

From Tunis to Sharm El Sheikh - The Role of the IGF

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This article reviews the history of the Internet Governance Forum, from its creation at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) until present time. The author highlights the features of its internal organization, as well as the main topics dealt with in the various editions of the Forum.

Introduction

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was called to make use of “digital opportunities”, aiming to bring the benefits of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to developing countries and make use of ICTs for development objectives in general and for those of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in particular. One salient feature of WSIS was its multi-stakeholder approach. Resolution 56/183 (1) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly stipulated that it should not be a Summit reserved for Governments, but also involve private sector and civil society.

When the WSIS preparatory process turned its attention to substance at PrepCom-2 in February 2003, an unexpected new issue emerged: Internet Governance. To begin with, the debate was very confused. The subsequent phase of substantive discussions leading up to the first phase of WSIS in Geneva in December 2003 saw a clash of visions in the debate on Internet governance. There were two clearly distinct perspectives. The first school of thought argued that the present system worked well and if there were any perceived problems it would first be necessary to define them before trying to find solutions. The second school of thought questioned the legitimacy of the present arrangements and wanted to give Governments more say and wanted the international governance mechanisms to be more in line with traditional forms of intergovernmental cooperation. Ultimately, these delegations felt that Internet governance related to national sovereignty.

The debate then was very polarized and, to a large extent, also very abstract. There were



misunderstandings on both sides. The discussions focused on “public policy issues” and the extent to which governments had a role to play therein. However, nobody was willing or able to spell out what was meant by “public policy” in the context of Internet governance. In short, there was no real debate on issues, but a confrontation of two visions of the world, or two schools of thought, and at the first phase of WSIS it proved impossible to bridge the gap between them. One salient feature of the negotiations was that the Governments remained in charge and the Internet professionals who run and manage the Internet were locked out. (2)

It was not surprising therefore that the summit failed to produce what might be termed “a solution.” Before it would have been possible to find a solution, there would have to be a common understanding that there was a problem that needed to be resolved.

Accordingly, the WSIS was the beginning of an ongoing debate on what has become a new major issue on the agenda of international cooperation. WSIS has started a process that can be described as a dialogue between two worlds: the world of governments and the world of Internet community (3). The synthesis between the distributed informal, bottom-up decision-making process of the Internet community and the pyramidal structures and top-down decision making of governments is the multi-stakeholder approach which by now has been generally accepted.

The terrain for this new multi-stakeholder dialogue had been prepared by the Working Group on Internet Governance (4) (WGIG), which between the two phases of the Summit had the task of preparing a report on this issue, with a view to facilitating the discussions at the second phase of the Summit in Tunis in November 2006.

The WGIG conducted its work in an open and inclusive format with consultations where all stakeholders were able to participate on an equal footing, contributed to a better understanding of how the Internet works and initiated a dialogue between all parties concerned. The WGIG report facilitated the negotiations at the Summit and, to a large extent, WSIS endorsed the WGIG findings and recommendations.

One of WGIG’s main achievements was that it succeeded in creating a space for an issue oriented policy dialogue on Internet governance in a climate of trust and confidence among all stakeholders concerned, and it proved to be a successful experiment in multi-stakeholder cooperation. Some non-government actors went as far as describing the groundbreaking nature of the WGIG process as a watershed in international cooperation.

The second phase of WSIS in Tunis on 16-17 November 2005 decided to give a mandate to the Secretary-General of the United Nations to convene a new forum for a multi-stakeholder dialogue (5) - the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). Heads of State and government felt there was a need to continue the dialogue on Internet governance in a new setting.

The mandate of the IGF, set out in Paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society (6), is to discuss the main public policy issues related to Internet governance in order to foster the Internet’s sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development. In

Tunis, the Government of Greece offered to host the first meeting of the IGF in Greece in 2006. Subsequently, the Governments of Brazil, India and Egypt offered to host the IGF meetings in 2007, 2008 and 2009 respectively.

