

## **The WSIS Principles on Internet Governance:**

### **Follow-up and Implementation**

William J. Drake  
Director, Project on the Information  
Revolution and Global Governance  
Graduate Institute for International Studies  
Geneva, Switzerland  
President, Computer Professionals for  
Social Responsibility  
[drake@hei.unige.ch](mailto:drake@hei.unige.ch)  
[www.cpsr.org/board/drake](http://www.cpsr.org/board/drake)

[NB: The below is in the standardized format agreed by the civil society Internet Governance Caucus for IGF theme submissions from its members]

*a. A concise formulation for the proposed theme.*

Assess the implementation of the relevant WSIS principles by Internet governance mechanisms and exchange best practices so as to encourage conformity with these principles.

*b. A brief description of why it is important.*

In paragraph 34, the Tunis Agenda established a broad working definition of Internet governance. This broad understanding of Internet governance as comprising the full range of intergovernmental and private sector regimes and programs that shape the Internet's development and use is reflected throughout the document. In parallel, early in WSIS process, governments established a new set of international principles on how governance should be carried out. These held that, "the international management of the Internet should be multilateral, transparent and democratic, with the full involvement of governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations. It should ensure an equitable distribution of resources, facilitate access for all and ensure a stable and secure functioning of the Internet, taking into account multilingualism." Governments repeated these principles without challenge or modification throughout the duration of the WSIS process, and included them in paragraph 48 of the 2003 Declaration of Principles and in paragraph 29 of the 2005 Tunis Agenda.

Taken together, these provisions clearly establish the global community's resolve that all Internet governance mechanisms should comply with the relevant WSIS principles. But in reality, there is significant variation across mechanisms with respect to the implementation of these prescriptions, and there has been

no systematic, crosscutting assessment of their current practices. These conditions impede collective learning, participation, and capacity building, and make it more difficult to promote improvements in the conduct of Internet governance.

*c. How it is in conformity with the Tunis Agenda.*

See above

*d. How it fits within the mandate of the IGF as detailed in paragraph 72.*

The Tunis Agenda states that the IGF should, (i) “Promote and assess, on an ongoing basis, the embodiment of WSIS principles in Internet Governance processes.” This mandate clearly suggests an ongoing work program comprising information gathering and analysis in order to promote the principles' implementation. Other clauses in paragraph 72 provide supporting operational guidance, e.g. the IGF should: (b) *Facilitate discourse between bodies* dealing with different *cross-cutting international public policies...*; (c) *Interface with appropriate inter-governmental organisations and other institutions on matters under their purview*; (d) *Facilitate the exchange of information and best practices, and in this regard make full use of the expertise of the academic, scientific and technical communities*; (f) *Strengthen and enhance the engagement of stakeholders in existing and/or future Internet Governance mechanisms, particularly those from developing countries*; and (g) *Identify emerging issues, bring them to the attention of the relevant bodies and the general public, and, where appropriate, make recommendations.*” (emphasis added)

*e. Who the main actors in the field are, who could be encouraged to participate in the thematic session.*

All international organizations, governments, and private sector and civil society actors involved in or concerned about Internet governance.

*f. Why should this issue should be addressed in the first annual meeting of the Forum.*

The principles were the most consistently invoked and consensual prescriptions on Internet governance established by the WSIS process. They provide overarching procedural guidance as to how Internet governance should be conducted now and in the future, and they constitute a horizontal baseline against which efforts to manage specific vertical issues like spam or multilingualization must be evaluated. As such, clarifying their precise meaning in practice and determining the extent to which current or proposed governance mechanisms for such issues conform with the principles is logically the first step that should be taken. However, it would be difficult to foster a focused and productive discussion on this topic in a large plenary setting before information has been systematically gathered and evaluated. Accordingly, it would be better to hold an initial dialogue in a breakout workshop, preferably to be facilitated by some preliminary data collection. If the discussion therein elicits sufficient interest, a virtual working group could be formed that could, inter alia, conduct some ongoing discussion and analysis and prepare a well-structured input to the 2007 IGF meeting.