

ETNO Reflection Document on the IGF Advisory Group

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 ETNO sees certain issues related to the work of the Advisory Group, which is an integral part of the IGF preparatory process. More specifically, ETNO address the issues of transparency and rotation of its members, in reply to the relevant call of the IGF Secretariat.

Comments

ETNO and ETNO member companies are committed to the IGF process and would like to contribute in the debate about the Advisory Group.

ETNO strongly believes that there is no need for a “bureau” in the sense the term usually has in the UN context. The IGF is not a membership body and it cannot elect. The issue of the bureau has been discussed thoroughly and resolved. Having cleared that, we would like to state that we continue to understand that the members of the Advisory Group work on a voluntary basis under their personal capacities and we appreciate their work, effort and time put so far. However, we recognize that there is great room for improvement as regards transparency and composition (rotation) of the Advisory Group. More specifically:

On transparency

For ETNO this is the most important issue, which must be improved. In this regard, we recommend that the Advisory Group publishes its agenda and produces reports (minutes) of its meetings, as it has initiated already. We also suggest that the Advisory Group increases its efforts to disseminate information regarding the IGF preparatory process, by producing regular reports of its activities. It should also work towards being a fully transparent, democratic, and accountable to all body, debugging the impression of a closed structure, which decides about or controls the preparatory process alone. In order to increase transparency, ETNO supports the idea of having a limited number of observers for each Advisory Group meeting.

On rotation

ETNO insists that certain criteria on the rotation of members of the Advisory Group are established from now on. By all means the Advisory Group must continue to be multi-stakeholder in nature and the balance of the multi-stakeholder groups within the Advisory Group must be kept. The number of its members should not be extraordinary and it should not exceed the current number of 45.

ETNO recommends that one third of the members are replaced each year, after a call by the IGF Secretariat, while the remaining two thirds are reconfirmed. Within the one third rotated, there must be a proportional spread within the various multi-stakeholder groups. The Advisory Group should be formally renewed each year by the UN secretary General the soonest possible, preferably by February each year.

Each new member originating from the rotation process should have a term of 3 years, with a possibility of reappointment. One member should represent the host country, so that he/she can act as a liaison for logistical and organizational matters. This member exceptionally must have a term of one year.

As regards a co-chair, ETNO continues to understand that if there is a need for a co-chair from the host country, that person's tasks must be devoted to the organizational and logistical arrangements. However, we strongly believe that these tasks can be covered fully by one member in the Advisory Group as stated before and not by a co-chair.