Due to its unique nature, there was no ready template to copy for the convening of the IGF. Therefore, to fulfill the mandate that was given to him, the UN Secretary-General asked his Special Adviser for WSIS, Mr. Nitin Desai, to start broad-based consultations on this mandate (7) with the aim to develop a common understanding among all stakeholders on the nature and character of the IGF. These stakeholders are defined in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society as being governments, intergovernmental organizations, international organizations, the private sector and civil society, including the academic and technical communities. (8) The Secretary-General extended the mandate of the Secretariat of the WGIG to provide support for this consultative process on a provisional basis. The mandate was confirmed on 2 March 2006 (9) and the Secretary-General appointed the author of this article as the Executive Coordinator (10). A Web site was set up (11) to facilitate communication between the Secretariat and stakeholders. All stakeholders were invited to submit written contributions as inputs, which would in turn be posted on the Web site to encourage an exchange of views. A questionnaire soliciting ideas on the IGF was posted on the Web site to stimulate and provide an open framework for discussion (12). The Secretariat also developed a capacity building programme, in the form of a fellowship programme whose participants are chosen from developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to come and work at the Secretariat for periods up to three months. During their stay, they learn about Internet Governance issues and get to interact with stakeholders that come to the open consultations.

Open Consultations and the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG)

Consultations open to all stakeholders became the hallmark for policy development in the IGF context. The first round of open consultations was held on 16-17 February 2006 and a second round was held on 19 May 2006. As part of the effort to widen participation, interested people could follow the proceedings virtually via a live webcast (13) and downloadable verbatim transcriptions (14) of the proceedings that were made available after each segment.

During this preparatory process it became clear that the expectations varied widely as regards the IGF. There were those who would like the IGF to be result-oriented - and they pointed to many open issues that needed to be resolved. They emphasized that the mandate specifically mentioned that the IGF could make recommendations and they said there was a need for many of those in the different subject areas that were discussed by the Summit. They would like the IGF to be the centre of an ongoing process.

However, others saw the merit of the meeting in the meeting itself: a gathering of government, private sector and business representatives who would exchange information and share best practices. They pointed to the model of the OECD (15), which to a large

extent uses these working methods. They also underlined that these working methods have proved very successful over the past fifty years.

During the consultations there was a general feeling that the activities of the IGF should have an overall development orientation. It was equally recognized that capacity building for developing countries in Internet governance issues should be an overarching priority. Capacity building was understood as enabling meaningful participation by all in global Internet policy development, and includes assistances to attend meetings as well as training in Internet policy matters.

The consultations also reaffirmed the WSIS Principles that the IGF meetings should be as open and inclusive as possible, with very light registration requirements. Furthermore, there was a common understanding that the IGF should be a continuous process with an annual meeting lasting for a duration of three to five days. A broad range of public policy issues were brought up, ranging from spam to freedom of expression.

There was also a general feeling that there was a need for an additional body with closed membership to manage the process and prepare the meetings of the IGF.

The views on which form this body should take diverged, with some arguing in favour of a multi-stakeholder management group that should be kept as small as possible (between 10 and 20 participants), and others arguing for a replication of the WSIS structure with three bureaus, one each for governments, private sector and civil society. The G77 (16) proposed a total of 40 members for the three bureaus, with 20 government representatives and 10 each for private sector and civil society, based on equitable geographic balance. The G77 also emphasized the ad-hoc character of the advisory process that would be put into place to prepare the first meeting of the IGF. (17)

In the end a mixture of these proposals was adopted: an Advisory Group (18), which would advise the Secretary-General on convening the inaugural meeting of the IGF. It would comprise representatives of all stakeholder groups who would engage in dialogue together as equals (in line with the principles set out in WSIS). The representatives of the various stakeholder groups would be chosen based on the recommendations by their respective groups. A notice went up on the Web site inviting all stakeholders to submit recommendations for members to the Secretariat by 18 April 2006. Letters were also sent to Permanent Missions of all UN member and observer states in Geneva, soliciting names for MAG candidates. The proposals were grouped roughly based as follows (19):

- Government representatives were proposed by the five regional WSIS groups; (20)
- Private sector representatives were identified mainly (but not solely) by the main interlocutor for the business community: the International Chamber of Commerce/ Coordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors (ICC/CCBI);
- Civil society representatives were proposed by various civil society groups (the Internet governance caucus, the media and various advocacy groups), reflecting the diversity of civil society;
- Internet community representatives were forwarded by the various Internet institutions such as ISOC, ICANN, NRO, CENTR etc.

These names were collected, collated and sent to the United Nations Secretary-General to select the members of his MAG. Representatives of inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) were also invited to attend the meetings.

