



Mr. Markus Kummer
Executive Coordinator
United Nations Secretariat of the
Working Group on Internet Governance
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Geneva, November 1st, 2004

Dear Markus,

As you know, the Internet Society (ISOC) has been very involved in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), in fact since its inception nearly three years ago. We organized briefings at the WSIS Summit in Geneva in December 2003, and ISOC Board members and management have participated in all of the preparatory meetings. We have been particularly interested in the work of the Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) and the work that you are doing there. As was clear at the Summit in Geneva, there is a great deal of confusion about the Internet and about the organizations and processes that shape its evolution and influence how it is used. It is the Internet Society's hope that the WGIG will help eliminate some of that confusion and strengthen some of the existing mechanisms for ensuring that the Internet meets the needs of users around the world - and, even more importantly, that these mechanisms make it easier to connect the "unconnected," the nearly ninety percent of the world's population who either cannot get access to or cannot afford to use the Internet.

The Working Group on Internet Governance and the supporting secretariat have a Herculean task ahead, with an extremely compressed schedule and limited resources. Thus, it seems essential that the Working Group define clear objectives and focus on those areas which can have the most direct impact and provide the most benefit.

Achieving this focus will not be easy given that the people involved in the WSIS process bring so many different agendas to the table. Some are calling for a "Bretton Woods agreement for the Internet," a new international treaty for "Internet governance." Others want to restructure or replace ICANN or other elements of today's international collaboration model. Others are looking for additional funding to accelerate development of the Internet. Some feel the Working Group can facilitate the development of international agreements on "harmful content," spam, computer crime, or other topics. Still others simply feel the Working Group is a useful forum to discuss the structure and processes related to international telecom and information policies. With so many different goals and expectations, it could prove difficult to get the Group to agree on its mission.

The Internet Society urges the members of the Working Group to focus on outcomes. In particular, how can the report of the WGIG have a positive impact by:

- 1) improving the efforts of United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations to support broad participation in the existing mechanisms that shape the Internet and its uses today, and
- 2) helping national governments better understand and participate in those mechanisms?

We urge WGIG to avoid plans to create new organizations to control Internet standards, to allocate domain names and IP addresses, set prices and policies for international Internet connections and peering, or to control what kind of content and applications are delivered over the Internet. Getting consensus on these issues would be difficult or impossible and even more importantly would work contrary to what has made the Internet so successful to-date. Furthermore, this narrow focus on Internet issues would mean that the WGIG would not be able to address very important issues related to Internet adoption and usage, such as national telecommunication policy, tariffs on telecom and IT equipment, competition policy, spectrum policy, and education and training (both for IT professionals and for users of IT and the Internet.)

In the past, when the Internet community has had to organize a group to grapple with complex issues, we often found it useful to define the key questions. In many ways, these questions provide a table of contents for the final report of the group. In this spirit, we would like to propose six (6) questions that we believe the WGIG should address. This list is not intended to be complete. Rather it is our "wish list" of topics we hope will be addressed.

- 1) How can national governments, the civil society, Internet users, and the general public around the world become better informed about all the varied organizations that affect the growth, evolution, and use of the Internet? And how can they stay informed?
- 2) How can such organizations more effectively involve individuals from developing countries? As you know, for over 13 years, the Internet Society has played a strong role in getting developing countries on the net, but there remains much to be done; and involvement and empowerment of individuals from developing countries is one of the most critical challenges we face.
- 3) Are there specific constituencies which are not able to be involved in the current Internet support structures? If so, who are they and how could they be accommodated by the organizations that interest them?
- 4) How can United Nations organizations, the World Bank, and other intergovernmental organizations do more to "build capacity" and develop Internet expertise among government policy makers around the world?
- 5) How best to define the term "Internet governance" and make clear that many factors and sectors - commerce, regulatory, social, legal, governments, private, public, etc. all have a huge impact on how the Internet grows and how it is used. The excellent UNDP paper on "ICT governance" (available at <http://www.isoc.org/isoc/conferences/wsis/> and titled: Internet Governance: A Discussion Document) could be helpful in this regard. ISOC would also encourage WGIG to examine the collaborative Internet model and evaluate whether a term other than Internet Governance would be more accurate and potentially less misleading.
- 6) How can the United Nations and other international organizations highlight and share success stories, e.g. government policies that have fostered the growth of the Internet; education programs that have led to sustainable Internet initiatives, particularly in developing countries; new Internet standards that enable new products and services that meet the needs of current Internet users and facilitate would-be Internet users; and useful information resources on Internet technologies and policy.

We sincerely hope this list will be helpful as the Working Group starts its deliberations. The Internet Society looks forward to working closely with you and the members of the Working Group in the coming months. The Internet Society has more than 19,000 member and 80 chapters in countries around the world. We work closely with organizations that fulfill important functions for the stability and growth of the Internet, like the Regional Internet Registries (RIR's), ICANN, the IETF and others. We can call upon many of the leading experts on Internet technology, standards and education and stand ready to help you find the information you need as you move more deeply into your task.

The Working Group on Internet Governance has a difficult task ahead, but we hope that you are able to complete your work in time to influence the deliberations of the World Summit in Tunis in 2005, as we believe that the WGIG report can play an essential part in defining the agenda and results of that meeting.

Sincerely,



Lynn St. Amour
President & CEO, Internet Society