

Contribution to the Internet Governance Forum

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Introduction

A preparatory meeting to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF, www.intgovforum.org) was held in Geneva in February 2006. About 300 participants debated about questions such as the general context in which the Internet takes place, IGF's thematic priorities and, on the other hand, its structure and its mandate.

As a result of this meeting, Mr. Nitin Desai, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser for the Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) who chaired the meeting, invited the participants to reflect on the following questions:

- whether there is a need for a multistakeholder group to prepare for the meeting;
- which public policy issues the first meeting of the IGF should address (top three choices).

The present document proposes a point of view concerted among Francophonia stakeholders issued of the European research area.

1. The IGF and the "multistakeholder" approach

Much more than any other Summit organised before by the United Nations, the WSIS was a way to enlighten the diversity of point of views proposed by all the participants: official delegates of the States, economic area representatives, civil society organisations.

The norms of preparation, organisation and the proper functioning of the debates illustrated in particular the mobilisation as well as the competency of the actors coming from the academic world and the associative spheres.

In parallel with seeking an intensified cooperation between the States in order to build an internationally transparent and equitable governance of the internet, the IGF has been proposed as a space for open and transparent dialogue about global policy issues.

The nature of the IGF's mandate calls for a positive answer to the first Dr Desai's question: the first plenary meeting has to be organised by a multistakeholder group, including governments, civil society, companies, universities, standardisation organisations and the technical community of the Internet.

In order to prepare the first IGF meeting in Athens, this group could be constituted on a voluntary basis among the stakeholders having participated in the WSIS process and, as such, well informed about its conclusions and goals.

Even if it does not seem appropriate, during these first steps, to constitute any task force nor board of representatives, a balance should be established anyway in the group's composition, in order to represent the different concerns as well as all the geographical areas, with a special attention to the valorisation of the developing countries or regions, while ensuring respect for the Human rights principles and, concerning European countries, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

This first meeting organised under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations should establish a process built for a unlimited duration, as evolutive, consensual, open, transparent and inclusive. An effective system of work, of consultation and of decision, online and offline, should be prepared in order to implement actual and structured action for the defined tasks while avoiding by all means blocking decision-making processes.

The following criteria are suggested:

1. Equality of the stakeholders and no limitation in participation;
2. No quota in the stakeholders representations;
3. Competencies to valorise essentially in relation with the Working Groups;
4. Access: to have a consultative status with ECOSOC and, anyway, to propose set of standards for an accreditation process independent of the States;
5. Output: to address "recommendations" to particular policy decision makers;
6. To favour decisions by consensus (equality and open access [cfr 1 & 4] might create lobbies!), without dismissing the participants advices and contributions.

2. IGF Priorities concerning public policy issues

Internet governance (in a broad sense and not as related to the issues actually covered by the competence of ICANN) represents an "institutional laboratory" of world governance. Considering that, when dealing with internet governance, we should not separate fundamental questions (chosen themes) from formal questions (concertation procedures and distribution of power in decision making). Technical and socio-political issues are interdependent: although it is important to distinguish between management tools and regulation tools (the person who manages does not take decisions concerning political orientations). This concerns countries as well as supranational organisations and international bodies.

On the other hand, the United Nations framework and the international development of the internet promote a philosophical and political creative thinking about the values of contemporary "living together".

That creative thinking cannot be limited to gathering of "subjects" treated successively in time, nor to the procedural construction of a hypothetical multicultural or geostrategical consensus. IGF can become the mirror of a more global thinking, but it is not its sole goal, nor is IGF the sole tool for that purpose.

For those reasons, IGF works must have the opportunity to receive the contribution of a high level researchers and to encompass a foresight vision about the technological and political-ethical issues of the internet, considering criteria of definition and of implementation of public policies. Without those requirements, those works would only illustrate a state of the technique

and the weight of the acquired situations at a certain time, without providing any grip for the future.

As a consequence, we wish :

- the three themes expressed below to be recognised as a priority for the first IGF plenary session, in a concern of pragmatism and efficiency;
- the themes to be approached from complementary point of views: in a concrete way (gathering feedbacks and identification of the actors), with a theoretical point of view (research results and elements of foresight) and in a perspective of continuity (it is illusory to think of reaching quickly a "key agreement" between all the stakeholders);
- these themes to be exemplary of the IGF ambition towards its important mission.

Three important public policy issues

In this objective, we propose to focus particularly on the three following issues:

- **development of multilingualism on the internet**, with respect to the international UNESCO Convention on cultural & linguistic diversity. It requires technological improvement and cooperation, and no fear of breaking the global internet;
- **defining and fostering the "public-ness" of the Internet**, issues of public interest, public domain, public infrastructure and public good, with a special focus on the **enforcement of capacity-building** (literacy, universal primary education, innovative ICT-based development programmes for youth, life-long learning, e-learning, technology know-how and access to information) for developing countries (while enhancing fostering projects by partners of the developed countries) and **open access to knowledge** (rights concerning intellectual property and development, absence of rights for decompilation, open-source and free softwares, ...);
- **protection of data and privacy** in the "internet of Things". Invisibility, automation and mechanical decision-making within a complex system made up of billions of exchanges raise questions whilst the issues of consent and responsibility have yet to be solved in the elementary interaction of web services. What status should be given to the identified traces? What should be the normalized consent protocols? Under which safeguards? The uncertainty of the future management of IPv6 and the generalization of the rationale of identity management open new policy, economics and ethics questions.

Conclusions

We insist upon the interest of a preparation of IGF meetings by experts chosen considering a geographical repartition, including all the multi-stakeholders, ensuring the follow-up of the Working Group on Internet Governance and debating in a process without short deadlines. These experts will have to be able to prepare a report around which the whole IGF work will be articulated. The research method is essential in the process, in order to "take some distance" towards the whole IGF themes of work.

It is really important to "open up" disciplinary researches, to favour a true technology assessment and to organise a wide scope evaluation, that is proposing the measure of the risks and the stakes, as well as an analysis of the proportioned answers to be brought to it.

Considering the conclusions of the previous works (WSIS, WGIG, IGF preparation), the meeting of the IGF must lead to concrete recommendations capable of enlightening decision-makers, public as well as private, in coherence with strands of thinking proposed by the stakeholders at all levels.

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