On 17 May 2006, the Secretary-General announced the establishment of an Advisory Group (21) to assist him in convening the IGF. Mr. Desai was appointed Chairman of the Group.

The main task of the MAG was to prepare the substantive agenda and programme for the first meeting of the IGF. All members served in their individual capacities.

To encourage openness and free expression the 'Chatham House Rule' (22) was applied to all meetings. In addition to the MAG its Chairman appointed five 'Special Advisors to the Chair' (23) to assist him.

The MAG, as it was subsequently known, met from then on usually three times a year: in May and September to prepare the annual meeting and in February to take stock of the previous' years' meeting and to discuss the first programme outline, based on the 'lessons learned'. Each of the MAG meetings was preceded by a round of open consultations and prepared by an online preparatory process, with calls for contribution issued by the Secretariat and Secretariat papers summarizing and synthesizing the input received.

The First Internet Governance Forum in Athens

The inaugural IGF meeting took place in Athens from 30 October to 2 November 2006. The meeting was opened by the Greek Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis, also participating were Internet pioneers such as Vint Cerf and Bob Khan.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in his opening address (24) that the forum entered uncharted waters. He emphasized its multistakeholder character and said that the forum therefore would have to develop procedures and practices for cultivating meaningful cooperation among these disparate partners.

He held the view that the Internet lent itself particularly well to this search for new forms of global collaboration. The challenge, therefore, was to bring two cultures together: the non-governmental Internet community, with its tradition of informal, bottom-up decision-making, and the more formal, structured world of governments and intergovernmental organizations. And while the forum was not designed to take decisions, it could identify issues that needed to be tackled through formal intergovernmental processes. He expressed his hope that the inaugural meeting would launch a process of mutual learning, generate new ideas, and perhaps even see the emergence of some new partnerships.

There were 1350 registered participants, almost twice as many people taking part than were originally expected and planned for. 97 government delegations participated with 397

delegates. There was also a strong media interest with 152 media accreditations. (25)

The inaugural meeting was based on four main themes:

- openness: freedom of expression, free flow of information, ideas and knowledge;
- security: creating trust and confidence through collaboration, particularly by protecting users from spam, phishing and viruses while protecting privacy;
- diversity: promoting multilingualism, including internationalized domain names (IDN) and local content;
- access: Internet connectivity policy and costs, dealing with the availability and affordability of the Internet including issues such as interconnection costs, interoperability and open standards.

The Athens meeting also included workshops whose organizers adhered to the multi-stakeholder principle. A total of 36 workshop proposals were held in Athens.

They covered on a wide range of topics such as multilingualism in the Internet to freedom of expression.

Amnesty International on the final day of the Forum presented their “irrepressible” campaign, through which it, with the support of The Observer newspaper, presented the ‘Internet as a new frontier in the struggle for human rights’. (26) Amnesty collected 50,000 signatures and handed over a pledge to Mr. Desai who accepted it on behalf of the Secretary-General.

The proceedings were reflected in a summary report prepared by the IGF Secretariat. (27) One of the more notable outcomes of the Athens meeting was the formation of a number of so-called ‘dynamic coalitions’. These coalitions are relatively informal groupings of stakeholders that are interested in collaborating on particular issues.

By now, there are thirteen ‘dynamic coalitions’ formed around issues such as stopping spam; creating an Internet bill of rights or access to knowledge (28).

The Athens meeting was generally hailed as a success. One of its main achievements was bringing together stakeholders who would not normally meet under the same roof (29). It encouraged dialogue on issues of common interest among people who would not normally interact. On the whole, participants recognized that the meeting had been useful and had met some of its main objectives in so far as it contributed to developing a common understanding of the format of the IGF.

Taking Stock after Athens and Preparing Rio de Janeiro

Following the inaugural meeting of the IGF, the Secretariat issued a call for contributions with the aim to take stock of the Athens meeting and make suggestions with regard to the preparation of the meeting in Rio de Janeiro as part of the open and inclusive process.

