to promote the open development, evolution, and use of the Internet for the benefit of all people throughout the world." The Internet Governance Forum's cross cutting themes of capacity building and development plus the original four focus areas of openness, diversity, security and access oriented the discussion in IGF Athens and continued to provide the foundation for the work of the IGF in Rio. The decision to build on the successful discussions and the positive interaction among stakeholders in Athens by adding the topic of critical Internet resources justified stakeholders' confidence in the ability of the IGF to address difficult topics. Once again, the IGF's open environment, quite different from that of intergovernmental negotiations, met the challenge. ISOC thinks this success precisely depends upon the fact that the IGF remains multilateral, multi-stakeholder, democratic and transparent, and that it is neutral, non-duplicative and non-binding, etc. – consistent with the WSIS guidelines.

ISOC believes that it is essential to retain those characteristics in all future IGF meetings. But we must find ways for the IGF to become more useful to those interested in the practice of Internet governance, and to fulfill its mandate and paragraph 77 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society. We also believe that it is time now for the IGF to draw concrete conclusions from all stakeholders' useful experiences. Hence, we would encourage that the structure and focus of the IGF evolve in the direction of making more practical and concrete

contributions to Internet governance at appropriate national, regional and international levels.

Successful multistakeholder Internet governance discussions at the local level are essential to progressing Internet governance at a global level, as was recognized at the IGF in Rio. But there is much to be done at the local level and all stakeholders should contribute to encouraging the creation of suitable and sustainable local multi-stakeholder structures, including technical and regulatory capacity building programs. For example, the Internet Society's regional INETs are often the occasion of vigorous discussion of how issues related to Internet governance are addressed locally and ISOC has committed to build on the INETs to further localize high-level discussions, identify regional challenges and explore local solutions.

Recommendations for the 3rd Internet Governance Forum

The most successful aspects of the IGF are displayed when people find opportunities to work together on specific issues of Internet governance. In Rio, some such opportunities arose in the formal workshop sessions; others in meetings of dynamic coalitions; and others yet in informal gatherings organized on site. Some examples: we have seen increased commitment to collaborating on child protection, parliamentarians are becoming engaged in Internet governance issues, discussion of linguistic diversity is progressing, and the understanding of steps to reduce Internet connection costs is becoming better informed and more practical. This trend began in Athens and grew in Rio.

The increased interest in the workshops and their potential for promoting collaboration should be the major goal for the 3rd IGF. This can be facilitated by reducing the number of formal "main sessions." ISOC believes that the main sessions on the IGF themes have served their purpose. There should be fewer in Delhi: perhaps only three – one each day. Two of those would be the opening and closing sessions, allowing the highest level participants to address the IGF

Speakers in the opening should be selected for their ability to focus participants' attention on the urgent need to show real results from the meeting in terms of promoting access, security, diversity and openness, but concentrating particularly on the needs of developing countries and capacity building.

The second main session should concentrate on a major new theme: for the 2008 Forum. ISOC recommends that this session, and much of the work of the IGF going forward concentrate on the overarching issue of "*connecting the next billion.*" As we heard in Rio, getting the next billion online highlights many challenges for the governance of the Internet, not least the scalability and sustainability of the Internet itself. This very practical focus will draw together

and include many facets of the themes discussed so far in the IGF, and has very direct and important linkages to development and capacity building. This focus – connecting the next billion – gained prominence in Rio and we believe that it is now time to better understand and address the challenges that all will face getting this next billion on line. The IGF is uniquely positioned to contribute in a substantive manner to this issue.

Learning and collaboration will be essential to identifying the challenges and highlighting the solutions. The IGF should serve as a facilitator, providing many opportunities for action oriented formal and informal workshops and meetings. And, as an innovation for New Delhi, the IGF should provide at no cost a large networking/display space for all stakeholder groups to present their real-world experiences and efforts to implement Internet governance locally, nationally, regionally and internationally. Physically, the display area should be structured around the IGF themes, to encourage dialogue and synergy among practitioners. And the theme areas should have facilities for small and medium groups to exchange experiences and to plan future work.

We believe it is time for the IGF to become a Forum promoting action on the entire range of themes outlined in its mandate, singly and in combination. It is ISOC's belief that IGF participants have now established a degree of trust that makes this possible.

Renewal of the Internet Governance Advisory Group

ISOC has followed discussion pertaining to the renewal of the Advisory Group (AG) closely. As a starting point, we think the AG for the first two IGF meetings functioned relatively well; however, lessons have been learned. First among those is the importance of appointing the AG early so work can begin organizing the next IGF. This has been challenging for the first two IGF meetings, and must be a priority. Ideally, the UN Secretary-General should announce the membership of the AG by March each year. It is clear that the work of the AG must be continuous, thus we recommend that the existing AG continue to function until a new one is in place.

A second lesson has been the importance of appointing AG members as individuals, rather than as representatives of any specific organization. While recognizing that in reality, the AG members have been selected to ensure that the voices of all relevant stakeholder groups are heard, and with due respect to achieving balance, *inter alia*, on grounds of geography, gender, expertise and other relevant characteristics, the *individual* responsibility of the membership has encouraged a high quality of participation by AG members.

ISOC believes that approximately one-third of the AG members should be replaced on a rotational basis annually, and that the current group membership number of forty should be retained. This will bring new perspectives to the AG's tasks and encourage creativity. This gradual rotation should also be used to adjust the balance of stakeholders in the Group, which now leans too heavily toward government membership.

We believe that past and present AG members drawn from the technical community have made vital contributions to both the AG decisions and to the overall shape of the IGF. For that reason, it is essential that the expertise of technical community continue to be a major component of the AG, whether the individuals themselves are drawn from business, civil society, academia or government.

Various proposals have been put forward for a nomination process. ISOC supports the idea that groups and individuals may submit nominations for AG membership, but they should not be able to restrict or interfere with the choice of AG members. The UN Secretary-General must remain the final authority in making appointments, in order to ensure the best possible balance among stakeholders, regions, etc. in the AG membership.

ISOC supports the view that AG members should be chosen on the basis of how large and diverse a community they connect to (which is different than "represent") and on their expertise. This will encourage broad and valuable engagement in the planning process, and ideally in the IGF itself. Ultimately, if it becomes necessary to invite some AG members to resign to achieve sufficient rotation, the Chair should initiate a discussion, using the quality of past participation as one of the main criteria.

Finally, ISOC believes it is essential to maintain a consistent single Chair of the AG, rather than rotating the chair or multiple co-chairs. In 2008, the Chair should be appointed for the remainder of the mandate of the IGF. If he is willing to accept the challenge, we would strongly support the appointment of the current Chair, who has performed admirably in that role for the first two AGs and Forums, and has won the respect and loyalty of all stakeholders.