

TO: Members of WGIG

FROM: Daniel Karrenberg

DATE: April 18th 2005

SUBJECT: **WGIG in Danger of Failing Needs to Focus**

The recently published work of the WGIG is very disappointing and does not create confidence that the group will produce helpful results according to its mandate. Unless the group focusses on achievable results it will fail.

The Work

The comment period for the work published by the WGIG the previous week is much too short for detailed or comprehensive responses. The fact that some of the documents changed without notice over the course of the week indicates that they were produced with undue haste and adds an Orwellian feeling to the whole process. The general quality of the work is disappointing for a number of reasons:

Failure to Describe the Status-Quo

The sheer amount of factual errors in describing the current Internet and its administration and co-ordination functions is stunning. Even where progress had been made the results are still far from adequate. For example the pre-occupation with centralistic top-down structures prevents an accurate description of the policy development process for IP address space distribution. The WGIG fails to recognise that the most important elements of this process are the regional policy fora and not the relatively small parts that ensure

global co-ordination; consequently it fails to recognise that these processes are completely open for governments and civil society to participate and that they always have been open for anyone with a genuine interest in the matter. The comment period is too short to enumerate all instances of descriptions of the status-quo that are factually wrong or blatantly ignore widely available data in favour of hear-say and rumours.

Failure to Develop a Vision

It is impossible to develop a useful definition of, let alone a vision about, "Internet Governance" without a good understanding of the status-quo as well as the history and the boundary conditions that led to the status-quo. Only with these foundations and a sense of where the Internet is moving can one develop a vision about "Internet Governance". Instead of developing such a vision the WGIG focusses on issues of future processes before even understanding the functions and goals of existing processes, let alone defining functions and goals of the envisaged processes. For example the work on the root server system calls for agreements between the root name server operators and unspecified entity without even spending half a sentence on the rationale for such agreements or the goals they would help achieve. This makes it impossible to have a rational discourse about this recommendation. Repeating such recommendations like mantras does not help this.

Lack of Discourse & Consensus

Making recommendations without giving a rationale and proposing processes without a description of their goals does not indicate that recommendations are the result of a rational discourse within WGIG and much less a consensus among WGIG members. This does not make the work very useful as a basis developing agreement among the much larger and more diverse group of participants in the WSIS.

WGIG Should Focus

With hindsight it appears that the WGIG accepted too large a mandate with too short a time to fulfil it. The WGIG should stop and reflect on what it can reasonably achieve to support the WSIS within its mandate and the time constraints. WGIG members should consider handing back part of the mandate.

I do not know enough about the WSIS to suggest which areas the group should focus on; surely those more intimately involved with the WSIS will be able to make helpful suggestions. I do suggest however that when working on those areas the WGIG should put an emphasis on a good understanding of the status-quo and its history as well as the boundary conditions of the area. The WGIG should then develop a common vision, describe it and make recommendations based on it. This will ensure that its work is helpful to the WSIS and the Internet community as a whole.

Blindly ploughing on will at best produce unhelpful results and make the work of WGIG irrelevant; at worst it will damage already grown crops and make fertile land unusable.

About the Author

Daniel Karrenberg has helped to build and operate successful Internet administration and co-ordination structures for nearly two decades. He currently serves the RIPE NCC as chief scientist; his interests include Internet measurements, the development of the DNS, routing security and the evolution of what others often call "Internet Governance". He can be reached at <daniel.karrenberg@ripe.net>.