A BRIEF HISTORY OF WGIG
Don MacLean

There are a number of questions future historians might want to ask about the Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG), such as:

- Did WGIG clarify our understanding of Internet governance?
- Did WGIG contribute to a successful outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)?
- How well did WGIG work as a multistakeholder process?

This chapter, written a few weeks after WGIG completed its work and a few weeks before the third meeting of the WSIS-2 Preparatory Committee (PrepCom), has a much more modest objective. Its principal aim is to summarize what WGIG did between its first meeting in November 2004 and the completion of its Final Report in July 2005, with an emphasis on the decisions that shaped the work of the group, the documents that marked its progress, and the approach that was taken to managing a number of issues throughout the process. This brief history of how WGIG carried out its mandate is intended to complement the account of WGIG's origins provided by Markus Kummer in his Introduction to this volume, and to be the precursor to a more detailed analysis that is planned for the future.

There are at least two ways of looking at the history of WGIG. From one point of view, it can be seen as a series of relatively discrete stages that began with the establishment of the group and progressed in a reasonably logical and orderly fashion towards the completion of the Final Report, with the results of one stage providing the foundations for the next and adding an additional layer of substance to the overall result. From another point of view, it can be seen as a much more free-flowing process in which a number of streams of discourse ran largely in parallel, touching from time to time, before joining together in a common pool at the end of the process.

These views are complementary. Each has its merits and the truth, as is often the case, probably lies somewhere in between. A full account of WGIG's history would require a balanced presentation from both perspectives. This brief summary of WGIG's work, which is written mainly from the first perspective, provides a step-by-step account of WGIG's progress on the basis of the documentary record, as contained in papers published on the WGIG web site and in e-mails exchanged among the members of the group. A concluding section provides some personal views on the principal themes that flowed throughout the WGIG process, the

main factors that shaped the working group's story, and the kinds of lessons that can be learned from the WGIG experience.

The Mandate

The first WGIG meeting took place at the United Nations' Geneva headquarters on 23-25 November 2004, almost one year after the first phase of WSIS (WSIS-I) had asked the United Nations Secretary-General to establish a working group on Internet governance and set out the following terms of reference[1]:

> 13.b) We ask the Secretary General of the United Nations to set up a working group on Internet governance, in an open and inclusive process that ensures a mechanism for the full and active participation of governments, the private sector and civil society from both developing and developed countries, involving relevant intergovernmental and international organizations and forums, to investigate and make proposals for action, as appropriate, on the governance of the Internet by 2005. The group should, inter alia:
>
> i)   develop a working definition of Internet governance;
> ii) identify the public policy issues that are relevant to Internet governance;
> iii) develop a common understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of governments, existing intergovernmental and international organizations and other forums as well as the private sector and civil society from both developing and developed countries;
> iv) prepare a report on the results of this activity to be presented for consideration and appropriate action for the second phase of WSIS in Tunis in 2005.[2]

Following a lengthy consultative process, the United Nations Secretary General had announced the establishment of the group just a few days earlier, on 11 November 2004[3]. However, the WGIG Secretariat had informally notified those who had agreed to join the group of the dates for the first meeting at the beginning of the month so that they could make travel arrangements. In line with the decisions of WSIS-I, the forty members of WGIG who assembled in the Palais des Nations represented government, the private sector and civil

---

[1] See Markus Kummer, "The Results of the WSIS Negotiations on Internet Governance," in Don MacLean, ed., *Internet Governance: A Grand Collaboration* (New York: United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, 2004), pp.53-57 for an authoritative account of the origins of WGIG.

[2] World Summit on the Information Society, "Plan of Action," WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/5-E, 12 December 2003, pp. 6-7

[3] See <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/pi1620.doc.htm> for the press release announcing the establishment of WGIG and listing its members

society from both developing and developed countries in a reasonably balanced fashion, taking into account geographic and demographic factors and making allowance for the gender inequality that currently characterizes the ICT sector. All members of the group had expertise in aspects of Internet governance. Many had also been involved in WSIS-I and previous multi-stakeholder policy processes, such as the Group of Eight's (G-8) Digital Opportunities Task Force and the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force. Others were new to the game of global, inter-sectoral cooperation.

Getting Organized

The first meeting was devoted to organizing WGIG's work and to setting the ground rules for interaction between WGIG and representatives of the different stakeholder groups mentioned in the WSIS-I Declaration of Principles – governments, the private sector, civil society, intergovernmental organizations, and other international organizations and forums.

