



## **ISOC Statement**

### **Internet Governance Forum meeting** **17 February 2006**

Mr. Chairman,

ISOC would like to address some of the questions you raised yesterday.

With regard to the expected outcome of the Internet Governance Forum, ISOC believes that the Forum should act as a space for sharing best practice, expertise and for presenting a range of findings related to a particular issue (or limited set of issues). As the Tunis Agenda clearly states, the IGF should be a "neutral, non-duplicative and non-binding process" and therefore should merely present findings for consideration by interested parties.

The multistakeholder Bureau outlined in the Tunis Agenda will play a central role in the Forum. We believe, however, that the Bureau should be renamed into a "programme committee" given, as many here have said, that the term Bureau has specific connotations in the UN system.

This "programme committee" should, as is anticipated in the Tunis Agenda text, be a multi-stakeholder, representative advisory body that helps shape and set the agenda and issue focus of the Forum. ISOC could foresee a programme committee composed of representatives of the principal stakeholders, with rotating co-Chairs.

Which, of course, brings me to the issue of the principal stakeholders. The Internet Society, and other organizations, as you have heard, believe that the Internet community should be recognized as a distinct "principal stakeholder" in the Internet Governance Forum for a number of reasons, not least of which was the technical and academic communities' recognition in the Tunis Agenda (paragraph 36).

This request for recognition as a distinct principle stakeholder is, we believe, more than warranted given that the Internet community (many tens of thousands of individuals and thousands of organizations) comprises, inter alia, organizations responsible for operating and managing the Internet, standard setting organizations, international, regional, national and local organizations responsible for the management and physical distribution of global resources, organizations responsible for the long-term development of the Internet and organizations 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.

With regard to the programme committee, we see it having an important role in reaching out and encouraging the participation of experts. In addition, we see the programme committee as also having an important role in encouraging the fullest participation, across regions and stakeholders, with a particular emphasis on the developing world. The levels of expertise and level of developing country participation will be two of the most significant measures of the success of the Forum.

There has been some discussion about which issue areas the Forum should consider, whether there should be few or many, and whether contentious issues should be on the table. ISOC agrees that many of the areas included in the WSIS clearly will require additional review and it will be up to the programme committee to decide which will be the subject of its focus. However, we would recommend that the IGF prioritize issues to focus on those that will facilitate progress on developmental issues and address other, unresolved issues at a later time. Clearly, work on these unresolved issues will continue in parallel in many existing fora but the Forum's immediate focus, we believe, should be on ICTs and development which was one of the central themes of the WSIS process.

ISOC believes that the Forum's success will depend very much on the mechanisms for contributing to the discussion and one of the best means of doing so would be through a web-based work and communication space. Such a web-based mechanism will encourage participation across stakeholders. It will be important that the web-based collaborative work space be appropriately hosted given the need for consistency and stability.

However, a caution: we should be cognizant of related time and resource issues. It is unrealistic to expect all stakeholders to be able to participate in multiple layered list-based exchanges on a real-time basis. Many stakeholders do not have the resources or the time to spend managing or participating in ongoing discussions.

The Internet Society believes that the Forum should meet once a year. The meeting should not exceed two to three days given the personnel and financial constraints that many stakeholders are subject to. In order to attract the greatest participation it might be useful for the Forum to be held in a different region each year.

The Internet Society, and the Internet community, stand ready to participate fully and constructively in the IGF just as they have endeavored to do over the last 3-4 years of WSIS.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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