



The Internet Society’s response to the call for follow-up to the consultations on the convening of the Internet Governance Forum

The Internet Society is pleased to respond to the call for input regarding the need for, and the mandate and composition of, a multi-stakeholder group to assist the United Nation’s Secretary-General in convening the Internet Governance Forum.

The Internet Society made a number of suggestions as to the mandate and composition of the multi-stakeholder group during an intervention on February 17 at the Forum consultation meeting in Geneva. We welcome this opportunity to provide additional detail that we trust will help contribute to the overall success of the Forum.

The mandate:

The Internet Society sees this multi-stakeholder group as a “body that helps shape and set the agenda and issue focus of the Forum”, what we have called a programme committee in other interventions. This programme committee should have a facilitating and guiding role with regard to the thematic focus areas of the Forum and its overall planning. The programme committee should work on a rough consensus basis, avoid bureaucratizing its role and structure and assist the UN Secretary General and his representative to ensure that the Forum is as useful and productive as possible.

We believe that the programme committee will have an important role in 1) reaching out and encouraging the participation of experts and 2) in facilitating information sharing regarding the issues that the Forum will discuss. The programme committee should ensure that all available expertise and best practice is sought out in the given subject areas with the aim of bringing about as much of a common understanding among stakeholders as possible.

We also see the programme committee as having an equally important role in encouraging the fullest participation, across regions and stakeholders, with a particular emphasis on the developing world.

We note, as we did during the consultation meeting, that the level of expertise and level of developing country participation will be two of the measures of success for the Forum.

One multi-stakeholder programme committee or many stakeholder bureaus:

One of the points of discussion in the consultation meeting was whether there should be distinct stakeholder bureaus that would then coordinate with each other or whether there should be one multi-stakeholder programme committee.

We do not believe that the spirit of multi-stakeholderism would be well served by distinct stakeholder bureaus. The Forum's success will depend upon all stakeholders collaborating and sharing information in true multi-stakeholder fashion, working with each other rather than coordinating with each other, as would be the case if stakeholders operated from their respective silos. We would suggest that it is only through a multi-stakeholder programme committee that critical horizontal and cross-cutting issues, such as spam, etc., can be fully and appropriately discussed.

Central to the success of the multi-stakeholder approach in the IGF will be the recognition the Internet community as a distinct and principal stakeholder, as was supported by many, including governments, during WSIS and the Internet Governance Forum consultation itself. In this regard we were pleased that the Chair of the Forum consultation referenced the Internet community as a stakeholder in one of his statements on the second day of the meeting.

Composition of the programme committee:

The Internet Society believes that what is most important for the programme committee is that it be 1) suitably balanced so as to appropriately represent the interests and diversity of stakeholders and 2) have an appropriate level of expertise. It should not be too large so as to make it ineffective, nor too small so as to make it unrepresentative. Therefore, the following levels of representation are suggested:

- 6 representatives from government and intergovernmental organizations
- 2 representatives from Civil Society
- 2 representatives from private sector
- 2 representatives from the Internet community

The programme committee should have the mandate to increase its size if it believes that this is necessary to better accommodate developing country representation. This said, if representation of any one stakeholder group were to be increased, the others should be increased proportionally.

In addition to the stakeholder representatives, The Internet Society believes that the programme committee should also include six (6) subject matter experts, chosen by the committee, to provide a level of expertise on the issue areas under consideration in the Forum. Obviously, these experts would not comprise the total expertise that the programme committee or the Forum would draw upon, but they would help ensure that the programme committee is providing the right level of programme planning and guidance. These subject matter experts could be appointed for one year.

The programme committee would then comprise a total number of 18 (12 stakeholder representatives and 6 subject matter experts), subject to further possible increases to account for additional developing country representation.

The role of Chair and co-Chairs of the programme committee:

The Internet Society believes that the Chair function should rotate among stakeholders, possibly every six months or at least every year. We also believe, along with other commentators, that there should be at least one co-Chair, and that the Chair and co-Chair(s) should be from different stakeholder groups. A schedule and agreed rotation process should be established as a priority.

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Links to other Internet Society contributions on Internet governance:

Submission on the Internet Governance Forum:

http://www.isoc.org/isoc/conferences/wsis/documents/ISOC_IGF_CONTRIBUTION.pdf

Statement during the Internet Governance Forum consultation:

<http://www.intgovforum.org/contributions/ISOC%20statement%20Feb%2017.pdf>

Statement by ISOC President and CEO Ms. Lynn St Amour during the WSIS Summit in Tunis:

<http://www.itu.int/wsis/tunis/statements/docs/cs-isoc/1.pdf>

ISOC WSIS and Internet governance page:

<http://www.isoc.org/isoc/conferences/wsis/index.shtml>