The contributions received focused on topics such as the preparatory process and the logistics of the meeting as well as its format and content. Most contributions highlighted the innovative character of the IGF and the need for developing a preparatory process based on key principles of multi-stakeholder co-operation. It was recognized that creating a basis for multi-stakeholder discussion was a challenging goal. Furthermore, several contributors argued that the preparatory process was important in drawing on the expertise from other organizations and delineating a new area for work for the IGF, which did not duplicate or compete with the work of existing organizations. The open and inclusive nature of the preparatory process, with two rounds of consultations open to all stakeholders, and the use of the IGF Web site as a platform for exchanging views were generally well received.

The MAG was commended for its work. The group was seen as having carefully developed its activities in such a way that they were not perceived to be taking on authoritative perspectives - a process that was consistent with the expectations set out in Tunis. Moreover, the MAG was successful in focusing on processes and identifying additional resource persons and institutions, not taking on the role of developing positions themselves.

For some stakeholders, the transparency over the appointment and operation of the MAG was inadequate. (30) Others argued that the IGF should move towards a decision-making body (31). Some commentators, however, emphasized that the IGF should not of itself seek to change or expand its mission, which was the result of careful and lengthy negotiations within the WSIS. (32) They saw the role of the IGF as a platform for exchanging information and ideas and sharing best practices, in a true multi-stakeholder format. In their view, the success of the Athens meeting was intrinsically linked with the role of the IGF as a forum for dialogue and discussion without a view to developing consensus positions, formal resolutions or documents manifesting or resembling policy making. These commentators saw its value in the productive and valuable discussions among people who might be able to take actions in other venues. (33)

The Second Internet Governance Forum in Rio de Janeiro

The second meeting of the IGF was held from 12 to 15 November 2007 in Rio de Janeiro under the general theme of "Internet Governance for Development". United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in his invitation, extended to all stakeholders, that the Forum was modest in its means but not in its aspirations. He described as its hallmark multi-stakeholder collaboration, based on the exchange of information and the sharing of best practices. This new form of international cooperation presented governments, the private sector and civil society, including academic and technical communities, with the opportunity to work together towards a sustainable, robust, secure and stable Internet, as envisioned by the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society.

The main sub-themes of the inaugural meeting of the IGF were carried through and the additional sub theme "critical Internet resources" was added. In the preparatory process a strong focus on children and young persons emerged.

Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Sha Zukang, in his opening address (34) described the Internet Governance Forum as a unique opportunity for all stakeholders to develop an innovative dialogue under the auspices of the United Nations, a dialogue free from the constraints of negotiating text. The forum was also unique in that it brought together people who normally would not meet under the same roof.

The meeting had seven main sessions. A total of 84 parallel events took place. Apart from 36 workshops, there were also several new elements such as 23 'Best Practice' forums where governments and other organizations could share their Internet-related experiences from which valuable lessons could be drawn. There were also eight 'open forums', in which Internet-related organizations could hold meetings and share information about their activities. Eleven Dynamic Coalition meetings enabled these informal multi-stakeholder interest groups to update participants on their progress since they were formed during the Athens meeting. Six further events covered other issues.

The panels carried on the innovative format started in Athens of interactive multi-stakeholder participation with questions and comments from the audience, facilitated by the moderator. Each of the sessions was chaired by the host country and moderated by journalists or independent experts. This format was generally accepted and well received. The meeting adhered to the commitment that the IGF would foster a dialogue among all stakeholders as equals with no special treatment given to any stakeholder group

'Critical Internet resources' was a new main session topic introduced in the Rio meeting. The session covered a wide range of issues related to the physical and logical infrastructure of the Internet. Discussions about ICANN, the role of governments, and Internet oversight also took place within the session. The issues that garnered the most attention at the Rio de Janeiro meeting seem to have been cyber-security focusing on child protection and against child pornography (35) on the Internet. On these issues, participants called for the harmonizing legislation between countries and also for bringing into force new legal instruments that apply to the on-line world. The next issue of highest visibility was access, in terms of getting the next billion people online (36). This also brought to the fore the issue of diversity with calls for a multilingual Net with additional IDNs (internationalized domain names) to reflect the expanding trends of Internet users in non-English speaking parts of the world

The linkages between Internet governance and sustainable development emerged as a new issue in the Rio de Janeiro meeting. Already at the Athens meeting there was a workshop 'Greening Development through ICT and Civic Engagement'. The International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) launched a book on the subject at the Rio meeting, which commented that the Internet governance community and the sustainable development community could learn from each others experiences, especially in the decision making process (37). This topic was also brought up in the 'Emerging Issues' main session where one panellist pointed to the positive contribution the Internet may be able to make in the effort against climate change (38).

