

ETNO Reflection Document on the Programme, Agenda and Format of the Hyderabad Meeting, ahead of the 3rd open consultation (Geneva, 16 September 2008)

Introduction

ETNO, the European Telecommunications Network Operators' Association (www.etno.be) and its 41 members from 34 countries have been working for many years on a range of policy issues associated with the information society, including Internet governance and the World Summit on Information Society process. Many ETNO member companies attended the Athens and the Rio IGF and participated in the preparatory open consultations.

This document describes how these telecommunications network operators view organizational (programme, agenda and format) as well as content issues for the preparation of the Forum's third meeting in Hyderabad, India.

General Comments

ETNO and its members are committed to the IGF process and are looking forward to the 3rd meeting of the IGF. In this respect, we have addressed many issues for the preparation of the Hyderabad meeting in our previous contribution (posted at http://intgovforum.org/cont_may08/RD284%20-%20IGV%202nd%20IGF%20consult.pdf), but we are pleased to provide further comments, taking into account the latest developments.

By all means, we continue to encourage the IGF Secretariat, the Multistakeholder Advisory Group, the host country India, and all the parties involved in the preparations of the Hyderabad meeting, to work towards finalizing all the details (i.e. programme including all workshops, descriptions, logistical issues etc.) by the end of September 2008.

Specific comments

Based on the document “Programme, Agenda and Format of the Hyderabad Meeting”, presented by the IGF Secretariat on 5 June 2008, we would like to make the following specific comments and suggestions:

II. Agenda

Regarding the overall theme “Internet for all,” ETNO understands that the title must be short, “catchy” and inspiring. However, the title must not create false or exaggerated anticipations, or even imply a universal service obligation. We find “Internet for all” very general, wide-ranged, which certainly can’t be exhausted in the Hyderabad meeting. We understand that the title and the agenda have been submitted to the UN Secretary General and can’t be changed. We would appreciate however, a small explanatory text underneath the overall theme, setting (or rather limiting) the framework for the discussions in Hyderabad. We suggest that “Internet for all” is concentrated on the efforts for expanding the Internet (reaching the next billion users and beyond), while at the same time promoting the dialogue for security, openness and critical Internet resources.

III. Programme

A. Basic structure for the Hyderabad meeting

ETNO supports in principle the new format of the Hyderabad meeting. Of course, there is room for some improvements, particularly in the duration of the main session debates and the re-introduction of the Reporting Back sessions. More specifically:

Based on the experiences of the Athens and Rio IGFs, ETNO strongly suggests keeping the 2 hour duration of the main session debates (instead of the 3 hours proposed for Hyderabad) and using the third hour for the Reporting Back session (the first day the extra hour can be used for the opening ceremony, while the last day - where there will be two main session debates - the extra hour in the morning can be used for Reporting Back and the extra hour in the afternoon for a possible closing ceremony). On the condition that the main session debates will be interactive and not wasted in presentations or replies by panellists and/or discussants, then 2 hours should be plenty of time to deploy the topics. This arrangement (2 hours for main session debate and 1 hour for reporting back or ceremony) also covers the practical need for a 3 hour interpretation slot.

The Reporting Back session is extremely helpful because someone may hear - and in more than one language - a brief summary of what was discussed in the previous main session and in many of the other events held before. It is also a form of outcome that many stakeholders are asking for. Therefore, ETNO urges that Reporting Back is re-introduced in the programme and that there is a one hour session prior to the main session debate. This suggestion in our view complements perfectly the main session debates, which according to the programme, will be introduced by presentations outlining the content of the morning main session workshops.

B. Meeting types

Main Session Debates:

ETNO would like to stress that using the term “debate” could be a cause for confusion, as “debate” is usually interpreted as contention of a fight or as quarrel. ETNO considers that by the term “debate” it is meant an interactive discussion and hopes that all participants will share this understanding.

ETNO supports the idea that these sessions are interactive and that they will not have panellists or designated respondents. Still, ETNO would like to propose the idea that besides a brief presentation outlining the content of the morning main workshops, there is a Key note speaker to stimulate discussion, rather than having the moderator trying to do that. Besides the moderator, who according to current practice is a journalist, may not be an expert on the specific topic. This idea about a Key note speaker could be quite useful for certain main session debates, if not for all.

Workshops:

ETNO reiterates that the number of workshops should be reduced and similar workshops should merge. Any selection should be primarily based on the quality of the proposal.

As regards the encouragement of Governments to respond positively to requests to lend their support to organisers of workshops, we really do not understand why it is necessary to single-out specific stakeholders. This sentence, if it remains, should refer to all stakeholders.

