ETNO Reflection Document in reply to the IGF Questionnaire "Taking stock and the way forward"

Introduction

ETNO, the European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (www.etno.be) and its 41 members from 34 countries have been working for many years on a range of policy issues associated with the information society, including Internet governance and the World Summit on Information Society process. Many ETNO member companies attended the Athens and the Rio IGF and participated in the preparatory open consultations.

This document describes how these telecommunications network operators experienced the Rio Forum and contains suggestions for the third IGF meeting as regards organizational and content issues. Furthermore this document reflects standing ETNO positions on Internet governance and the IGF process as such.

General Comments

ETNO and its members are grateful to the peoples of Brazil for the hospitality and for the arrangements regarding the meeting in Rio de Janeiro. We are now looking forward to the New Delhi IGF, which should build upon the success of the Athens and Rio meetings. ETNO is committed to the IGF process and would like to contribute in a fruitful manner to the preparations of the 3rd IGF.

As a general comment, we would like to stress that good organization and good programming are fundamental. After two IGFs it is essential that a rough programme and schedule (content/themes, format/framework of discussions, and timetable of the preparatory process) for the New Delhi meeting become available before the second open consultation and that they are finalized by September 2008.

The multi-stakeholder - on an equal footing - approach and the non-decisive nature of the IGF must be maintained and strengthened. The next IGF must

build on these. Also, balanced participation of all stakeholders from all geographical areas must be stimulated.

1. What worked well?

ETNO and ETNO member companies have highly appreciated the work, effort and time put by those who contributed to the organization and success of the 2nd IGF meeting. The Rio IGF, like the Athens IGF, provided an open and inclusive space for true multi-stakeholder policy dialogue, in order to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet.

Crucial elements for this success were the open and inclusive character and the multi-stakeholder nature of the IGF on an equal footing. The Forum gave governments, the private sector, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the academic community, each with its own culture, an opportunity to present their views. Thus, the Rio meeting helped improving the understanding of many complex issues about Internet governance.

On a more practical side, the organizational, logistical and hospitality support was very good during IGF Rio. The staff was very friendly, the communication and power supplies were efficient, although certain times - despite efforts - participants experienced wi-fi access difficulties and there were enough conference facilities to support the event. The free wireless network and free computer facilities were highly appreciated. Internet access must remain available, free and easy.

Particular mention is due to the video and audio broadcast, which gave the opportunity to those who could not participate physically a chance to follow discussions in real time. Also, the final Chair's summary, which gave a well balanced overview of what had happened in Rio, was deeply appraised.

2. What worked less well?

ETNO recognizes that the IGF Secretariat with extremely limited human and financial resources, as well as many members of Advisory Group put much time and effort for the best possible preparation of the Rio IGF. However, certain elements of the programme (i.e. panellists, description / more information of some best/open practice forums, dynamic coalition meetings etc.) were unknown even the week before the event. As already two Forums have been held and there is enough experience, it is widely anticipated that this unfortunate fact is not be repeated and that the programme, schedule and all the relevant information regarding the New Delhi IGF will be finalized and announced well in advance.

The most significant part which did not work very well for many who attended the Rio IGF turned out to be the schedule, as too many events were held in

parallel of the main sessions. Despite efforts not to have similar events taking place at the same time, interested participants could not always attend what they came for. The Rio IGF offered an incredible number (84) of meetings on a broad range of subjects. The selection criteria of all but the main session meetings could have been stricter and there could have been suggestions from the Advisory Group to the potential organizers to combine or to focus their proposals.

Many participants had to choose between several sessions that were scheduled concurrently. This led some to consider that main sessions are no longer needed, or that they could turn into "reporting back" sessions, a view which ETNO does not share. In any case, the format of the Forum needs to be rethought.

Remote participation was almost invisible in Rio, although there was extended video and audio broadcast. It would be quite useful to have feedback on remote participation. ETNO believes that the IGF is open and inclusive in principle and it should truly promote the participation of people from all groups and from all geographical areas. This does not mean only physical participation, which may be difficult for many, but remote participation as well. Moreover, due to the substance and type of this event, remote participation suits very well the Forum. Keeping the diversity and assuring effective physical and remote representation of stakeholders remains a challenge to be met at future IGFs.

As regards written material, the synthesis paper, being more of a report on "the road to Rio," failed to stimulate discussions during the IGF. Also the material presented during IGF was not available in electronic form. Even today, almost 3 months after the Forum, the IGF is not fully reported (besides video and audio archives where they exist, most template reports of workshops and other meetings are missing).

