

Statement from the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) on the second Internet Governance Forum, Rio de Janeiro, November 12-15 2007

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, 27 November 2007 – The second Internet Governance Forum (IGF) concluded on November 15 and the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) presents an initial assessment of the event and makes suggestions for moving towards the third forum in New Delhi in a year's time.

The Rio IGF, like the first IGF in Athens, succeeded as a space for inclusive policy dialogue. The openness of the event's format and the quality and diversity of the participants deepened understanding of complex and controversial issues. The format of the workshops enabled participants to gain a better grasp of both commonality and difference in their positions and opinions. It is this nuanced approach that enables the IGF to influence and inform policy without the constraints of needing to create consensus on negotiated text.

This being said, the IGF can and should make further progress in fulfilling its mandate. Based on the outcomes of various workshops at the second IGF, and our assessment of the process, APC would like to make the following suggestions:

1. Establishment of a self-regulatory mechanism to ensure participation, access to information and transparency in internet governance

APC recommends that a mechanism is created to ensure that all the institutions which play a role in some aspect of governing the internet commit to ensuring transparency, public participation (of all stakeholders) and access to information. See proposal from APC and the Council of Europe:
<http://www.apc.org/english/news/index.shtml?x=5310569>

2. Convening of regional and national IGFs

APC supports the idea of **regional IGFs** that can serve the purpose of defining regional priorities and enabling greater participation from multiple stakeholders at regional level. We believe that **national IGFs** are a powerful mechanism for learning, problem solving, collective action and building partnership among different stakeholders at national level.

3. Convening of "IGF working groups"

APC recommends that the IGF uses the format of the Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG, established during the World Summit on the Information Society), or bodies such as the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) to convene working groups to address complex issues that emerge during a forum. These groups can be made up of individuals with the necessary expertise and drawn from different stakeholder groups. These groups can then engage specific issues in greater depth, and, if they feel it is required, develop recommendations that can be communicated to the internet community at large, or addressed to specific institutions.

These recommendations need not be presented as formally agreed recommendations from the IGF, but as recommendations or suggestions for action from the individuals in the working group.

These working groups have a different role from the self-organised dynamic coalitions which we believe should continue. Dynamic coalitions have a broader mandate and are informal in nature. We see IGF working groups as differing from dynamic coalitions in that they should particular challenges rather than a general issue area. They will also have a degree of accountability and an obligation to report that dynamic coalitions do not have.

Based on discussions at the IGF II it appears that working groups on the following issues might be valuable:

- a) Working group on self and co-regulation in internet governance**
- b) Working group on business models for access**
- c) Working group on a development agenda for internet governance.**

The need for working groups will only be apparent when the event report has been finalised. We propose that the IGF secretariat and the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) consider this proposal at that time.

4. Effective resourcing of the IGF secretariat

We want to express our admiration of Markus Kummer and his team for accomplishing so much with so few human and financial resources. We recognise the extensive investment made by the government of Brazil, and also by the previous host country, Greece, as well as other contributions made by governments, sponsors and donors. However, if the IGF is to continue to succeed and make further strides in fulfilling its mandate, the secretariat needs to be properly resourced.

The United Nations needs to recognise that the IGF is the outcome of a UN process and should ensure that it has the resources it needs to fulfil its mandate as defined at the Tunis Summit in 2005.

5. Strengthening the capacity and legitimacy of the Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group

We recommend that:

- a. one-third of the membership of the Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group rotates every year
- b. it is formally appointed by UN Secretary-General by the end of January of every year
- c. the mandate of the MAG is clarified and
- d. it considers electing some form of management committee to streamline its internal decision-making processes.

We recognise the right of the MAG to have closed discussions (Chatham House Rules) but it needs to adhere to basic principles of transparency and accountability. We propose that the MAG provides routine reports on its meetings and decisions.

6. Making better use of plenary time

Acknowledging that access, openness, security, critical internet resources and diversity have been explored extensively, APC does not see the value in recycling these themes in the plenary format. We encourage the IGF III organisers to consider a different format for the plenary panels. Such a format should allow for in-depth discussion of specific issues and can draw on the outcomes of workshops and inputs of working groups.

7. Increased participation in agenda setting

We suggest that the IGF secretariat and the MAG convene working groups for each of the main themes of the next forum to help shape the agenda and identify speakers well in advance of the event. These groups can assist the MAG and the secretariat to address gender balance and diversity in the composition of the panels.

8. Learning from experience

We encourage the secretariat and the hosts of the first two IGFs, **Greece and Brazil, to engage in active sharing of lessons learned with the next host country of the IGF**, India. This process should include representatives of all stakeholder groups.

In conclusion, we would like to extend our thanks to the host country, the co-chairs of the forum, the executive coordinator of the IGF secretariat, the people who assisted him and his team, and all participants. In particular we want to recognise the efforts of the Brazilian Internet Steering Group and their inclusion of civil society organisations throughout the preparatory process.

We wish India well in its preparations for the third IGF and express our commitment to the process and willingness to provide support in the process where we can.

*Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
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www.apc.org*