The proceedings of the Rio meeting were reflected in a Chairman's Summary (39).

Taking Stock after Rio de Janeiro and preparing Hyderabad

After the meeting, the Secretariat again issued a call for contributions on the IGF Web site to give an opportunity for stakeholders to give feedback on the Rio de Janeiro meeting and make suggestions on what could be improved for the next meeting in Hyderabad, India. These suggestions were to be used for input into the 'Taking Stock' session, held in Geneva on 26 February 2008. The Secretariat received 23 contributions down from 32 for the Athens stocktaking. It was said this should not be taken as a lack of interest but more as a sign that, overall, participants were satisfied with the meeting and had no complaints to make (40).

The feedback received indicated that there was a general feeling that the meeting had been a success, which built upon and went beyond the Athens meeting. The richness of the debate, the number of workshops, the multi-stakeholder format, the diversity of opinions, and the number and range of delegates were all cited as indicators of success. Through the speeches made, there was a common thread that the IGF presented all stakeholders with a unique opportunity to catalyze local change by empowering communities, to build capacity and skills, and to enable the Internet's expansion, thereby contributing to economic and social development.

Moreover, there was clear support for the multi-stakeholder processes and many participants reiterated comments heard from the Athens meeting on how the dialogue of the IGF, freed from the constraints of negotiations and decision-making, allowed for ideas to be freely exchanged and debated. There was also a need expressed for reviewing the IGF preparation process in order to allow a broader, more balanced and more representative participation from all stakeholders, which would allow as much diversity of opinion as possible. Calls were also made for improving what was seen as an insufficient gender balance.

The village square was praised and there were suggestions that it should be expanded in the future IGF meetings. The format of the workshops was seen as innovative though it was felt that the number of panellists could be reduced in future IGFs. The Chairman's summary was said to add value to the main sessions and it was suggested that the summary be translated into all six UN languages in order to foster worldwide awareness of the IGF's findings. There was a general feeling that participants wanted the IGF's format to continue to evolve and not be a prisoner of meeting formats inherited from past meetings.

Wider Recognition

The relevance of the IGF in 2008 was increasingly recognized in a wider context. The IGF activities were reflected in the United Nations Secretary-General's annual report on the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) to the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD). In turn, the CSTD submitted its findings to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The 34th

plenary meeting of the Economic and Social Council adopted the ECOSOC Resolution 2008/3 on the "Assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society" on 18 July 2008 "(t)akes note with appreciation of the ongoing work of the Internet Governance Forum, its multi-stakeholder approach and its innovative platform and expresses its thanks to host Governments for their contributions", and "(r)ecommends that the Internet Governance Forum, as a multi-stakeholder discussion forum, retain its focus on public policy issues related to Internet governance (41).

The ECOSOC Resolution was submitted to the General Assembly of the UN which took note of the IGF and adopted the Report of the Second Committee to the General Assembly, dated 2 December 2008, which, inter alia, "(i)nvites Member States to support the meaningful participation of stakeholders from developing countries in the preparatory meetings of the Internet Governance Forum and in the Forum itself in 2009 and 2010, and to consider contributing to the multi-stakeholder trust fund created for the Forum, as appropriate".

Outside the United Nations family, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) made a reference to the IGF at its Ministerial Meeting on the Future of the Internet Economy. On 18 June 2008, the OECD Ministerial Session adopted The Seoul Declaration for the Future of the Internet Economy, which invited the OECD to further the objectives set out in the Declaration, inter alia by reinforcing co-operative relationships and mutually beneficial collaboration with the Internet Governance Forum (42).

In 2008, there was also a spread of national and regional IGF initiatives that fed into the annual IGF meeting. Two initiatives were reported from Africa: an East African IGF (EAIGF) was held in Nairobi, bringing together outcomes from national meetings held in Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya. Another meeting took place in Dakar, focusing on West African country issues for Internet governance. An IGF in the Latin America and Caribbean Region was held in Montevideo and a European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EuroDIG) was held in Strasbourg, hosted by the Council of Europe. National IGF meetings were held in the United Kingdom, in Italy, Spain and in Germany.