The main substantive products of the first meeting were a draft outline of the Final Report, an inventory of public policy issues that the group considered relevant to Internet governance, and a template that could be used to describe these issues; identify the actors, institutions, and mechanisms currently engaged in their governance; and conduct an initial assessment of the adequacy of these arrangements[4].

The WGIG Secretariat had laid the foundations for this work prior to the meeting by developing an first draft outline for the Final Report and circulating a matrix intended to help WGIG members identify Internet governance issues and priorities through an approach that used a simplified version of the Open Systems Interconnection (OSI) model to identify and analyze issues in relation to the infrastructure, transport, applications and content layers of the Internet[5].

Although the first item in WGIG's terms of reference was to develop a working definition of Internet governance, the group agreed that it would be best to approach this task in a bottom-up fashion that would begin by identifying all of the public policy issues that were relevant to Internet governance – thereby fulfilling the second task in the WGIG terms of reference – in order to progressively build a working definition that would capture the essential elements that were common to all these issues.

---

[4] These documents are available at <http://www.wgig.org/meeting-november.html>.

[5] This approach had found considerable support at the Global Forum on Internet Governance organized by the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force in New York on March 25-26, 2004.

Instead of using a layered model to organize issues for analysis, the group decided to draw on the WSIS-I Declaration of Principles in order to:

- categorize issues in terms of their relevance to the Internet governance goals set out in the Declaration ("an equitable distribution of resources, facilitate access for all and ensure a stable and secure functioning of the Internet, taking into account multilingualism," as well as other relevant issues); and
- assess the adequacy of existing governance arrangements on an issue-by-issue basis in terms of the criteria set out in the WSIS Declaration of Principles ("the international management of the Internet should be multilateral, transparent and democratic, with the full involvement of governments, the private sector, civil society and international organizations," as well as the extent to which governance arrangements are coordinated)[6].

The members of the group decided to work as transparently as possible among themselves and with stakeholders during the four meetings that were planned to take place in Geneva, as well as during the intervals between these meetings. To this end, the group decided that structured consultations would be held with stakeholders each time the group met in Geneva, that the products of WGIG's work would be made available for comment on the WGIG web site between meetings, and that information on what had taken place during WGIG working sessions could be made available to interested parties as long as Chatham House rules were respected[7].

In order to maximize the transparency of physical meetings, the group decided to hold two kinds of sessions in addition to open consultations: "plenary sessions", which would be open to observers from all stakeholder groups, but without the right to speak; and "closed sessions" that would be restricted to WGIG members and observers from intergovernmental organizations, who would have the right to speak[8].

In closed sessions, the group adopted the general practice of working in plenary. While recognizing that it would be necessary to break up into smaller groups in order to carry out work between meetings, the group agreed to use e-mail and other web-based tools to share information and to make it available to all members of the group in real time.

---

[6] See World Summit on the Information Society, "Declaration of Principles", WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/4-E, 12 December, 2003, §48.

[7] Under Chatham House rules, reports of meetings to not attribute statements or positions to individuals in order to preserve the freedom of participants to speak their minds on the subject under discussion.

[8] Only one such plenary session was held, on the first day of the second WGIG meeting. The practice was discontinued since it did not appear to add value to the WGIG process for any of the participants.

Mapping the Terrain

Beginning with a list of twenty four issues relevant to Internet governance that had been identified by WGIG members in response to the Secretariat 's pre-meeting questionnaire and taking into account additional issues that had been identified in a paper for the United Nations ICT Task Force[9], the working group emerged from its first meeting with an "Inventory of Public Policy Issues and Priorities" that contained forty six items sorted into five categories – equitable distribution of resources, access for all, stable and secure functioning of the Internet, multilingualism and content, and other issues for consideration. Because some items appeared in more than one category or were expressed in slightly different terms in different categories, around thirty different issues were actually on the WGIG list.

The Secretariat circulated this list to WGIG members at the end of November along with the evaluation template that had been developed during the meeting, with a request that members indicate the topics on which they would consider either preparing an issue paper or contributing to or commenting on an issue paper. The plan for this stage of the group's work was:

- to finalize the inventory of issues and the template so that these documents could be put on the WGIG web site by mid-December;
- to form working groups on each item in the inventory as quickly as possible with the aim of having draft issue papers ready for review by the group as a whole by mid-January 2005, so that they could be finalized and posted on the WGIG web site by the end of the month, along with an invitation to WGIG stakeholders and other interested parties to comment.

