Youth Coalition on Internet Governance report

Introduction

Since the creation of YCIG after Sharm ElCheikh, its members convened at IGF to report their activities and updates and also coordinate efficiently their actions in their workshops in addition to workshops (e.g. challenging Myths workshop) organized by YCIG and its members. As usual DC meetings are good opportunity for us to outreach more attendees to expand the memberships in all stakeholders. We also had discussion about difference between whether youth representatives should be there representing themselves, or should be representing wider groups of youth.

Like during Vilnius plenary session, YCIG drafted statement during its DC meeting to advocate more youth representation and participation. We also used social reporting to cover our sessions and those attended by young representatives http://igf2011.diplomacy.edu/content/dynamic-coalitions-youth.

YCIG statement

The statement summarize the work done by YCIG, topics discussed at DC meetings and also YCIG position expressed at IGF final session:

As in 2010, the Youth Coalition made use of an etherpad document to collaboratively draft a statement to share in the closing plenary of this years IGF. The statement, which was unfortunately not read in full due to time constraints, is below:

2011 YCIG Statement, Nairobi Kenya

The Dynamic Youth Coalition on Internet Governance was founded in 2009 at the Sharm El Sheik IGF. This year, members of the Youth Coalition on Internet Governance have been involved across the Internet Governance Forum, in the preparatory process, organising a number of workshops, and participating actively in many more.

For this IGF we hosted a session 'Challenging Myths about Young People and the Internet', in which we sought to contribute to a deeper dialogue when claims about youth are used in Internet Governance Debates. Our panelists addressed myths such as the view that "Young people are either digital natives, or are digitally naïve", and challenged claims about "Internet Addiction" and the view that "young people don't care about privacy". The real picture is much more complex: and we need to work together to have a

nuanced debate about youth that balances provision, protection and participation rights. We will produce a workshop report that we hope you can use in future workshop planning and facilitation – to make sure we together avoid generalisations about youth and supporting us to together build evidence-based responses that promote online creativity, safe digital lives, and freedom of expression and access to information and education.

The Youth Coalition on Internet Governance exists to network and support younger participants to speak up and to collaborate in all areas of Internet Governance. We believe youth have a wide range of contributions to make to IG debates on all topics. The issues on IG we are discussing in five years could show up in the lives of the youth already today, and by getting more young people along, we can be prepared. And since there are many young people willing to help the internet community, let us not waste this resource.

In our coalition meeting yesterday we reviewed the current state of youth participation in Internet governance both locally and globally. Children, young people and young adults are not a homogenous group: they come from civil society, government and the private sector, and from many countries and cultures. There is not one 'youth' voice, but we believe younger voices should be represented in all workshops and panels. Whilst many workshops have made progress in youth presence this year – there is a long way to go before we can say the concerns, ideas and insights of the net-generation are fully included in IGF dialogue. And we are disappointed that a number of panels, including those specifically focused on youth issues, did not invite young panelists. We offer our support to you in helping you contact a wide network of youth to help find panelists and participants for future workshops on all themes, and we invite you to get in touch whenever this can be of help to you.

To continue to develop youth involvement in IGF we need to focus on capacity building; addressing structural barriers to youth engagement; and to link youth inclusion to wider issues of inclusive IGF participation.

Language barriers are common challenge for youth's engagement in international conferences, and although we have been impressed by how many members of YCIG have been communicating with other young people back home through Twitter, IRC, email, Skype and other tools in their own languages, representing their colleagues when they spoke up in English in sessions, we encourage IGF to push towards greater multi-lingualism in debates.

We note also that youth often lack resources to engage in IG debates, both finances to travel, and access to support to engage with IG issues all year round. We encourage donors to support youth participation in IGF in sustainable ways.

Youth have already been active capacity building for IG, organising regional youth IGF events, and New Media Summer Schools linked to EuroDig. However, the lack of promotion for IG and internet-related issues and fora still means many young people who

would be able to passionately engage, are simply missing the opportunity because of lack of awareness. The development of regional IGF meetings offer a great chance for local youth to become aware of and get involved in Internet Governance, and we encourage regional IGF meetings to use these as an opportunity for capacity building that will support children, young people and young adults to play an active role in Internet Governance. E-Participation also offers real potential for improving youth engagement in IG issues, and we hope more youth-led and youth-focussed hubs can be in place for IGF2012.

We already started planning several local IG-related events for both this and the coming year, in Africa and elsewhere. If anyone here shares this will of organising and helping others get their young, useful voice heard, please do not hesitate to contact us, for example through our website and mailing list available at ycig.org.

Recurring issues in participation aside, there has been some great progress in recognising youth as an important stakeholder in the IGF and the ideas of the young and the adults have clearly converged over time. For example, it has been refreshing to hear how others than specific youth representatives have suggested leaving 'internet' off of 'internet bullying', 'cyber' off of 'cybercrime' and 'digital' off of 'digital citizenship'. Young people do separate the online and offline, but do not think of the Internet as some separate virtual space. The Internet is, slowly but surely, becoming a core part of the real world for all adults as well. On this basis, lets collaborate to make the net, and our world, a better place.