

Intervention by Bertrand de La Chapelle
First consultations on the convening of the IGF
February 17, 2006

Mr Chairman,

You invited us yesterday to contribute in a thinking aloud mode and I will follow your recommendation here, presenting a few concrete ideas in a personal capacity to feed the debate, focusing on the first meeting of the Forum in Athens.

1) Athens as an Open Conference

The IGF should be established in the most pragmatic and self-organizing manner possible. As the participant from Singapore mentioned yesterday : we want the IGF to start small and evolve. To prove the movement by walking, and save time, the simplest approach could be to *organize **Athens** as a 3-4 days open conference*, with a basic registration process, like the one used for the present meeting, open even to interested individuals.

2) With a limited number of “thematic sessions”

Athens should address a diversity of substantive issues in a limited number of “thematic sessions” (4 to 6 max), in addition to the necessary opening and final wrap-up plenaries. The issues should be chosen at this first IGF in order to illustrate the diversity of themes and to respond to the priorities of the diverse categories of stakeholders.

3) To help build a clearer picture on issues of common concern or interest

The purpose of these thematic sessions is to allow all actors to get a clearer picture of the different dimensions of each issue and reach “a better understanding of the challenges it raises, even if they do not agree at that stage on how it should be addressed, or what the solutions are. The only criteria should be that actors agree the issue exists and should be addressed. In other terms, that this is an “issue of common concern or interest”

4) Possible Thematic Sessions structure

Each session (half a day) could start with a panel of experts from the different categories of stakeholders presenting the different dimensions of the issue (45 min.), followed by an overview of the main actors involved in addressing it (30 min.). A discussion (1 to 1:30 hours) would then ensue to explore how the Forum can facilitate deliberations about the issue and interaction among the various actors. Each of the above aspects is necessary to allow concrete outcomes from the IGF

and the thematic sessions should not be limited to a mere panel with no or little discussion.

5) Input from Thematic Sessions into the closing Plenary

For each thematic session, a rapporteur or the Chair would make a summary of the discussions and proposals for action (15 min.) and present the main elements in the wrap-up plenary to help structure activities in the perspective of the next annual meeting of the IGF.

6) Open call for suggestions of themes

How should these themes be selected ? Several suggestions have been made yesterday and surely will be today. But we need an iterative and structured process to identify them in an open and inclusive manner. In this perspective, following the present consultations, an “open call for suggestions of themes” could be initiated by the Secretariat, with a deadline of end of March.

7) Proposed format for submission and selection of themes

Stakeholders would contribute one page submissions, ideally following a proposed six point format* :

- A concise formulation for the proposed theme;
- A brief description of why it is important in their view;
- How it is in conformity with the Tunis Agenda in terms of substance, particularly in reference to para. 34 to 54;
- How it fits within the mandate of the IGF as detailed in para 72;
- Who the main actors in the field are, who could be encouraged to participate in the Forum and its thematic sessions
- Last but not least, why, in their view, this issue should be addressed in the first annual meeting of the Forum rather than in subsequent ones.

Irrespective of whether this format is adopted for submission, the six points above could be used as criteria for the final selection of the different themes

8) Final selection of themes during the May consultations

Submissions would be posted online by the secretariat. A second phase for online comments would be opened for all actors to express support or criticize the proposals during the month of April. The second round of open consultations envisaged for May could then, in view of a summary of comments by the Secretariat, select the few themes that gather the greatest consensus.

10) Multi-stakeholder Program Committee

At this second meeting, and only then, a more formal multi-stakeholder Program Committee would be formed to help organize the introductory panels for each thematic session, and guarantee the involvement of the key stakeholders in this field.

11) A poster session in Athens for issues not retained at this first annual meeting

During the Athens meeting, stakeholders who submitted issues not retained for the main thematic sessions would be given the opportunity to make short 3-5 minutes interventions in a special poster session of 2 hours in order to further feed the agenda-setting process. This innovative session (in a format already implemented in the Tokyo regional conference in 2003) element is useful to introduce for two reasons:

- to keep engaged actors who care about a theme that was not retained and would like to see it taken into account in the future
- to facilitate the early identification of emerging themes, in accordance with the very mandate (para 72 of the Tunis Agenda) of the UGF

Mr. Chairman, I will limit my contribution at that stage to this issue and take the opportunity to thank you for holding this meeting in such an open format.
