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PRESS RELEASE

Independent Group Submits Report on Internet Governance in Lead-up to Tunis Summit on the Information Society

14 July 2005 – An independent working group today released a report on the governance of the Internet, the conclusions of which will be considered during the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), to be held in November in Tunis. At the first phase of WSIS, held in December 2003 in Geneva, governments were unable to agree on a number of questions regarding control and management of the Internet and asked the United Nations Secretary-General to establish a working group to facilitate the decisions in the second phase of the Summit.

In its report, the Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) provides proposals to improve current Internet governance arrangements and sets priorities for future action. It proposes a further internationalization of Internet governance arrangements, based on the WSIS Declaration of Principles (adopted in 2003) which advocates multilateralism and the involvement of all stakeholders and international organizations. The Report identifies a wide range of governance functions but excludes government involvement in day-to-day operational management of the Internet.

Based on an assessment of what works well and what works less well, the Report identifies a vacuum within the context of existing structures and notes that there is no global multi-stakeholder forum to address Internet related public policy issues. It therefore proposes the creation of a global forum for dialogue among all stakeholders such as governments, the private sector and civil society, to address problems linked to Internet governance, including spam and cybercrime. Since it was unable to agree on a single model, the Working Group in addition sets out four possible models for the conduct of global public policy and oversight of the Internet.

- One model sees no need for a specific oversight organization, but envisages the possibility of enhancing the role of the Governmental Advisory Committee (GAC) of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).
- Another model suggests setting up a new body that would address public policy issues in relation to ICANN competencies and maybe also issues that do not fall within the scope of other existing institutions. In this model, the GAC might be made redundant.
- A third model envisages the creation of a new body that would replace the GAC and have

wide ranging policy competencies. ICANN would be accountable to this new body which would also facilitate negotiation of Internet-related treaties, conventions and agreements. It would be linked to the United Nations.

- A fourth model proposes new structures for three interrelated areas of Internet policy governance, oversight and global coordination. It suggests the creation of three new bodies for each of these functions and would include a reformed internationalized ICANN linked to the United Nations.

The United Nations Secretary-General has transmitted the report to the President of the Preparatory Committee of the World Summit, Ambassador Janis Karklinš (Latvia), and to the Secretary-General of WSIS, Mr. Yoshio Utsumi (also Secretary-General of the International Telecommunications Union), who will forward it to governments for consideration at the Preparatory Committee meeting in September in Geneva.

The report, which has a strong focus on development, advocates a meaningful participation of developing countries in Internet governance and recommends ways to reinforce their capacities to deal with these issues.

The report also recommends further improving coordination among the various international organizations and institutions dealing with Internet governance issues. Furthermore, the report notes that international coordination needs to build on policy coherence at national and regional level and recommends that the multi-stakeholder approach be implemented at all levels.

The document makes recommendations in a number of policy areas: administration of the root zone files and system; allocation of domain names; IP addressing; interconnection costs; Internet stability, security and cybercrime; spam or junk-emails; data protection and privacy rights; consumer rights; intellectual property rights; meaningful participation in global policy development; capacity building; freedom of expression; and multilingualism.

A background report, complementary to the main report of the working group, reflects the wide range of opinions held within the group and incorporates comments made by stakeholders, based on the WSIS Principles of transparency, openness and inclusiveness.

The Working Group met four times between November 2004 and June 2005, and held consultations with all stakeholders. The Group was comprised of 40 members from governments, private sector and civil society. They participated in their personal capacity, under the chairmanship of Mr. Nitin Desai, Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General for WSIS. (A list of members is available at <http://www.wgig.org/members.html>.)

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The report is available on the WGIG and WSIS websites: <http://www.wgig.org> and <http://www.itu.int/wsis/>