On the hospitality side, only very few participants could stay at the meeting venue and most had to stay at other hotels, some of which were rather expensive or / and far away. Besides the reception the first night there were no social events organized, thus there were not enough opportunities for networking, while the coffee breaks could have been better organized.

3. Did the meeting meet your expectations? If not what were its shortcomings?

ETNO recognizes that the Rio IGF moved the IGF agenda forward, but further changes are required. Rio was indeed "Athens plus" and New Delhi certainly needs to be "Rio plus."

4. What did you think of the different types of meetings?

Based on the Rio and Athens experiences, ETNO wishes to make the following specific comments and suggestions:

- **Main sessions**

ETNO acknowledges that most of the main sessions in the Rio IGF were not well attended. In our view this is due to the fact that there were too many parallel events, but also due to the structure of the session (general discussion, repeated views, too many remarks from the panellists, not enough discussion from the floor). The room available for the main sessions was huge and enlarged the impression of emptiness. As it turned out in Rio there was need for increased room capacity only for the opening ceremony / session, the taking stock and emerging issues sessions as well as the closing ceremony. However it is worth noting that during the majority of the aforementioned sessions, no other events took place at the same time, so people were able to attend them.

ETNO believes that the main sessions are the most important meetings of the IGF and that special attention must be given to them in the schedule. As stated before, it will be best if there are fewer events held in parallel of the main sessions, but with better quality.

On the positive side the 2 hours duration of the main sessions worked well. However discussion many times lacked focus. It is worth examining the idea that one of the panellists acts as a Key note speaker to stimulate discussion, rather than having the moderator trying to do that. The number of panellists also worked well and should be kept to a maximum of 4-5 people. However, panellists - besides their presentations - should limit their remarks so that there are more views presented from the floor. As for the idea of "discussants," we believe that it did not add anything and that it should not be repeated.

As regards the themes of the next IGF, ETNO suggests that the 5 broad themes are kept. However, they should not be recycled with yet another general discussion. Instead there should be more specific topics within each theme, according to timeliness, announced well in advance. These specific topics must be chosen after wide agreement. This way, participants may explore them better and provide added value to the debate, rather than repeating the same general positions. Adequately, if this approach is followed there is no need for one main session for each theme, as certain main themes interact (i.e. Access and Critical Internet Resources).

- **Reporting Back Sessions**

ETNO believes that these sessions, prior to the main sessions, are extremely useful because someone may hear - and in more than one language - what was discussed in the previous main sessions and in many of the other events held before. Therefore, they should be maintained, but with necessary adjustments.

The reporting back for the main sessions should be done by the IGF Secretariat as it can guarantee a well balanced overview of what was discussed. As for the reporting back of all the other meetings, we suggest that there is more structure, with a strict format to be followed by all. A maximum time of 5 minutes should be given for presentations and there should be more chances for comments (but not on substance issues, because substance comments fit best in the main sessions).

- **Workshops**

  The number of workshops (and other events which are similar to workshops) running in parallel within the official IGF programme must be reduced and the resources must be optimized. The Rio experience proved that there should be less workshops and a strong effort to merge similar ones is much needed. An early call would help in this direction. Also, the titles must reflect the content and most importantly the description must be clearly announced and followed.

  For ETNO it is important that the IGF Secretariat, taking into account the open consultations, in conjunction with the Advisory Group take the responsibility for the selecting the workshops. We believe that one of the main goals of the workshops should be to fuel the discussions in the main sessions.

  As regards workshop reporting (or results) we suggest to keep the workshop template developed in Athens (who participated, what issues were discussed, what were the main points), which worked very well, but unfortunately was not implemented by most of the organizers in Rio.

- **Best Practice Forums and Open Forums**

  ETNO observed that the number of Best Practice Forums in Rio was outstanding (10 country and 13 thematic ones), while many did not justify why they fitted under this type of meeting. Many turned out to be workshops. We strongly believe that discussion about "best practices", or rather "lessons learned" fits better within main sessions or workshops. If "Best Practice Forums" remain in the programme, they must be very limited, specific, well justified, and accepted after a wide agreement.

  Additionally, a limited number of Open Forums, on the understanding that these are meetings organized by major organizations dealing with Internet governance, aiming at presenting and discussing their activities, could take place.

- **Dynamic Coalition Meetings**

  ETNO raises certain concerns regarding the Dynamic Coalition meetings in Rio, as these meetings in reality turned into workshops, sometimes promoting specific views of one or more groups. It is therefore important to understand better how Dynamic Coalitions fit in the IGF process.

