

Government of Singapore
15 Feb 2006

Responses to the Questionnaire on the Convening the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

*This questionnaire addresses some issues that came up following the Tunis Summit. It is meant to stimulate the discussions in the open consultations on the convening of the IGF on 16 and 17 February and help clarify some open questions with regard to the functioning of the IGF. The questionnaire aims to provide an open framework for discussion – additional remarks, comments or questions are welcome and should be sent to wgig@unog.ch *. You may write your comments on any of the questions directly into the form or submit more general comments separately. Please provide your full name, the entity which you represent and where you are based. If you are responding in your personal capacity please state so and describe your involvement in Internet Governance issues. Responses will be published on this website.*

1 The Tunis Agenda sets out various functions for the forum. Paragraph 72 (g) indicates that a possible outcome of its meetings could be recommendations (“where appropriate”). Paragraph 72 (l) asks the IGF to produce a report (“to publish its proceedings”) as its output.

(a) What outcome would you expect from an IGF meeting?

(b) Should there be any other output apart from the report?

The IGF should provide a platform for policy discussion and not for policy development. Reports of the proceedings could be fed back to the various relevant organisations as an input to their work

2 The Tunis Agenda describes the IGF as “multilateral, multi-stakeholder, democratic and transparent” (para 73) and sets out many functions it should assume (see paras 72 and 77). However, it leaves open questions of participation as well as periodicity, duration and type of IGF meetings, including on-line aspects and virtual collaboration and participation. Several delegations endorsed the proposal contained in the WGIG Report, i.e. to create a Forum that should be modelled on the WGIG open consultations, where all stakeholders participated on an equal footing.

(a) Could the WGIG open consultations constitute a possible model for the IGF?

(b) How often should the Forum meet?

- (c) How long should its meetings be?*
- (d) Should meetings be considered subject to UN rules, such as accreditation, rules of procedure or languages?*
- (e) How could the IGF make best possible use of ICTs and promote virtual interaction?*

The IGF meetings should meet not more than once a year for between 2-3 days, focusing on one or two issues. Consistent with the multilateral, multi-stakeholder, democratic and transparent nature of the IGF, individuals and organisations who would like to participate and contribute should be able to do so. Therefore the traditional UN accreditation rules should be modified so as not to limit the participation of non-governmental organisations or individuals. The rules of procedure for the IGF could be based on the successful WGIG open consultations which involved all stakeholders in a democratic and transparent manner on an equal footing.

In line with the multi-lateral, multi-stakeholder spirit of the IGF, multiple language interpretations should be made available in the six official UN languages.

Being sensitive to the limited resources of both participants and the IGF, the IGF should not meet more than once a year. The IGF should also make use of websites, email and other online collaboration tools.

3 The Tunis Agenda has a strong development focus. It raises questions related to access to the Internet (para 72(e)) as well as to developing country participation in Internet Governance mechanisms (para 72 (f)). It also emphasizes that the IGF needs “to contribute to capacity-building for Internet Governance in developing countries, drawing fully on local sources of knowledge and expertise” (para 72 (h)).

- (a) How should the IGF approach access issues (“availability and affordability of the Internet”)?*
- (b) Para 72 (f) indicates that special measures ought to be taken to facilitate developing country participation in the IGF itself. What should be done?*
- (c) What should be the focus of capacity-building initiatives?*

While the IGF should not duplicate the work of existing organisations, it could leverage on its multi-stakeholder make-up to discuss innovative ways which could involve partnerships between governments, the private sector, NGOs and civil society and local communities to improve access to the Internet.

Capacity-building initiatives could focus on building up awareness of issues and their impact at the national and international levels.

4 Para 78 (b) calls on the Secretary-General to “establish an effective and cost-efficient bureau to support the IGF, ensuring multi-stakeholder participation”.

- (a) Does this para refer to a bureau as it is normally used in an intergovernmental context, such as the WSIS bureau?*
- (b) Would it be a bureau to deal with organizational issues and prepare agenda and programme of the IGF meetings?*
- (c) If so, how should it be composed?*
- (d) Alternatively, could it be a high-level senior advisory body to provide overall direction and shape to the IGF meetings?*
- (e) If so, how should it be composed?*

The Tunis Agenda calls for the establishment of an ‘effective and cost-efficient bureau to support the IGF, ensuring multi-stakeholder participation’ (para 78b, Tunis Agenda). The responsibilities and make-up of the WSIS-Prepcom Bureau serves as a good model for the IGF to consider adapting. In addition to being responsible for developing the agenda, an important task of the IGF Bureau’s would be setting procedures to ensure multi-stakeholder participation.

In ensuring that, the IGF Bureau should itself be comprised of fair representation from all stakeholders, also taking into consideration balanced geographical representation. In the interest greater representation, the tenure on the IGF Bureau should not be longer than 2-3 years. The Bureau should also be responsible for the election of the Chair of the IGF meetings as well as approving proceeding reports submitted by the Secretariat.

The IGF could envisage the formation of a group of experts, whose main function is to support the IGF Bureau in determining the agenda for the meeting and develop papers to raise awareness and help in the facilitation of discussions. The support for such structures should be minimal and make use of the communication infrastructure to be put in place by the IGF Secretariat. Alternatively, this Group of Experts could also be part of the IGF Secretariat set-up. They should not require much further resources and should be largely self-supporting with some members or organizations volunteering to carry out some of its research duties.

