AUSTRALIAN DELEGATION TO THE SECOND PREPARATORY COMMITTEE OF PHASE II OF THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR THE INFORMATION SOCIETY (WSIS)

STATEMENT ON THE PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE WORKING GROUP ON INTERNET GOVERNANCE (WGIG)

FOURTH PLENARY MEETING, 24 FEBRUARY 2004

(Check against delivery)

Australia thanks Mr Kummer for his presentation on WGIG's preliminary report and through him, Chairman Desai, and the whole Working Group.

Australia welcomes the preliminary report, demonstrating as it does steady progress and a clear way forward. We congratulate the Group on its open and inclusive approach and look forward to this continuing into the future.

Australia, like other countries, recognises the important and growing role of the Internet in the global information society. The Internet has an inevitable impact on the social, economic and cultural development of all nations.

Australia acknowledges that paragraph 48 of the Geneva Declaration of Principles states Internet governance needs to be multilateral, transparent, democratic and inclusive of multiple stakeholders. Australia sees a central issue being how these principles are best achieved without compromising the dynamism that has characterised the Internet to date. While recognising the important role of all stakeholders, Australia's view is that this dynamism depends significantly on the private sector and consumers engaging in an open marketplace and effective competition.

At this stage Australia would like to provide the following initial comments on WGIG's preliminary report.

In relation to paragraph 30 – the definition of Internet governance – Australia notes this is a difficult issue and welcomes the Group's commitment to consult further on it. Australia envisages providing further contributions on this matter.

In relation to paragraph 32 – points to be considered in defining Internet governance – Australia agrees high priority should be given to innovation, but innovation in all its forms, for example, commercial as well as technological innovation. Australia also agrees that consideration of Internet governance may indeed imply new forms of governance but notes this may be achieved through the reform of existing institutions.

In terms of key issues – as discussed in paragraph 34 – Australia sees the key priority as the management of critical Internet resources to ensure the Internet's efficient, effective and stable operation. In relation to the use of the Internet, we see many of the issues identified, as well as others, falling under the broad heading of consumer protection and further WGIG work should take this broader perspective.

We also share the view of Norway and others on the importance of the global community being able to effectively address transnational cybercrime. We also need to maximise Internet security, particularly given the Internet's widening interface with other critical infrastructures.

Regarding the relationship between Internet governance and development, thought will need to be given here to the interaction between this idea and WSIS consideration of financial mechanisms.

Consistent with our view that emphasis should be placed on optimising the use and coordination of existing arrangements for Internet governance, we consider thorough examination by WGIG of these existing arrangements, and their advantages and disadvantages, relative to other approaches is essential. This should also assist with the consideration of cross-cutting issues.

Australia considers WGIG's July report should provide concrete options for Internet governance, with their pros and cons, for consideration by all stakeholders.

In response to Ambassador Karklins' request for proposals for preparation for Prep Com 3, we support the idea of a Group of Friends of the Chair preparing a draft text for Chapter 3 dealing with Internet governance. This text would best be circulated early for consideration and comment by all stakeholders, prior to it being lodged for formal consideration at Prep Com 3.

Thank you.
