



IGF WORKSHOP SUMMARY: “QUALIFYING, QUANTIFYING, AND MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF INTERNET ACCESS COSTS” (November 13, 2007)



On November 13, as part of the Rio de Janeiro Internet Governance proceedings, five organizations organized a workshop on access entitled “Qualifying, Quantifying, and Meeting the Challenge of Internet Access Costs.” Workshop speakers included:



Mr. Masanobu Katoh, Corporate Vice-President Fujitsu Limited and Chairman GII Working Group on Internet Governance, Moderator

Mr. Kiyoshi Mori, Japan's Vice-Minister for Policy Coordination (International Affairs), and



Dr. Olfat Abd El Monsef, Vice President, National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of Egypt.

Mr. Bill Woodcock, founder and research director for PCH and



Mr. Nishal Goburdhan, from Internet Solutions in South Africa

The speakers and the workshop participants discussed:

- The importance of increasing access to the Internet, and providing affordable solutions to the vast number of users who have yet to connect to the Internet, as well as the role of public policy and regulation and various approaches, including international, regional and domestic peering and transit agreements as a component of lowering overall connectivity costs;
- The identification of various “best practice” initiatives (e.g., construction of Internet exchange points, capacity building in skills and expertise) that Internet service providers, government officials and other stakeholders have used in local, national and regional communities to boost Internet penetration rates, particularly in Africa and Latin America; and
- how policy making, including regulation and competition can contribute to lowering end-to-end connectivity costs.

Lessons learned:

- Development of local traffic exchanges (IXPs) can provide greater Internet Access and lower connectivity costs.
- The existing regulatory approach in certain countries does not necessarily adequately support the development of IXPs, or encourage the emergence of local ISPs. Additional liberalization is part of the solution in many countries; a flexible legal, policy and regulatory regime is required to allow such services. Often a country must reach across different agencies to create involvement from numerous players to create an effective strategy. In many cases, it may be the freedom from regulatory restrictions which allows new investments.
- How an extensive set of national initiatives in Egypt to provide affordable Internet access and computers to those in need of assistance proved successful with the added benefits of building up ISPs and facilitating e-government goals
- Linkage to the regulatory framework in Egypt and how it has contributed to increased competition and choice for users. We also heard about the role of the Ministry as a champion to draw resources and participants together. About a ‘case study of a success story by a private ISP in South Africa where an initiative calling attention to the need for deregulation and working with the government for reforms produced a healthy environment for ISPs to grow and provide more Internet services.
- Some of the concerns expressed include that regulators and policy makers should avoid creating “islands of local access” by ensuring interconnection of various networks that begin to emerge.
- ‘Lessons learned’ by Japan’s deregulatory efforts to reduce Internet costs to consumers may be helpful as other regulators explore such directions.

Finally, the discussion highlighted the fact that access to the information infrastructure and ICT and Internet capabilities is one of the most fundamental measure of a society’s ability to grow its economy, enhance its social well-being, and integrate itself with the global economy. All stakeholders must work together in countries so that the right policies are in place to ensure access to the Internet.

Workshop Organizers:



Keidanren – Japan Business Federation



- **iGrowthGlobal**, an organization providing independent policy research on the major ICT policy issues domestically and internationally, including in the developing world.
- The **Nippon Keidanren** – the influential Japanese Business Federation with the mission to accelerate growth of Japan's and world economy.
- The **World Information Technology and Service Alliance** (WITSA), an alliance of over 70 national IT Associations facilitation the use of ICT.
- The **Global Information Infrastructure Commission** (GIIC) –an initiative by ICT industry leaders to promote the infrastructure for the advanced information society
- **Packet Clearing House** or **PCH** is a non-profit research institute formed in 1994. It supports operations and analysis in the areas of Internet traffic exchange, routing economics, and global network development , and