Not surprisingly, the first of these tasks proved much easier to accomplish than the second. The inventory of issues and priorities and the template were posted as planned. However, the process of forming working groups, agreeing on procedures, analyzing issues, and developing consensus within individual working groups and among the members of the group as a whole proved to be a demanding, time-consuming process that was both facilitated and complicated by the very extensive use that was made of e-mail, through the general wgig-discuss mailing list and lists that were set up on specific issues. During this process, the number of issues on the WGIG inventory began to shrink, either as a result of the consolidation of closely-related topics, or because no one was willing or able to develop a paper, or because WGIG members were unable to achieve a sufficient degree of consensus to publish a paper. In order to maintain rough consensus within the group, particularly in relation to controversial topics, it was agreed that every paper would be published as a "draft working paper" and prefaced with a disclaimer

---

[9] Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, "Internet Governance Without a Governance Body", a Proposal Submitted to the United Nations ICT Task Force Forum on Promoting an Enabling Environment for Digital Development, Berlin, November 19, 2004.

stating that it reflected the preliminary findings of the drafting team, that it had been reviewed by all WGIG members, and that it did not necessarily represent a consensus position or contain language agreed by every member of the group[10].

In spite of the difficulties experienced in carrying out a very ambitious work program in a relatively short period of time, which was interrupted for many WGIG members by an important holiday season, draft working papers on twenty one issues began to be posted on the WGIG web site at the beginning of February.[11] These papers drew comments from seven governments, eight WGIG observers and thirty five other interested parties, and provided the basis for the open consultations with stakeholders that took place on 15-16 February 2005 during the second WGIG meeting[12].

Reporting Progress

With the issues, actors, institutions and mechanisms of the Internet governance terrain mapped in some detail, the working group faced two main challenges during its second meeting:

- to lay the foundations for the next stage of its work, which involved assessing the adequacy of current Internet governance arrangements in greater detail and developing a common understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders;
- to prepare a Preliminary Report for the second meeting of the WSIS-II Preparatory Committee (PrepCom-2), which took place in Geneva from 21-25 February 2005.

The February meeting was scheduled to take place over five full days and was the longest of the four WGIG meetings. However, because half this time was allocated to sessions that were open to all stakeholders, the group had relatively little "private time" to progress its work and prepare its report to PrepCom-2. Although the group's public sessions once again took place at the United Nations' Palais des Nations, the closed sessions were held in a quieter environment some distance away, at the headquarters of the International Labour Organization.

---

[10] The full text of the disclaimer reads as follows: "This paper is a 'draft working paper' reflecting the preliminary findings of the drafting team. It has been subject to review by all WGIG members, but does not necessarily present a consensus position nor does it contain agreed language accepted by every member. The purpose of this draft is to provide a basis for the ongoing work of the group. It is therefore not to be seen as a chapter in the final WGIG report, but rather as raw material that will be used when drafting the report. This draft working paper has been published on the WGIG web site for public comment, so that it will evolve, taking into account input from governments and stakeholders."

[11] See <http://www.wgig.org/working-papers.html>

[12] See <http://www.wgig.org/Comments-Papers.html> for comments on the WGIG draft working papers and <http://www.wgig.org/docs/Report-February.pdf> for a summary of the open consultations of February 15-16, 2005.

During its closed sessions, the group made some progress in developing a working definition of Internet governance. Between the first and second meetings, there had been some discussion of this topic on the WGIG mailing list and a number of different definitions had been proposed. In general, two views had emerged. One view favoured a normative definition that would be rooted in the WSIS-I Declaration of Principles and prescribe what Internet governance ought to be. Another view favoured a descriptive definition that would be rooted in the literature of social science and would simply say what Internet governance is. The meeting sought to reconcile these two points of view by attempting to develop a two-part definition of Internet governance that would have both descriptive and normative components. Although it was unable to agree on a satisfactory formulation of these two approaches, in the course of its discussions the group reached consensus on the general meaning of the term "governance" as distinct from "government", and on the range of issues, actors, organizations, and activities that would need to be captured in order to have a satisfactory working definition. This progress was duly reported to PrepCom-2[13].