The Third Internet Governance Forum in Hyderabad

The third meeting of the IGF was held in Hyderabad, India, on 3-6 December 2008 and focused on the theme of "Internet for All". The meeting was held in the aftermath of terrorist attacks in Mumbai. While these tragic events led to some cancellations, the overall attendance with 1280 participants from 94 countries, of which 133 were media representatives, was close to that at the second annual meeting.

United Nations Assistant Secretary General Jomo Kwame Sundaram in his opening address recalled that the IGF was not a new organization or agency, and rather than being a decision-making body, the IGF was a space, a platform, for frank and enlightened debate. The forum provided a unique opportunity for all stakeholders to foster innovative dialogue under the

auspices of the United Nations. It shaped and informed the decision-making processes of other institutions and governments and prepared the ground for negotiations that would take place in intergovernmental as well as other forums.

All the five main sessions were organized as three thematic days under the following headings: 'Reaching the Next Billion', 'Promoting Cyber-Security and Trust', and 'Managing Critical Internet Resources'. The last day covered 'Emerging Issues - the Internet of Tomorrow' and 'Taking Stock and the Way Forward'. Each of the sessions was chaired by the host country and moderated by journalists or independent experts. As in previous years, the IGF programme and meeting were prepared through a series of open, multi-stakeholder consultations held throughout 2008, a process that also designed the IGF's interactive and participatory structure.

Parallel to the main sessions, 87 workshops, best practice forums, dynamic coalition meetings and open forums were scheduled around the broad themes of the main sessions and the overall mandate of the IGF. Five workshops and other meetings were cancelled following the events in Mumbai.

Remote participants had the opportunity to participate, via online chat, email, discussion boards and blogs. Five hundred twenty-two participants from around the world joined the main session and monitored seven different workshops. They participated in panel discussions through live chat and live audio and video streaming, during the four-day event that broadcast more than 450 event hours.

A major innovation was the introduction of remote hubs. The majority of remote participants were part of remote hubs in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Belgrade, Serbia, São Paulo (Brazil), Pune (India), Lahore (Pakistan), Bogotá (Colombia), Barcelona and Madrid (Spain). These hubs were able to carry on significant discussions in relating the IGF proceedings to their own regions, permitting the construction of foundations for future projects and policies at local and regional levels.

A common thread through all the speeches in Hyderabad was the recognition of the importance of the meeting's overall motto, 'Internet for All'. It was noted that the Internet was bringing great potential for economic and social benefit to the world. At the same time, speakers also pointed out that there was a need to guard against the problems the Internet could bring when used for harmful purposes. Speakers noted the opportunity the IGF provided for a dialogue between all stakeholders and a mutual exchange of ideas. It allowed to build partnerships and relationships that otherwise might not occur.

There was a general feeling that the IGF had evolved over the past three years. The point was made that to address the needs of the next billions the issues needed to be relevant to them.

It was also noted that the IGF had matured and had become a space where difficult issues could be addressed. The respectful and informed discussion about critical Internet resources that had taken place in Hyderabad was mentioned as an example in this regard. In general,

speakers were supportive of IGF's multi-stakeholder environment, and while some recognized that it meant there would be polemics, the opportunity to learn from each other and share ideas and points of view was valuable. Others noted that increased funding for the IGF was important if it was to be more predictable and viable.

The opening and closing session showed a broad political support for the IGF model. The US, private sector representatives and the Internet community issued strong statements in favour of the IGF the way it developed since Tunis. This was echoed by the Chairman who, in his closing statement, made the point that the IGF, as a forum, held great promise as a platform to forge a grand multistakeholder coalition for universal good to grab the opportunities and exploit them to the fullest while containing, if not eliminating, the threats.

The 2008 meeting also addressed the review process, as called for by the Tunis Agenda, Paragraph 76. Formal consultations will be held at the fourth IGF meeting in 2009, to allow for a timely decision by the UN Membership within the five-year deadline. The fourth annual meeting will be held in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, on 15-18 November 2009.