5 Para 78 (b) can also be interpreted as referring to a secretariat function.

- (a) Could this function be assumed by existing institutions, which could take turns in providing the secretariat for the IGF?*
- (b) Alternatively, is there need for an independent secretariat?*
- (c) If a secretariat is established,*
 - (i) Where should it be based?*
 - (ii) What should be its linkage to the United Nations Secretary-General?*

The IGF should draw upon any appropriate resources of interested parties to carry out the Secretariat functions. While the IGF Secretariat could be hosted by organisations within the UN system or existing not-for-profit organisations, it is pertinent to recognise the competence that each stakeholder group can bring to the IGF, and Singapore could envisage a secretariat staffed by representatives from the different stakeholder groups.

The IGF Secretariat should be responsible for providing administrative and logistical support for the IGF. Its main tasks would be in the assisting the Bureau in preparing the agenda, proceeding reports, as well as maintaining the communications channels which could include websites, online collaboration tools etc. It should also act a liaison for the IGF in coordinating with other international organisations either on participation or substantive issues. While the host country of the IGF meetings would be responsible for the venue, meeting facilities including translation, it is also crucial that the IGF Secretariat work closely with the host organisers to ensure that the meetings run smoothly.

6 Para 73 addresses aspects related to the structure of the IGF, which should be “lightweight and decentralised” and build on “existing structures of Internet governance, with special emphasis on the complementarity between all stakeholders involved in this process”.

What does this mean in practice?

(a) Does the decentralized structure refer to a support structure (secretariat) or the Forum itself, or both?

(b) Does it point to additional expert meetings and / or programme committees, which could report back to the IGF and help prepare its meetings? Should possible sub-structures be supported by organizations with the relevant expertise?

Singapore understands the decentralised structure to refer to the IGF. While the IGF could envisage the formation of expert groups or programme committees, the support for such structures should be minimal and make use of the communication infrastructure to be put in place by the Secretariat. They should not require much further resources and should be largely self-supporting with some members or organizations volunteering to carry out some of its administrative duties.

7 The Tunis Agenda does not elaborate on aspects related to the funding of the IGF.

How do you think the IGF should be financed?

In order to keep the IGF lightweight and cost-efficient as called for in the Tunis Agenda (para 73b), it should not be weighed down by high fixed costs. This could be avoided if the funding for IGF could come from distributed sources. While the IGF Secretariat could be funded by interested host organisations as discussed above, representation at the IGF Bureau and experts group should be funded by respective stakeholder groups not unlike the experience of WGIG. Countries interested in hosting the meetings of the IGF should be prepared to fund the organisation as well as the facilities of such a meeting.

On participation of developing countries at the IGF, the IGF could consider working with other agencies, institutions to offer fellowships. Where applicable, governments, NGOs and the private-sector should also be encouraged to sponsor participants from developing countries.

8 Para 74 mentions the “proven competencies of all stakeholders in Internet governance and the need to ensure their full involvement”.

What steps should be taken to identify and engage all stakeholders and what needs to be done to make best possible use of their competencies?

The different competencies that each stakeholder group bring to the IGF must be recognised and tapped. In doing so, the engagement of all stakeholders according to these competencies must be considered at every level, from the composition of the Bureau to accreditation rules to ability and ease of participation in the discussions through the use of collaboration tools.

9 Para 74 also encourages the Secretary-General “to examine a range of options for the convening of the Forum”.

Are there any other options not addressed in the questions above? What are these options as you understand them?

10 Paragraph 72 (a) of the Tunis Agenda gives the IGF the mandate to “discuss public policy issues related to key elements of Internet governance in order to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet”.

- (a) (a) *What are these issues?*
- (b) (b) *Are they all the issues mentioned in the Chapter on Internet Governance in the Tunis Agenda?*
- (c) (c) *Which issues should be treated as priorities?*
- (d) (d) *Could these issues constitute a work programme for the coming years?*

The Tunis Agenda has identified issues pertaining to the use and access of the Internet and these are good bases for IGF to begin its work.

2 11 The first meeting of the Internet Governance Forum should take place “no later than 2006”

- (a) (a) *When would be the best time for the meeting?*
- (b) (b) *What should be on its agenda?*
- (c) (c) *Should it focus on one or at the most two issues that would be dealt with in depth, or should it discuss a wide range of issues?*
- (d) (d) *How should its programme be designed (time-management plan, organizational aspects)?*

In line with the strong development focus of the Tunis Agenda, the IGF meetings could at the start, focus on capacity-building and developmental aspects of the Internet including ‘ways and means to accelerate the availability and affordability of the Internet in the developing world’ (para 72e, Tunis Agenda) as well as ‘issues arising from the use and misuse of the Internet of particular concern to everyday users’ (para 72k, Tunis Agenda). Having built up awareness of Internet-related issues and their impact at the national and international levels, subsequent meetings could discuss complex, cross-cutting issues pertaining to the Internet which requires the cooperation of all stakeholders and where it is beyond the purview of one single international organisation.

3 12 Any other comments, suggestions or questions that should be addressed?

Please let us know your views on any other issues that ought to be addressed.

**Please send all submissions in either .rtf, text or . pdf via email.*