In addition to beginning work on the definition of Internet governance, the group took an important step forward by sorting the issues that had been analyzed in the first round of working papers into four issue areas or clusters, each of which represented a significantly different governance challenge in terms of substance, process and stakeholder roles and responsibilities. WGIG's Preliminary Report to PrepCom-2 described these four clusters in the following terms:

(i)   Issues related to infrastructural issues and the management of critical Internet resources, including administration of the domain name system and IP addresses, administration of the root server system, technical standards, peering and interconnection, telecommunications infrastructure including innovative and converged technologies as well as multilingualization. These issues are matters of direct relevance to Internet governance falling within the ambit of existing organizations with responsibility for these matters;

(ii) Issues related to the use of the Internet, including spam, network security, and cybercrime. While these issues are directly related to Internet governance, the nature of global cooperation is not well defined;

(iii) Issues which are relevant to the Internet, but with impact much wider than the Internet, where there are existing organizations responsibly for these issues, such as IPR or international trade. …

---

[13] See Working Group on Internet Governance, "Preliminary Report of the Working Group on Internet Governance", WSIS-II/PC-2/DOC/5-E, pp.5-6, §30-33.

(iv) Issues related to developmental aspects of Internet governance, in particular capacity building in developing countries.[14]

In addition to these four clusters, the Preliminary Report recognized that WGIG's work should be guided by the key WSIS principles and also recognized the importance of horizontal issues that affect every aspect of Internet governance, such as the economic and social impacts of the Internet, the particular challenges facing developing countries, and the capacity of existing Internet governance arrangements to address governance issues in a coordinated manner[15].

The Preliminary Report was presented to PrepCom-2 on 24 February 2005. In the discussion that followed, the report was very well received by representatives of twenty three developing and developed country governments and the Presidency of the European Union, as well as by representatives of the Internet community, the private sector, civil society, and relevant intergovernmental organizations. The discussion of the Preliminary Report was tantamount to an endorsement of WGIG's work by PrepCom-2. This strengthened the cohesion of the group and its resolve to continue its work as planned[16].

Assessing Current Arrangements

WGIG's Preliminary Report included a work program for the remainder of its mandate. As a next step, the group proposed to assess the adequacy of present Internet governance arrangements and to develop a common understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of all actors. The report also promised that papers on these issues would be posted no later than 31 March 2005, so that all stakeholders would have a chance to comment on them before the third WGIG meeting on 18-20 April 2005.[17]

During its second meeting, the group had begun the task of using the WSIS criteria to assess the adequacy of current governance arrangements in the first of the four issue areas it had identified – i.e. in the cluster grouping issues related to infrastructure and the management of critical Internet resources. Although it made a good start on this task by developing a matrix that related the specific issues and governance arrangements contained in this cluster to the WSIS criteria, and although it also had begun to spell out what these criteria meant in practical

---

[14] WGIG, "Preliminary Report," p. 6, § 34.

[15] WGIG, "Preliminary Report," p. 6, § 35.

[16] See <http://http://www.wgig.org/PrepCom-Statements.html> for the statements made at PrepCom-2 in response to WGIG's Preliminary Report.

[17] WGIG, "Preliminary Report," p. 7, § 37-38.

terms[18], the group did not have time during the meeting to develop a comprehensive assessment framework or to agree on a method for carrying out the next stage of its work.

Following the discussion of WGIG's Preliminary Report by PrepCom-2, the Secretariat proposed that the group should aim to produce papers on each of the issue clusters that had been identified in the Preliminary Report. To facilitate this task, it was proposed that the first issue area, which contained many of the issues that had been at the heart of the Internet governance debate during the first phase of WSIS, should be divided into two sub-clusters (1.a and 1.b), with the former grouping issues related to the Internet's physical infrastructure and the latter grouping issues related to its logical infrastructure (i.e. IP addresses and domain names). The Secretariat also suggested that these papers should be short, crisp and clear, that they should identify the strengths and weaknesses of current governance arrangements, and that they should aim to clarify the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders.

To coordinate this work, the Secretariat proposed to nominate five pairs of co-leads representing different constituencies and regions and requested the members of the group to indicate the papers to which they were willing to contribute, with the aim of having drafts ready by mid-March so that papers could be posted as promised by the end of the month. To facilitate this work, the Secretariat set up e-mail discussion lists for each issue area and enhanced the functionality of the Plone online content management team space that had been used with rather limited success in the previous phase. In addition, building on some work that was initially done with respect to cluster 3 issues, the Secretariat developed a document entitled "Towards a Common Understanding of the Roles and Responsibilities of All Stakeholders in Internet Governance" that was intended to serve as a "chapeau" for the five assessment papers and to provide a general framework for assessing the adequacy of existing governance arrangements in terms of the WSIS criteria[19].

