

The Internet Society (ISOC) is pleased to submit the following comments and recommendation to the United Nations Secretary General's review process examining the desirability of continuing the Internet Governance Forum. ISOC has participated in the IGF since its inception, and has organized and spoken in the main sessions and workshops in collaboration with every type of stakeholder. We have served on the IGF multistakeholder advisory group. We have been a regular contributor to the IGF Secretariat Trust Fund. We have created and supported a substantial ISOC IGF Ambassador Program to engage significant numbers of active, knowledgeable participants and bring them to the IGF from around the world¹. Our extensive membership is involved and supportive². Thus, ISOC has had a chance to learn about the Forum from every perspective, and we welcome the occasion to be able to share our views in this important process.

The Internet Society is convinced that the IGF performs a useful function. In considering its future, we must remember that the Forum is a child of the World Summit on the Information Society. The WSIS was an important milestone in the world's attitude toward Internet governance, but it was not a truly multistakeholder process. Discussions about the Internet and its inclusive, bottom up, stakeholder driven processes took place in an environment that severely limited the participation of non-governmental organizations, whether from civil society or from the private sector. And yet, the WSIS explicitly set up the IGF in a way that resembles the Internet model's organizations and processes. We appreciate this and recognize it as a very significant step forward from normal UN, and intergovernmental ways of doing things. We believe that the IGF is working well, and must be considered a success. Diverse stakeholders are learning how to talk together, share experiences, and work together.

The Internet Society values the opportunity created by the IGF. We are encouraged to see the pursuit of issues in a multistakeholder engagement model. And we maintain that these outcomes would not have been possible in any of the traditional intergovernmental models we are aware of. We recognize that the IGF is a unique forum where ideas can be explored and tested by stakeholders, on an equal footing, unburdened by the constraints of intergovernmental procedures and negotiations. The IGF does things intergovernmental structures do not readily permit. It provides a space to explore emerging issues with an open mind, rather than by debating fixed positions in a negotiation. It encourages stakeholders to identify potential partners; to take away and use new ideas. We also believe that the progress that has been made by this innovative forum would be lost if the IGF does not continue for a further period of time.

¹ See the 2008 Report at <http://www.isoc.org/pubpolpillar/igfambassadors/docs/ambassador_brochure_2008.pdf>

² See the survey of ISOC members at <<http://www.isoc.org/pubpolpillar/docs/ig-survey-report-200905.pdf>>

We therefore recommend that the IGF be continued for a further five years, with a second review to be carried out to determine the ongoing need to continue the Forum further into the future.

For further information, please contact:

Bill Graham
Strategic Global Engagement
Office of the President
The Internet Society
graham@isoc.org

About the Internet Society

Founded in 1992, the Internet Society (ISOC) is a professional membership society with more than 80 organizations and over 28,000 individual members in over 90 chapters around the world. It provides leadership in addressing issues that confront the future of the Internet, and is the organization home for the groups responsible for Internet infrastructure standards, including the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) and the Internet Architecture Board (IAB). In 2002, ISOC was given the privilege of operating the .ORG domain name as a result of a competitive open bid process conducted by ICANN; and a subsidiary organization, called Public Interest Registry (PIR), was established for this purpose.