

Dear participants,

ISOC has been a major supporter of IGF ever since its inception. It has been a very active participant of the advisory group and the IGF in Athens. It is also committed to participate in the process in the future. In doing so, ISOC has a very simple objective: preserving the openness, transparency and inclusiveness of Internet and ensuring that Internet is for everyone.

I believe that IGF is a very useful forum to discuss issues that are of great importance for the development of Internet. For example, the four main issues debated at the IGF in Athens, that is Openness, Diversity, Security and Access are all very important goals for all nations, but particularly developing nations. It is also very important that IGF is a multistakeholder process that involves government, but also civil society, the private sector, the technical community, academia, etc. I am delighted that a range of stakeholders are represented here today.

It is ISOC's belief that IGF should concentrate on the principles, i.e. openness, transparency and inclusiveness, that have made the success of the Internet rather than trying to find new models of governance or new decision-making structures. IGF has already contributed in triggering important discussions in these areas and I hope that many more discussions will be made in the coming months and years.

However, the IGF will not meet its objectives if the discussion of these important issues is confined to yearly conferences. The annual IGFs MUST catalyze the more important discussions that should take place regionally and locally, since Internet Governance happens there as well. Every country contributes in the governance of Internet by promulgating laws and policies that have impact on the Internet. Therefore, IGF won't be successful unless it promotes and encourages discussion of the issues and the sharing of relevant experience at the regional and national levels.

Africa has shown great interest in the WSIS process as well as in the IGF. For example, the participation of Africans in all the conferences has been considerable. Many Africans are also trying to push the discussions down to the regional level and even to the national level. This meeting is organized to help these efforts and to ensure that Africa is well prepared for the Rio conference of IGF.

I believe that to be successful in the IGF, Africa should be united and focused. I don't think Africa will be served by presenting discordant views at the IGF. It won't be served either by dispersing itself on many issues since it has limited resources. Africa will greatly benefit from choosing its priorities and if possible, its positions, to present a strong view at the Rio conference. I hope that this meeting will help us go one step forwards towards building these priorities and positions.

I don't want to preempt the discussions that will follow, but I would like to briefly state what I personally believe the priorities should be for Africa. I believe that our priorities are enabling the great portion of our society to access the Internet. We have come a long

way in the last decade, but there is still a long way to go compared to other regions of the world. Capacity building should therefore be a major priority for Africa. I also believe that access should not be restricted to certain groups in our societies but that everybody should get access. However, this cannot be possible unless Internet is more diverse and our African languages and content are much more present on the Internet. Diversity should therefore also be a major priority of Africa.

Last but definitely not least, I believe that Africa must embrace the core principles of Internet, i.e. openness, transparency and inclusiveness. This requires a lot of regional and local discussions so that these principles are well understood and supported by the local communities.

Thank you,