

Internet Society Statement – 22 September 2005

WSIS PrepCom 3 Sub-committee A on Internet Governance

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

The Internet Society wishes to commend the members and staff of the Working Group on Internet Governance for their many hours of hard work, and for their efforts to reach out to people involved or interested in the management and development of the Internet.

First, a moment on what is really important to the success of the WSIS.

It's very unlikely that a teacher in central Africa, a doctor in the Andes, or a small merchant in Central Asia cares about root servers or how IPv6 addresses should be distributed. But they do care about the cost of access, whether they can get technical advice on how to connect to and use the Internet, whether the Internet is secure and reliable, and whether there is useful Internet content and services in their native language.

In that regard we should recall why we are here. I would like to quote from paragraph 4 of the WSIS Declaration of Principles:

Communication is a fundamental social process, a basic human need and the foundation of all social organization. Everyone, everywhere should have the opportunity to participate and no one should be excluded from the benefits the Information Society offers.

These “communications rights” are important and we need to constantly remind ourselves of what they mean for society. We must focus more sharply on two critical issues that will facilitate these communications rights in all parts of the world - connectivity and capacity building.

We have spent a lot of time, too much time, discussing architectural and management matters. Developing nations need infrastructure, enabling regulatory systems, Internet usage levels that drive local content, a greater focus on multilingualism, knowledge sharing and education, and mechanisms that promote participation across fora. We have had some discussion of these important issues, but not enough. We must acknowledge their critical importance and do more to address them.

The Internet Society and the Internet Community have, for the last several decades, been instrumental in capacity building through assisting developing countries to “come online”.

Of course, we need to do more. We all do. We applaud the Summit’s efforts to date but further call upon the WSIS to make capacity building and connectivity clear and unequivocal priorities.

I will now address the issue of new structures.

The WGIG Report has demonstrated a number of things. First, the existing mechanisms work. They may not be perfect, as many will argue, but they work, and they have been demonstrably resilient and adaptable. Second, many of the policy areas that we discussed are already addressed by fora around the world at international, regional and national levels. Many issues cannot be solved by new, overarching structures at a global level but rather by building on today’s open, multi-stakeholder and cooperative processes.

The Internet Community has evolved, just as the architecture of the Internet has over the 35 years of its existence. We in the Internet Community are committed to an organic evolution, to taking measures to bring about constructive change and to address concerns that have arisen during the WSIS process.

Participants must acknowledge that the Internet Community has adapted, become more open, more global, more inclusive and representative. All the organizations in the Internet Community encourage participation in their processes. The system works, and evolves, an example being the creation and expansion of the Regional Internet Registry system. The Internet Society urges participants in the WSIS to recognize this progress and to consider whether new structures will bring truly measurable, positive change to the functioning, stability, security and openness of the Internet.

Lastly, I would like to touch upon stakeholder participation.

The Internet Community includes, inter alia,

- 1) Standards setting organizations such as the IETF (tens of thousands of individuals, thousands of organizations), and the World Wide Web consortium
- 2) Organizations responsible for the policy and physical distribution global resources including:
 - * ICANN and its supporting organizations,
 - * The RIRs,
 - * The NIRs, LIRs, and ISPs,
 - * The Internet Exchange Points,
 - * The ccTLDs

- 3) Organizations responsible for the long-term development of the Internet such as the IAB and the IRTF
- 4) Organizations responsible for policy and education such as the Internet Society (with 20,000 members and more than 80 chapters around the world), not forgetting the thousands of Internet user groups across the globe.

This Community is at the core of the development and management of the past, present and future Internet, yet it is not a “principal stakeholder” in these discussions. The Internet cannot function without this Community. The long-term stability, security, adaptability of the Internet is fundamentally dependent upon the continued and integral engagement of the Internet Community in all governance discussions.

We therefore ask that the final input from Sub-Committee A on Internet Governance to the WSIS final document reflect that the Internet Community is a principal stakeholder as per paragraph 29 of the WGIG Report. A lengthier paper on this matter is outside the room.

Thank you. Mr. Chairman. And thank you to the private sector for letting us borrow some of their time.