When it comes to workshop reports, we continue to believe that these must be short, based on a previously agreed template (who participated, what issues were discussed, what were the main points) and checked before being presented in order to make sure that they truly reflect the discussions. In any case, no matter what the format of proceedings, the principle of “no official outcomes” must be preserved. Further more, it is not helpful for IGF to adopt any process that makes subjective assessment and indicates that wide consensus has been achieved.

Best Practice Forums and Open Forums

ETNO would like to repeat its previous position that discussion about “best practices”, or rather “lessons learnt” fits better within main session debates or workshops. ETNO is very concerned that thematic or country presentations are baptised as Best Practice Forums, in the absence of a reliable mechanism to justify them as such. Therefore, we underline that if “Best Practice Forums” remain in the programme, they must be very limited, specific, well justified, containing all the necessary details and accepted after a wide agreement.

Dynamic Coalition Meetings

ETNO has expressed its views on the Dynamic Coalitions in its two previous contributions. Therefore, we would only like to repeat that Dynamic Coalitions must be given space in the IGF to evolve. But it is of the interest of all parties not to see their role institutionalized and that certain criteria are met (i.e. that their work is directly related to the IGF, that their constitution is known, that

they are indeed a Coalition and not one organization advocating specific views, that the meetings do not turn into workshops, and that they provide open access to information and documents as some already do).

Other Meetings (Reporting Back Sessions):

Please see our comments under Basic Structure for the Hyderabad meeting. Additionally, as we have suggested in the past, the reporting back for the main sessions should be done by the IGF Secretariat as it can guarantee a well balanced overview of what was discussed. As for the reporting back of all the other meetings, we suggest that there is more structure, with a strict format to be followed by all. A maximum time should be given for presentations and there should be more chances for comments (but not on substance issues, because substance comments fit best in the main sessions).

C. Format of the Schedule

Please see our comments under Basic Structure for the Hyderabad meeting. Additionally, ETNO suggest that the lunch break lasts two hours instead of one and that is reflected in the programme document.

IV. Substantive programme

A. Reaching the Next Billion

Access

ETNO believes that, in order for the Internet to be available and affordable, national policies should protect and encourage investment in capacity and growth. However, building a backbone network remains an expensive decision for an operator, while transit networks are necessary elements for network interconnection. Although costs for long distance transmission have strongly decreased, it remains a challenge for all operators around the world to offer an IP network allowing specific quality of service and provide security at a satisfactory level. This cannot be made without investments and requires sustainable business models. To ensure the spread of internet, ETNO considers necessary to create suitable conditions, so that the private sector may undertake the necessary risks and invest in infrastructures and ICT, within a competitive environment.

Of course, other important issues that relate to access, such as affordability of terminal equipment and of wired or wireless access of end-users, must also be taken under consideration.

Multilingualism

ETNO supports the drive to enhance awareness of multilingualism and the efforts that are being put into enabling additional languages to be used across the Internet as well as the creation of local content. Using the IGF process to further those aims and to raise awareness is encouraged. This is a small but important step to bridging the digital divide.

B. Promoting Cyber-Security and Trust

Are we losing the battle against cyber crime?

The battle against cyber crime must be viewed as an issue that will demand constant attention and vigilance. It is not a simple case of “winning” or “losing” one battle and the way this topic has been described in the programme fails to recognise this point.

Fostering security, privacy and openness

Engagement between appropriate and impacted stakeholders is essential for a safe and secure environment to exist across the Internet. Focusing on some of the key requirements will help to achieve the balanced approach amongst security, privacy and openness, which is essential and will help the Internet to grow.

C. Managing Critical Internet Resources

Transition from IPv4 to IPv6

ETNO fully recognises the increasing importance of this topic and in particular the discussions surrounding IPv4 exhaustion and the transition from IPv4 to IPv6, where awareness needs to be raised. As regards the adoption of IPv6, any move in that direction has to be industry led and it can only occur when the industry determines that the required drivers are in place. Governance issues related to IP management should build upon the current practice and the bottom-up approach.

Arrangements for Internet Governance – global and national / regional

ETNO is still concerned that this title is very vague, general and not well understood. In fact it is not clear at all what will be discussed about. We would like to stress that by using the title “Arrangements for Internet Governance” under “Managing Critical Internet Resources” discussion is likely to expand away from areas that demand immediate attention, such as the imminent discussion on the transition from IPv4 to IPv6. We believe that care must be taken within IGF not to duplicate discussions that are more appropriate for other existing fora. Therefore, we see this session as a “scouting” one, in terms of what the landscape is (global and national / regional), what has been done and by whom, aiming at a better understanding of CIR.

V. Logistics

ETNO urges the Indian Government to introduce a simplified VISA procedure for IGF participants.