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## **Comments submitted by IT for Change as part of formal consultation on review of IGF, Dated 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2009**

### **1. To what extent has the IGF addressed the mandate set out for it in the [Tunis Agenda](#)?**

The IGF has largely addressed the mandate given by TA in being an open policy dialogue forum. However, it has still to go a long way in order to fulfill the real objective with which it was set up – to be able to assist in democratic development of global public policies, and if necessary, new institutions, in the area of IG, in the spirit of the Geneva Declaration of Principles.

It is important that the IGF does not see the instrumentality of ‘a discussion and dialog space’ as the end in itself. It should constantly judge itself with respect to the global policy impact it has made, or can make. To this end, it needs to keep evolving its structures and nature of outputs. While important and innovative work is being done in this regard, we need to move much faster given the urgency of addressing global Internet policy issues to enable an inclusive and participative information society envisaged in the Geneva Declaration of Principles.

### **2. To what extent has the IGF embodied the [WSIS principles](#)?**

Geneva Declaration of (WSIS) Principles open with a clear accent on human rights and Millennium Declaration Goals (MDGs). Unfortunately, both these issues either entirely ignored or greatly under-emphasized in the IGF. A proposal to use the term ‘rights’ in the overall theme for the next IGF is currently being very strongly resisted. Similarly, MDG issues like poverty eradication and universal health and education appear far away concerns for the IGF, which continue to remain mostly engaged with relatively elitist issues. There is no clear attempt to frame its themes and work plans in a manner that places rights and MDGs centrally. The subject of ‘development’ mostly gets treated in a superficial and patronizing manner, without engaging actors who are truly involved in development activities, including from the UN. Very often ‘governance’ issues are posited to be less important than ‘needs’ issues for disadvantaged people, which flies in the face of most current political conceptions of what is development. .

On the other hand, the IGF scores very high on the levels of multistakeholderism, openness and transparency which are unprecedented for any UN body, and can therefore serve as a very useful role model.

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**3. What has the impact of the IGF been in direct or indirect terms? Has it impacted you or your stakeholder group/institution/government? Has it acted as a catalyst for change?**

IGF has brought very important IG issues to a global political stage. It has served to build the capacity of new actors – especially in the South – to engage with IG issues. It has developed an environment, actually a new paradigm, for open deliberations on global political issues, which can be a trend-setter for deliberative democracy at the global level. Unfortunately, it still has not been able to attract the interest of the political civil society from the South, despite holding its last meeting in India, which has a very vibrant civil society. Also, in terms of developing countries as a whole, it was hoped that the IGF will help trigger possibilities of new Southern views on IG and Internet policies. This has not happened, though it is still possible that some such initiatives shape up at the IGF in the future.

**4. How effective are IGF processes in addressing the tasks set out for it, including the functioning of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG), Secretariat and open consultations?**

There has been a good degree of flexibility, and consequently of innovation, in IGF structures, which is exemplary. It speaks to the merit of its present leadership, and the secretariat, which must be congratulated. The blame for inadequate progress on real issues lies almost entirely with the lack of political will on the part of the principal actors in the global IG arena. Open houses for deciding agenda and other key issues, open call for workshops, dynamic coalitions, open written submissions and synthesis paper based on it, making transcripts of key sessions made available, making chairman's summary made available, rolling program document, stakeholder working groups for finalizing workshops, full fledged open sessions at the IGF, and now the proposed round tables are all interesting and useful innovations, which are, hopefully, evolutionary towards purposeful outcomes from the IGF.

The MAG seems to have worked well, especially now that it has taken steps to enhance its transparency. However, it need to take up more substantive work, moving beyond a strictly process role, as described in response to question 6 below.

**5. Is it desirable to continue the IGF past its initial five-year mandate, and why/why not?**

Yes. The IGF needs to be a standing or a permanent body, or at least be around for a very long time to come. IG issues at the global level are only going to become more urgent and important to address, and the global democratic deficit in regarding them going to be felt more and more starkly. The importance of the IGF in such an emerging context would keep rising, which is if it is able to start addressing the intentions with which it was created (see reply 1 above)

**6. If the continuation of the Forum is recommended, what improvements would you suggest in terms of its working methods, functioning and processes?**

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IGF cannot remain a 2-3 days conference once a year. It needs to evolve an around-the-year work plan with substantive outputs. At present the 3 times a year MAG meeting mostly grapples with procedural issues, but as insituational building stabilizes, these process issues will become relatively less important. It will be important to be able to produce substantive output, and keep up a substantive dialogue. Unfortunately, many in the MAG try to limit its role to a program committee, thought it is a fact that increasingly, directly or indirectly, a good amount of substantive stuff gets done in the MAG meetings. With institutional stabilization, such a substantive role has to be more clearly articulated/ formalized.

The best way to do so is first of all to formally accept a clear role for MAG to do some degree of substantive discussions and produce outcomes on Internet policy related issues, and secondly, to structure itself for this purpose. MAG working groups, taking in some outside members, around specific issues may be a very useful way to do so. The structure and work of WGIG may offer some good leads for this. A WGIG like work and output mode has to be taken up, by making necessary changes, because both the annual meeting of the IGF, and the larger global IG community, require a good amount of specific inputs, that are based on a broad-based expertise and have also gone through certain political processes. Without such specific outputs one cannot see the IGF processes making any substantive impact of global IG scene.