The working methods proposed by the Secretariat, which were accepted by the group's members, drew on lessons that had been learned during the previous phase of WGIG's work in preparing working papers on the inventory of public policy issues related to Internet governance. The principal aim of these proposals was to improve the efficiency of WGIG's work and the overall quality and consistency of its outputs – inherently desirable objectives that were reinforced by the relatively short interval between the presentation of the Preliminary Report at the end of February and the third WGIG meeting in mid-April.

---

[18] See the non-paper posted at <http://www.wgig.org/docs/WGIGPaper-Criteria.pdf>

[19] Following discussion and refinement, the chapeau paper, "Towards a Common Understanding of the Roles and Responsibilities of All Stakeholders in Internet Governance" was posted on the WGIG web site on April 3, 2005, in advance of the issue cluster assessment papers.

In spite of these improvements, the WGIG had difficulty meeting its March 31 deadline, as devils began to emerge in the details of different issue areas, most particularly in cluster 1. Once again, the group found it necessary to include a general disclaimer with each paper to the effect that it was a "draft working paper" reflecting the preliminary findings of the drafting team, that had been subject to review by all WGIG members, but that did not necessarily present a consensus position or contain agreed language accepted by every member. With this proviso, the assessment papers were posted in component parts as they were agreed by working group members beginning on 5 April 2005[20]. Over the next ten days, all of the assessment notes for clusters 1, 2 and 3 were posted. Since the third WGIG meeting was scheduled to take place in mid-April, 15 May 2005 was set as the deadline for stakeholder comments. Four governments, twenty-three WSIS observers, and seven other interested parties provided comments[21].

Developing Proposals for Action

The third WGIG meeting, which took place in Geneva from 18-20 April 2005, laid the foundations for the final stage of its work. During the meeting, the group revised the outline for the Final Report in order to begin aligning it more closely with the working group's terms of reference. This done, it directed the Secretariat to prepare a draft introduction for the Final Report which, in addition to summarizing the origin and evolution of WGIG, would set out the general principles that had guided the development of the Internet, as well as the WSIS principles that had guided the working group in carrying out its terms of reference.

Since these principles would be presented in the Introduction to its Final Report, the group concluded that they would not need to be repeated in the chapter dealing with the definition of Internet governance, and that the definition therefore should be descriptive rather than normative. The group reached a rough consensus on the general features that a working definition of Internet governance should have and set up a small working group to draft a chapter for review at the next meeting. This chapter would not only include a proposed definition of Internet governance, but also explain why a definition was needed and what its terms were intended to mean.

The group concluded that the two sets of draft working papers that had been prepared by WGIG members provided most of the raw material that would be needed to draft chapters for the Final Report that would identify issues related to Internet governance, assess the adequacy of existing governance arrangements, and present a common understanding of the roles and

---

[20] See <http://www.wgig.org/April-Working-Papers.html> for the April 2005 assessment papers.

[21] See <http://www.wgig.org/Comments-April.html> for comments on the April 2005 assessment papers.

responsibilities of different stakeholders. It therefore decided to entrust the Secretariat with the task of consolidating this material according to the outline for the Final Report, and to set up small working groups to draft some additional material in the form of boxes that would provide greater detail on a number of high priority issues, such as interconnection charges and free and open source software.

During its third meeting, the group also spent a considerable amount of time discussing how existing Internet governance mechanisms could be improved and whether new mechanisms were needed. The papers assessing the adequacy of current governance arrangements had demonstrated that stakeholders face significantly different governance challenges in different issue areas. Accordingly, there was general agreement in the group that different kinds of solutions would be required, in terms of policy and process, to address the main governance challenges that had been identified through the cluster analysis.

These challenges included: improving oversight of the management of core Internet resources; responding to new issues related to Internet use in areas where global governance arrangements are currently lacking, such as spam and information and network security; improving coordination between Internet governance and the governance of issues in areas such as trade and intellectual property rights, which are significantly affected by the Internet; and enhancing the capacity of developing countries to coordinate Internet governance at the national level. To facilitate action in response to these current governance challenges and others that arise in the future, there was a general feeling among WGIG members that it would be useful to have a global Internet governance forum where all stakeholders could meet on an equal footing. However, although there was general agreement in the group on the main Internet governance challenges that should be addressed, there was not yet a common view on the action that should be taken.

