

Civil Society Internet Governance Caucus's Inputs for the Open IGF Consultations, Geneva, 26th February, 2008

Statement I:

Format of IGF, Hyderabad

IGF, Hyderabad, marks the halfway point in the IGF's mandate. It is therefore essential that the meeting addresses all aspects of the IGF mandate. We should use the two years of IGF experience to assess how well IGF is fulfilling its Tunis Agenda mandate, and make improvements as necessary to the format and processes of IGF.

It will be appropriate to use the 'Stock Taking and the Way Forward' session at Hyderabad as a mid-term review of the IGF process, considering that the IGF process is supposed to be completely reviewed at the end of a five year period. This main session should be intensely prepared for by a Working Group. The IGC will like to repeat its successful Rio workshop on the theme of the 'Role and Mandate of the IGF' at Hyderabad, to feed into this main session.

We are of the opinion that the IGF's mandates and functions can be put into two broad categories: One is of providing an open space for discussing any and all public policy issues regarding the Internet for all stakeholders, therefore, *inter alia*, encouraging closer interactions among stakeholders and groups who often 'do not often 'talk' to each other'. The second set of mandates and functions can be clubbed in the category of providing some relatively clear directions and possibilities in the area of global public policy, and for this purpose plug the gaps in terms of ideas, possibilities, interactions etc in the global institutional framework for Internet governance.

The structure of the IGF meeting should be adequate to meet both these purposes. The first purpose listed above is largely being achieved, and the IGF is now recognized for its characteristic of a town hall meeting where anyone can come and voice one's opinion and concerns. However, the requirements for the purpose two listed above - that of some clear contribution to the global public policy arena - may require us to explore some structural improvements for the Hyderabad IGF meeting, without taking away its open town hall meeting character.

IGF as an Open Town Hall Meeting

In fulfilling this aspect of its mandate, as we mentioned, we think that the IGF is making good progress. We should continue to allow as many open workshops at IGF as possible, subject only to the limitations of the logistics. In fact, we should encourage connected events on the sidelines of the IGF as well, some of which were held around IGF, Rio.

The process of selection of open workshops should, *inter alia*, involve the criteria of

(1) Sponsor's readiness to structure the workshops as a space for an open dialogue and not just one-sided advocacy. The multi stakeholder criteria should be seen more in terms of the demonstrated willingness of the sponsors to invite different stakeholders, and those with different points of views, to participate as panelists, rather than in terms of the sponsorship of the workshops. The later criterion leads to the possibility of some stakeholders, especially those with a relatively tightly organized and relatively monolithic structure and policy/ political approach, to veto some subjects. In any case, the variety sought should be more in terms of different points of views, rather than just different stakeholders, because it is possible to gather a panel of different stakeholders with a narrow range of views on a particular subject.

(2) Workshops themes staying, as closely as possible, within the IGF's broad mandate of dealing with specifically IG issue, that are global, and have some relation to public policy arena. Specific overall thematic emphasis for each IGF meeting may also be indicated.

IGF as Providing Directions to Global Public Policy on Internet

There is a general impression that more can be done to ensure that the IGF fulfils its mandate of providing directions to global public policy on Internet, as indicated by many parts of its Tunis Agenda mandate. The main sessions should be the focal spaces for fulfilling this set of objectives. Many of those who attended Athens and Rio meetings felt that the main sessions could be made more compelling and productive. We did see attendance at these sessions shriveling off, from Athens to Rio, and within Rio, from day one onwards.

We think that the main sessions should be focused on specific issues concerning the conduct of Internet governance *per se*, rather than on more broadly framed issues pertaining to the Internet environment generally. These specific issues should be framed, and prepared for, well in advance.

The main sessions can be made more productive and fruitful by

(1) Having a couple of thematic workshops connected with, and feeding into, each of the main sessions. There should be a limited number of such thematic workshops, with a vigorous effort to merge proposals for workshops in a manner that preserves diversities of geo-politics, special interests and different viewpoint, but retains the clear purpose to increase the effectiveness of the main sessions.

(2) Not having thematic workshops run at the same time as the main sessions.

(3) Using Working Groups to intensively prepare for each of these main sessions, and the connected workshops. These working groups should also synthesis some kind of an outcome documents on each theme, taking from the discussions at the main sessions and the connected workshops. These working groups could consist of members of the MAG plus some other experts and stakeholders.

Dynamic Coalitions too have a great potential to increase the effectiveness of the IGF. There should be greater clarity on the formal integration of Dynamic Coalitions into the overall IGF structure. Dynamic coalition pertaining to the theme for a main session should be involved in the preparations for that session. They must also be able to report back on their activities in that main session.

To enable proper preparation for Hyderabad IGF, a call for workshops should be given out as soon as possible. This will also require early decision on main session themes. Postponing these crucial activities will leave us with inadequate time to make all the needed preparations for the IGF, Hyderabad. This will hinder the possibilities of our moving ahead on achieving the full potential of the IGF, that we all desire to do.

Participation at the IGF

We should further explore innovative methods within the IGF to improve the active participation in the IGF proceedings of all those who attend the IGF.

It is also important to improve the participation of currently excluded and under represented groups in both the IGF's public consultations and the annual meetings. Adequate financial support should be provided to potential participants from developing and least developed countries.

There is also a lot of scope for improving participation through online means, which should be fully explored. However, improvement in online participation cannot fill in for greater face-to-face participation of currently under-represented groups.

As the IGF goes to the South Asian region which is home to more than half the world's poor, special focus needs to be given to realizing the vision of an Internet for everyone. This first of all requires obtaining the participation of disadvantaged groups and communities in the governance of the Internet. Hyderabad IGF should take all possible measures to make outreach to and include these groups in the IGF meeting. This can be done by galvanizing the local civil society around the Hyderabad IGF meeting. We welcome the call given by the MAG Chair, Nitin Desai, to do so, in the recent ICANN meeting at New Delhi.