

IGF: the most appropriate mechanism for global Internet governance

Contribution for the Retreat on Advancing the 10-year Mandate of the Internet Governance Forum.

Juan Alfonso Fernández González, July, 2016

A proposal from eleven years ago

In 2005 the Report from the Working Group on Internet Governance¹ established the premises and principles on which the proposals of institutional mechanisms for international internet governance should be based.

The premises were limited to two:

50. There is a wide range of governance functions that could include audit, arbitration, coordination, policy-setting and regulation, among others, but not including involvement in day-to-day operational management of the Internet that does not impact on public policy issues.

49. The WGIG agreed that the continued internationalization of the Internet and the principle of universality reinforces the need for a review of existing governance mechanisms, hence the WGIG undertook such a review and the results are presented here.²

The agreed principles were only three:

48. The WGIG recognized that any organizational form for the governance function/oversight function should adhere to the following principles:

- No single Government should have a pre-eminent role in relation to international Internet governance.
- The organizational form for the governance function will be multilateral, transparent and democratic, with the full involvement of Governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations.
- The organizational form for the governance function will involve all stakeholders and relevant intergovernmental and international organizations within their respective roles.³

It is important to note that of these three principles only the first was new, since the other two had already been agreed in the first phase of WSIS and appear in paragraphs 48 and 49 of the Geneva Declaration of Principles.

This premises and principles for global public policy and oversight of the Internet proposed by the WGIG and endorsed in the second phase of the WSIS remain fully valid and should be the basis of any international Internet governance arrangement.

One possible way is to adapt the most tangible achievement of the WGIG: the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

¹ WGIG. (2005b). *Report of the Working Group on Internet Governance*. Geneva: United Nations.

www.wgig.org/docs/WGIGREPORT.pdf

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Another proposal from 2005

Shortly after the WGIG issued its report, one of its members wrote an article ⁴ proposing 14 points to ensure that the forum would be implemented as a universal mechanism for Internet governance.

The 14 points are:

- 1) The forum should be a global space for coordination and discussion of all governance issues, as well as to support the development of global policies for the Internet.
- 2) The forum should coordinate a broad spectrum of governance themes.
- 3) The forum should be pluralist (multistakeholder).
- 4) The forum should include an intergovernmental mechanism through which governments exert their responsibilities regarding Internet related aspects of public policy.
- 5) The forum, and any global governance instance, should not be under the jurisdiction of any specific country.
- 6) The forum should work for the global public interest.
- 7) The forum should abide by the criteria of transparency, democracy and multilateralism.
- 8) Each one of the representatives of the four interest groups (governments, business, civil society and academic/technical community) ought to establish clear accountability rules regarding their constituencies.
- 9) Regarding existing global organizations dealing with specific, Internet related issues, the forum function should be of coordinating these organizations instead of replacing them.
- 10) The forum should operate with efficacy and practicality to ensure rapid decision-making processes, in keeping with the dynamics of Internet expansion and evolution.
- 11) The forum should be flexible and adaptable to adjust its agenda and processes to the rapid evolution of the Internet.
- 12) The forum should be able to act as an efficient clearing house collecting needs from the several interest groups and dispatching them (or the resulting resolutions) to the relevant organizations.
- 13) The forum should be authoritative in its capacity to resolve conflicts and coordinate the work of different organizations.
- 14) The forum should be self-sustained.

(These points are explained in the original document. ⁵)

I believe that the Internet Governance Forum can evolve so that, without losing its attributes of diversity, inclusiveness and legitimacy, can become the most appropriate mechanism for global Internet governance.

⁴ Afonso, C. (2005). A Global Internet Governance Forum. The View from Brazil. In Bervejillo, S. (Ed.), *Vision or hallucination? Briefing papers towards the World Summit on the Information Society*, Montevideo: Instituto del Tercer Mundo (ITeM). www.choike.org/documentos/wsis/book08.pdf

⁵ Ibid.