The proceedings were reflected in a Chairman's Summary (43). On the Occasion of the Hyderabad meetin, the IGF Secretariat distributed a book it had produced to document the IGF's first two years. (44)

Taking stock of Hyderabad and preparing Sharm El Sheikh

The preparation of the 2009 meeting started with a broad consultative stock-taking process. This process included a discussion on how to conduct the review process. Open Consultations were held on 23-24 February 2009, followed by a meeting of the Multistakeholder MAG on 25-26 February 2009. There was general agreement that the Hyderabad meeting had been successful and that the IGF had matured, thereby creating a climate of trust and confidence among forum participants that also allowed to address controversial issues. There was also a feeling that some of the issues had progressed to the point that they could now be dealt with in other formats, such as round tables.

The MAG agreed on the broad outline of a meeting schedule, reflecting the taking stock process of the Hyderabad meeting and taking into account the written comments and the suggestions made at the open consultations. "Internet - an opportunity for all" was suggested as the overall title of the meeting. While the suggestion found some support, it was also felt that the wording was too general and that there was a need for further reflection on the title. "Internet rights and principles" was another proposal for an overall theme, but the view was held that this would be too specific. The view was also held that the overall theme should take into account the challenges to the global economic downturn.

Conclusions

The experience so far seen from Tunis to Sharm El Sheikh illustrates how complex and multifaceted Internet governance is. There is merit in discussing openly, with all actors involved. Some say the lack of decision-making power is a weakness. The opposite view could be also held: on the contrary, the apparent weakness is the strength of the IGF. Nobody needs to be afraid of the IGF, since it cannot take "the wrong decision". It has no vested self-interest, except from being recognized as a meaningful platform for the debate that can be useful in shaping the agenda, in preparing the ground for negotiations or decisions that will take place or will be taken in other institutions. The IGF has no power of redistribution, however, it has been given the power of recognition. It can serve as a laboratory, a neutral space, where all actors can table an issue. The IGF has been a market place of ideas. In the market for goods and services, the better products always prevail. The same laws of demand and supply apply to the market place of ideas. The better ideas will prevail. The IGF provides a space for dialogue where interested actors can take up an issue without any fear. Nothing they say at the IGF can be held against them.

The IGF has brought people together who will stay in touch after the meeting, so that the IGF will build bridges between the various actors involved. The IGF, if used well, should be able to bring in developing countries into this debate as equals and facilitate their participation in existing institutions and arrangements and thus give them some sense of ownership. Ultimately, the involvement of all stakeholders, from developed as well as developing countries, will be necessary for the future development of the Internet. In this sense, the IGF should be able to play a useful role towards the achievement of this objective.

Through dialogue, the IGF seeks to raise awareness of the development dimension of Internet governance. By setting development and capacity building as its cross-cutting and overarching priorities, the IGF made it clear that Internet governance is not an end in itself, but should be responsive to the economic and social dimensions of development. This development orientation, which provides a good mix between societal, economic and technological issues, is more relevant than ever today, during a period of unprecedented economic downturn (45).

Notes

[1] Resolution 56/183 of 21 December 2001 endorsing the WSIS
http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/background/resolutions/56_183_unga_2002.pdf

[2] Kummer, M. (2004). The Results of the WSIS Negotiations on Internet Governance. In D. Maclean, Internet Governance :A Grand Collaboration (p. 53). New York: United Nations ICT Task Force.

[3] UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his address at the inaugural IGF meeting.

[4] The setting-up of the WGIG was one of the outcomes of the first phase of the WSIS. Its

terms of reference are set out in the Geneva Declaration of Principles, WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/0004, available at <http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/official/dop.html>

[5] <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sga1006.doc.htm>

[6] The Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, available at: <http://www.itu.int/wsis>

[7] Implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society
<http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/2006/cs2006/SG%20report%20on%20WSIS.15June.pdf>

[8] See id., . 29-35.

[9] <http://www.un.org/apps/sg/sgstats.asp?nid=1942>

[10] The Secretariat is hosted by the United Nations Office at Geneva. It operates under the umbrella of the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) in New York which also provides its administrative support. The IGF Secretariat is funded through extra-budgetary contributions.