  ETNO believes that Dynamic Coalitions can provide valuable input to the IGF and for that reason they must be given space and time to evolve. In order to ensure their dynamic nature, it is of the interest of all parties not to see their role institutionalized and that certain criteria are met. In our view, a multi-stakeholder nature is very much wanted and needed from and by the Dynamic Coalitions, whose work must be directly related to the IGF. ETNO has noted that many of the Dynamic Coalitions already provide open access to information and documents through their websites. This practice should be encouraged for all Dynamic Coalitions.

  ETNO views the Dynamic Coalitions as a means to stimulate the debate within IGF meetings by facilitating open discussion on emerging topics. If the discussion is found significant enough it could lead to the elevation of the subject matter within the IGF process. In this context ETNO believes that Dynamic Coalition meetings fit better a parallel to the official IGF programme.

5. Was there an adequate balance between the different types of meeting?
and
7. Should all the different types of events be maintained on the programme of the New Delhi meeting? If so, should they be maintained in the form they were held in Rio or is there need for any changes to be introduced?

  ETNO believes that there should be a clear distinction between main sessions, workshops, best practice forums, open forums and other events, which was not always the case in Rio, despite the initial description of the types of meetings. Having cleared that, we would like to comment that there was not enough balance and that there should be restructuring regarding the format of the IGF meetings, by using criteria such as simplicity and efficacy.

  The main sessions should be the main event. The number of workshops should be reduced and closely related to the main sessions. ETNO proposes that there is a core IGF programme consisting only of main sessions and selected workshops closely related to the main sessions (integrating best practices in both types of meeting), and a parallel programme consisting of Open Forums, Dynamic Coalition meetings, any other workshop, as well as any other event. More specifically, ETNO suggests that there is a core of meetings for which the IGF Secretariat, taking into account the open consultations, in conjunction with

the Advisory Group take the responsibility for organizing or at least selecting in the case of workshops, and all the other events are freely organized, providing that their linkage to the IGF is justified and that there is enough information about them (the titles reflect the content and the description is clearly announced and followed).

This way all participants will have a clearer view of the various IGF meetings and it will be easier for them to participate in the meetings they want according to what they think is important and interesting. Additionally, the organization of the IGF will also be easier and simpler.

8. Did the 'Village Square' meet your expectations? If not, what can be improved for the next IGF?

The Village Square met our expectations and should be maintained. We found it quite convenient that Internet access points were in the same place as the distribution and information stalls. For the New Delhi meeting we suggest that the Village Square is more centrally located.

9. Is there a need for a synthesis paper which gives an overview of all contributions received and which is translated in all UN languages?

ETNO believes that the synthesis paper translated in all UN languages is very much useful. However, we believe that the synthesis paper must set the scene and it must be the starting reference of the IGF meeting by boosting the debate. It could be a critical review of the situation over the previous year (not heavy on statistics) and / or the contributions received after a specific call.

If the synthesis paper is just an overview of the contributions received, an introductory report could also be considered as a means to stimulate discussions and to work in conjunction with it. This Introductory report could be prepared by the IGF Secretariat or by an individual commissioned by it. In the latter case (prepared by an individual) the report should be spherical, neutral and not reflecting the particular views of any individual person or organization. It should be clear that we are not suggesting that an introductory report replaces the synthesis paper; rather it should work in conjunction with it.

10. Other suggestions for improvement in view of the third IGF meeting to be held in New Delhi in December 2008?

ETNO is very much concerned about the cost for participating in the IGF. Many governments, civil society organizations and business have budgetary constraints (i.e. most employees of ETNO member companies face a ceiling for accommodation around 150 € for a single room with breakfast and taxes). The problem is quite acute because it can affect the participation, as only those who can afford it will be able to participate physically in the IGF meeting. It is therefore of outmost importance that the Indian Government negotiates with the venue hotel and other hotels close by special rates, which are affordable and comply with major budgetary restrictions most attendants face. This will allow more people to attend the New Delhi meeting in acceptable conditions and there will be better chances to maintain a certain quality level of multi-stakeholder dialogue and efficiency of debate.

Remote participation could turn into a back-up solution for the success of the New Delhi meeting.

11. Any other comments or suggestions?

ETNO calls for increased transparency in the IGF preparatory process (including the work of the Advisory Group and the Secretariat) and appropriate dissemination of information. The issue of transparency has also been addressed by the UN Secretary General and ETNO is eager to see how it is implemented.

Finally, the appearance of the official IGF site does not help at all. It should be more functional and informative and this can be done with very few resources.