



Contribution to the Internet Governance Forum Consultations

May 2007

General comments

The Internet Society (ISOC) is pleased to provide the following comments in response to 1) the Internet Governance Forum's call for input on the secretariat's planning document and 2) the call for contributions to the open consultation on May 23rd.

Our comments build on a number of points made so far in Internet Governance Forum (IGF) consultations and on the experience of IGF Athens. In general we are in favor of the basic agenda and focus areas as outlined in the recent Rio planning document posted to the IGF site. The document addresses a number of points that ISOC raised during the February 2007 consultation and in prior submission and statements.

The Internet Society's mission is "to promote the open development, evolution, and use of the Internet for the benefit of all people throughout the world." The Internet Governance Forum's cross cutting theme of capacity building and development and the four focus areas of openness, diversity, security and access are fundamental to increasing the availability of the Internet. These themes and focus areas oriented the discussion in IGF Athens and continue to provide a very important foundation for the work of the IGF going forward.

In considering the success criteria for IGF Rio it is worthwhile looking at past experience. IGF Athens worked because it was multilateral, multi-stakeholder, democratic and transparent. And, it was an open environment free of the intergovernmental pressures of negotiated texts and political maneuvering. Suggestions that might change the structure and nature of the IGF for Rio or future meetings need to be approached with great caution and carefully measured against both the IGF's mandate and paragraph 77 of the Tunis Agenda.

Structure

- As we have indicated in the past, we believe that shorter main sessions with fewer speakers would be more rewarding than the larger and longer sessions in Athens. These shorter sessions would be made all the more relevant and valuable with a much greater emphasis on experience sharing across stakeholders.

- We believe that a number of workshops should be linked to the main sessions and a certain number left open to encourage a broad discussion of issues of interest to the participants. It would be most useful if the linked workshops were held after their respective main sessions. This will give the workshop participants an opportunity to build on the discussions and issues raised in the main panel.
- Given its nature, the Emerging Issues session would be better placed at the end of the meeting rather than the beginning. We discuss this further below.
- There is a suggestion that there will be an exhibition space in Rio. We would encourage the organizers to place an emphasis on meeting spaces and giving more prominence to the plaza concept rather than an exhibition space.
- We encourage webcasting and audiocasting of the sessions in Rio. The chat-rooms in Athens provided for remote participants were also particularly valuable and enabled a lively discussion. For Rio we would encourage greater awareness building of these tools across stakeholders, communities and geographies so that more participants will use them.

The four themes

In its submission to the IGF consultation in February of this year, the Internet Society suggested that while the four theme areas were the right ones to carry forward to Rio, there would need to be a more narrow focus on specific sub-issues to make the sessions truly valuable to participants. A deeper dive into the key issue areas is necessary, and our recommendations reflect this suggested approach.

Access:

- The main focus of this session should be on the importance of enabling environments, including regulatory regimes, investment climates and business practices, etc., to addressing access issues. Workshops could explore these sub areas in more detail.
- A greater emphasis should be placed on experience sharing and best practices that help address sub para (e) of the IGF's mandate: "Advise all stakeholders in proposing ways and means to accelerate the availability and affordability of the Internet in the developing world." All stakeholders should be encouraged to present best practices.
- Specific access issues for disadvantaged communities (for reasons of gender, geography, disability, etc.) should be highlighted and addressed in workshops, as should the issue of interconnection costs and the means for addressing them.

Openness:

- The focus of this session should be on the challenges to access to information and knowledge and what can be done to overcome them. Challenges might be related to, inter alia, standardization issues, languages and content, censorship and freedom of expression, training/skills development, etc. This approach lends itself well to a productive problem solving and best practices focused discussion.
- Additionally, this session should address user issues, as per sub para (k) of the IGF mandate on issues arising from the use and misuse of the Internet.

Security:

- The focus for this session should be on the need to develop and implement a "culture of cyber security" in developing and developed nations, from educational and awareness raising programs for the individual user through to guidance on improving the security of e-government services, etc. The focus should be on sharing of best practices and successful implementation programs.

- Malware, unwanted traffic and related topics could be the focus of a workshop.
- We are also pleased to see digital identity and authentication highlighted as important issues and would suggest that they also be subject of a workshop.

Diversity:

- The main focus of this session should be on creating demand for diversity of voices, languages and, importantly, content on the Internet. There are a range of impediments to diversity, including regulation, lack of skills development, lack of commercial incentives, etc., that should be addressed. Again, the session should be structured to highlight how such impediments have been successfully overcome.
- A related discussion should focus on the importance of user-generated local content to spurring access and increasing local investment.

Emerging Issues

As we have mentioned above we do not believe that an Emerging Issues session is best placed at the beginning of the meeting. The Internet Society suggests that the Emerging Issues session should be held on the last day and dedicated to looking at new issues relevant to the Internet brought about by changes in technologies, societal shifts, new regulatory initiatives, etc., with the goal of identifying those that might warrant focusing on at the next IGF.

Internet governance at the local level

At the Internet Society's recent INET in Abuja, Nigeria, there was a vigorous discussion of how issues related to Internet governance are addressed locally. A number of speakers pointed to the fact that while much occurs at the international level, there is very little to ensure that the momentum and discussions in international meetings is driven forward at the local level. It was suggested this is due in part to a lack of suitable local multi-stakeholder structures and technical and regulatory capacity in many countries.

The Internet Society suggests that time in Rio would be well spent fulfilling sub para (h) of the IGF's mandate, in which the Forum should "contribute to capacity building for Internet governance in developing countries, drawing fully on local sources of knowledge and expertise." Highlighting examples of successful multi-stakeholder Internet governance discussions at the local level would be a useful step in this direction.

The Internet Society (<http://www.isoc.org>) is a not-for-profit membership organization founded in 1991 to provide leadership in Internet related standards, education, and policy. With offices in Washington, DC, and Geneva, Switzerland, it is dedicated to ensuring the open development, evolution and use of the Internet for the benefit of people throughout the world. ISOC is the organizational home of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) (<http://www.ietf.org>) and other Internet-related bodies who together play a critical role in ensuring that the Internet develops in a stable and open manner. For over 13 years ISOC has run international network training programs for developing countries and these have played a vital role in setting up the Internet connections and networks in virtually every country connecting to the Internet during this time.