[11] Internet Governance Forum, <http://www.intgovforum.org>

[12] Questionnaire on the Convening of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) :
<http://questionnaire.htm>

[13] Internet Governance Forum Webcast,
http://live.polito.it/mediateca/Internet_governance_forum

[14] Internet Governance Forum, Meetings, <http://www.intgovforum.org/meeting.htm>

[15] OECD -Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

[16] Group of 77 at the United Nations, <http://www.g77.org/doc>

[17] Statement by HE Mr. Masood Khan (Pakistan) on behalf of the Group of 77 and China at the Consultations on the Establishment of the Internet Governance Forum, 17 February 2006,
<http://intgovforum.org/contributions/IGF%20Statement%20by%20PR.pdf>

[18] Later rebranded as 'Multistakeholder Advisory Group' (MAG).

[19] Masango, C. (2008). The Internet Governance Forum: its Development, Function and Future. Internet Governance and the Information Society: Global Perspectives and European

Dimensions, . W. Benedek and V. B. M. C. Kettemann, Eleven International Publishing 63-65.

[20] The WSIS regional groups are the same as on the UN level: Western European and Others Group (WEOG); Eastern European Group; Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC); African Group and Asian Group.

[21] See UN Release SG/A/1006 PI/1717 of 17 May 2006.

[22] "When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed" (Chatham House Rule, <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/index.php?id=14>).

[23] Internet Governance Forum, MAG, Special Advisers to the Co-Chairs, http://intgovforum.org/ADG_members_chairs_Adv.htm

[24] Read out by MAG Chairman Nitin Desai.

[25] Note by the secretariat on activities undertaken by relevant United Nations entities in the implementation of WSIS, UN Doc. E/CN.16/2007/CRP.2 of 16 May 2007, http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/ecn162007crp2_en.pdf, 25

[26] Irrepressible.info - an Amnesty International campaign, <http://irrepressible.info> and BBC, Amnesty to target net repression, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/5020788.stm>

[27] <http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/index.php/athensmeeting>

[28] Dynamic Coalitions, http://intgovforum.org/dynamic_coalitions.php

[29] Under-Secretary-General Sha Zukang in his speech at the Second IGF Meeting Opening Ceremony, http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/Rio_Meeting/IGF2-opening-12NOV07.txt

[30] Internet Governance Forum, Second Meeting, Rio de Janeiro, 12-15 November 2007, Synthesis Paper, http://intgovforum.org/Rio_Meeting/IGF.SynthesisPaper.24.09.2007.rtf

[31] Intervention made by the Government of Brazil in the February 2007 open consultations, <http://intgovforum.org/contributions/IGF-1-0216.txt>

[32] Letter to the Executive Coordinator of the IGF from the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA), <http://www.intgovforum.org/ITAA%20IGF%20-%20Feb%202%202007.pdf>, at 1.

[33] Internet Governance Forum, supra note 21.

[34] http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/Rio_Meeting/IGF2-opening-12NOV07.txt

[35] Cf. AFP, Rio forum to shine torch on the dark side of the Internet,
<http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5gTTt0X1GybN3uKCu0WkjqvD8L8IA> and Yahoo News, UN
Internet forum focuses on fighting sex predators,
http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20071116/tc_afp/unInternetbrazil_071116114145

[36] Cf. ABC News, UN Conference Tackles Digital Divide,
<http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory?id=3859652>, BBC, Access key talking point at
forum, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/7096411.stm>

[37] D. MacLean, M. Andjelkovic & T. Vetter, Internet Governance and Sustainable
Development: Towards a Common Agenda 9 (2007).

[38] R. Pepper, Senior Director, Government Affairs, Cisco Systems,
http://intgovforum.org/Rio_Meeting/IGF2-EmergingIssues-15NOV07.txt

[39]
http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/Rio_Meeting/Chairman%20Summary.FINAL.16.11.2007.pdf

[40] Transcript of the 26 February taking stock session:
<http://intgovforum.org/feb26/Geneva-IGF-2-26-08%20Full%20Day%20ver1.txt>

[41] <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/docs/2008/Resolution%202008-3.pdf>

[42] <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/49/28/40839436.pdf>

[43] <http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/hydera/Chairman%27s%20Summary.10.12.2.pdf>

[44] Doria, A., W. Kleinwächter, et al., Eds. (2008). *Internet Governance Forum (IGF) - The
First Two Years*. Geneva, UNESCO Publications for the World Summit on the Information
Society- Special issue, co-produced with ITU and UNDESA.

[45] Under-Secretary-General Sha Zukang, speech at the World Telecommunication Policy
Forum, Lisbon, 22 April 2009.