

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS – CAIRO INET 18 MAY 2009

CONCLUSIONS

This brings us to next steps.

NEXT STEPS

To borrow a quote from Dr. Vint Cerf:

“As the Internet expands, nothing is more important than getting the policy right.”¹

This is because policy can either drive or impede Internet access.

A repeating theme in today's presentations has been that Internet access means much more than physically connecting someone to the Internet. Understanding what Internet access means for each segment of a community, is the first step towards developing sound Internet policies.

The second step is to recognise the interrelationship between different features of Internet access. For example:

- Internet Exchange Points allow locals to communicate more cheaply and efficiently with each other on the Internet which in turn encourages increased local content on the Internet; and
- Increased local content on the Internet encourages more locals to access the Internet.

¹ See <http://www.isoc.org/isoc/headlines/20090227.shtml>

The third step is to identify the physical, economic, cultural and social impediments to Internet access at all levels – local, national and regional, and to investigate policies which might remove or ameliorate these impediments. Look outside, learn from the experiences of other communities and share your experiences with them. Adopt a collaborative approach to problem-solving Internet access issues.

The fourth step is to ensure that policies, especially regulatory policies, are proportionate to the issues they are seeking to address. Overly regulated services stifle innovation and discourage use. Imagine an extreme situation, a world where each person requires a licence before they are entitled to access the Internet.

The fifth step is to take advantage of the synergies offered by a multi-stakeholder approach to resolving Internet access impediments. We have seen the potential benefits of this today in the context of our discussions on the IGF.

The final step is to always remember the target – increased and enhanced Internet access.

The Internet Society's Enabling Access Initiative² focuses on enabling access to the Internet by addressing the fundamental impediments to Internet growth and usability.

There are three aspects to this Initiative:

- Technical Capacity Building
- Policy, Regulation and the Access Environment
- Enabling Access for Under-served Communities

In terms of policy and regulation, the Internet Society's goals are to:

- Encourage policymakers to adopt ICT policies that promote the expansion and reach of Internet infrastructure on a national and global basis.
- Facilitate the elimination or revision of national Internet and telecommunications regulatory impediments to Internet growth.

² More details can be found at <http://www.isoc.org/isoc/mission/initiative/access.shtml>

- Educate policymakers on contemporary Internet issues in order to promote sound decision making.
- Educate policymakers and regulators on the broader economic/market and social factors that impact Internet development.
- Educate policymakers and industry on the challenges, needs, technologies, and opportunities of increasing Internet access to these communities.

Africa is an important focal point for the Internet Society's Enabling Access Initiative, particularly in terms of policy and regulation.

We believe that the development of policies that promote an open and trusted Internet are essential not only to increase access, but also to enhance the overall Internet experience for Africa.

As part of its Public Policy outreach program in Africa, the Internet Society, in partnership with the Commission of the African Union, and hosted by His Excellency Dr. Tarek Kamel, Minister of Communications and Information Technology, will be holding its first Regional Internet Leadership Forum, a forum for African Ministers and other leaders who have demonstrated exemplary leadership in Internet policy development (the African Regional Internet Leadership Forum 2009) later this year.

We hope that this event, this INET and other activities organised by the Internet Society in Africa and for Africa will contribute to the local, national and regional development of sustainable policies which will enable Internet access for Africa.

Remember, we are here to help.

THANKS

Please join me in thanking our partner in this event, the Egyptian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and Dr. Dawit Bekele, Regional Bureau Manager for Africa, as well as all our speakers, moderators and organisers.