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To: igf@unog.ch
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Subject: Comments for Hyderabad meeting

This is the output of a discussion process within the Online Collaboration Dynamic Coalition that aimed to produce a requirements document for building an online community for the IGF, equivalent to those of other Internet governance institutions such as the IETF. The discussion did not reach in a consensus, so this document is not presented as being that of the Online Collaboration Dynamic Coalition, but is endorsed in its present form by the author as an aid to future development of the IGF's Web presence.

Rationale

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The establishment of the IGF was an ambitious innovation in global governance for the Internet. Whereas earlier Internet governance institutions such as the IETF, the RIRs, and to some extent ICANN, emerged largely from the grassroots of the Internet technical community and utilised principally online working methods from the outset, the IGF is the first new Internet governance institution to be structured principally as a face-to-face annual meeting, and aside from the activities of its dynamic coalitions, it remains set in that form.

Whilst this may have provided a more natural means of engagement for some stakeholders from outside the Internet technical community, it has distanced the IGF from ordinary Internet users and limited its potential to draw in the breadth of community engagement that the other Internet governance institutions mentioned above have enjoyed. Thus even when mechanisms such as Webcasting have been provided to bridge the annual meeting with online users, these have been underutilised because remote users have not felt part of the same community as those meeting in person.

To improve the mechanisms of remote participation made available by the IGF therefore only addresses part of the problem. What is more important is that the IGF produce a virtual community to motivate a broad cross-section of users, including those who cannot afford to attend the annual meetings, to participate actively and enthusiastically in year-round policy dialogue. In short, the IGF must welcome online discourse as a principal means of engagement in its activities, not merely as an adjunct to its discrete annual meetings.

To date, the IGF has fallen short in this. Where other Internet governance institutions host vibrant and effective virtual discussions that benefit from the unique discursive properties of the online environment, the IGF does not. The development of such a virtual community for the IGF has been limited by a number of factors, and it is the purpose of this requirements document to set those out, and to sketch the institutional, technical and social modifications that the IGF should commit to if it wishes to foster the development of a more engaging online environment for the IGF community.

What the IGF already has

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Official Web site

- * Static pages, manually maintained navigation and ad-hoc archival
- * Manually maintained ACL for event organisers to update event information
- * Semi-automated management of event information
- * No programmatic access to metadata such as calendar files
- * Interactivity limited to a manually maintained RSS feed
- * No site map, search or user-generated content
- * Limited support for asynchronous discussion (the official Web forum)
- * Limited support for synchronous discussion (the official Webcast and chat client)
- * No support for collaborative editing, decision-making, social networking or multilingualisation

IGF Community Site (<http://igf-online.net>)

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- * Not supported by the Secretariat, developed by the Online Collaboration Dynamic Coalition
 - * Single sign-on with OpenID to centralised community Wiki and blog site
 - * Shared but manually-maintained links to official and community resources in header menu
 - * Flexible support for asynchronous discussion (hybrid mailing lists and Web forum)
 - * Limited support for synchronous discussion (IRC channel and Web gateway)
 - * Flexible support for collaborative editing (wiki)
 - * No support for decision-making or social networking
 - * Limited content aggregation (RSS, not enhanced by metadata)
 - * Limited multilingualisation support

Host country sites

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- * Static, manually maintained content
 - * Do not share data with official or community Web sites
 - * No support for any of the forms of online democratic engagement

Other

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- * Social networking through unofficial IGF Facebook group
 - * Does not share data with official or other community Web sites

What changes are required

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Institutional

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- * It should be possible to register as an IGF stakeholder without attending a meeting in person
 - * Rather than the IGF's plenary activity being limited to an annual meeting that meeting should cap a programme of online intersessional work
 - * The official Web site should be unified or closely integrated with community and host country resources
 - * Data from the official IGF Web site should be programmatically accessible and tagged for reuse:
 - User registration details
 - Calendar of events
 - Live transcripts
 - Dynamic coalitions
 - Stakeholder contributions
 - * Funding should be sought for online resources just as it is allocated for the annual meeting

Technical

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- * Unified registration system for IGF annual meetings, sub-events and IGF online resources
 - * Rich ACL providing roles for Secretariat, Advisory Group, Dynamic Coalitions and others
 - * Registration details can be shared with community Web sites and events using OpenSocial API
 - * RSS+Dublin Core metadata engine to unify data from official and community sources
 - * Multi-modal online participation should be facilitated where possible (eg. email, Web, RSS)
 - * Unified set of themes for IGF sites (differentiating between official and community resources)
 - * Engine to gate live transcripts to IRC, Jabber, Second Life, etc
 - * Event information made available in iCalendar format
 - * All workshops and events to have access to integrated online fora
 - * Extension and unification of existing facilities for asynchronous and synchronous discussion
 - * Extension of existing facilities for collaborative editing (eg. add polling support)

Social

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- * Appointed volunteer rapporteurs to bridge online and offline fora
 - * Outreach programme to existing online communities of Internet users
 - * Capacity building for government stakeholders in the use of online resources

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host -t NAPTR 1.0.8.0.3.1.2.9.8.1.6.e164.orglawk -F! '{print $3}'
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