Following the meeting, in order to help advance this discussion to the point where specific recommendations could be developed, the Secretariat circulated a questionnaire designed to elicit the views of WGIG members on the actions that needed to be taken to improve Internet governance with respect to four "process functions": a forum function; an oversight function; a function to improve coordination of existing international governance mechanisms; and a function to improve coordination of national governance mechanisms. WGIG members were encouraged to use the Plone work space to post their replies to the questionnaire, to keep track of their colleagues' answers, and to continue their discussions. In addition, a separate version of the questionnaire, prefaced by a "chapeau" explaining its purpose, was made available on the public portion of the WGIG web site[22]. A majority of WGIG members representing all points

---

[22] See <http://www.wgig.org/docs/Questionnaire.09.05.05.pdf> for the public version of the questionnaire and a list of stakeholder replies.

of view responded to the internal version of the questionnaire[23]. In addition, four governments and seven WGIG observers responded to the public questionnaire[24].

Writing the Report

The fourth and final WGIG meeting, which took place from 14-17 June 2005, began with open consultations at the headquarters of the International Telecommunication Union, which are across the street from the Palais des Nations in Geneva. When WGIG members assembled that evening at the Chateau de Bossey, an idyllic retreat outside Geneva owned by the World Council of Churches and operated as an Ecumenical Institute, they had plenty of material to work with and only seventy-two hours to complete their Final Report.

Prior to the meeting, the Secretariat had prepared a sixty five-page document that fleshed out the outline for the Final Report that had been agreed at the third WGIG meeting with material drawn from the Preliminary Report, as well as from the draft working papers on Internet-related public policy issues and existing governance arrangements. In addition, as agreed at the third meeting the document included sections on the general principles that had guided the development of the Internet since its inception and on the WSIS principles that had guided WGIG's work, as well as a draft chapter on the working definition of Internet governance.

In the opening session of the Chateau de Bossey meeting, WGIG members decided to write a short Final Report that would be easily accessible to the high-level policy-makers participating in WSIS-II, and to present the Secretariat document as a Background Report that would be of particular interest to policy analysts and other specialists. To achieve this objective, WGIG departed from its usual practice of working in plenary and set up a number of working groups to draft text and recommendations for the different chapters of the Final Report. However, before breaking up into smaller groups, the working group as a whole approved the introductory chapter and the chapter on the working definition of Internet governance in the Background Report. The Secretariat and some members of the working group were subsequently charged with preparing edited versions of these two texts for inclusion in the Final Report.

During the middle part of the Chateau de Bossey meeting, WGIG members divided into relatively large working groups in order to draft text and recommendations on priority public policy issues, as well as to draft recommendations on the forum function and the oversight function. The working group on the oversight function in turn sub-divided into four ad hoc

---

[23] See <http://www.wgig.org/docs/IG-questionnaire-response.pdf> for a summary of replies by WGIG members to the questionnaire.

[24] See <http://www.wgig.org/meeting-april.html>

groups, each of which developed one of the four models that appear in the Final Report. In addition, small groups were assigned such tasks as: preparing a chapter on capacity-building in developing countries for the Background Report and drafting recommendations on this subject for the Final Report; drafting a list of the roles and responsibilities of government, private sector and civil society stakeholders for the Final Report; and working on the boxes that were to be included in the Background Report on a number of high priority issues. Throughout this phase of the meeting, the Secretariat worked closely with the different groups to capture the results of their work and update the constantly evolving drafts of the Final Report and the Background Report.

For the final stage of the meeting, WGIG re-assembled in plenary to review the material that had been produced by the different working groups. The draft recommendation on the forum function was readily accepted by the group as a whole, and it was agreed that the four oversight function models developed by the ad hoc groups would be accepted by WGIG without further substantive discussion and presented in the Final Report, in the words of the Chairman, as "four equally beautiful brides". After spending many hours polishing text and fine-tuning recommendations, mainly by using a computer projection system to propose and adopt amendments through a real-time editing process, WGIG members agreed to put the Final Report to bed around one-thirty in the morning of Saturday, 18 June 2005 in a spirit of good cheer, common satisfaction, and considerable relief. This was done on the understanding that purely editorial changes could be made in the next week or so, once everyone had had a chance to read the text and recommendations in hard copy, and that any proposed change that potentially raised an issue of substance could only be made with the unanimous consent of the group as a whole.

Not surprisingly, given the circumstances in which the WGIG Final Report had been written, there were a small number of issues related to the wording of parts of the report that required further discussion. All were satisfactorily resolved, and on 5 July 2005 the Final Report was transmitted to the United Nations Secretary-General, who in turn transmitted it to Ambassador Janis Karklins, the President of the WSIS-II Preparatory Committee, and to Mr. Yoshio Utsumi, the WSIS Secretary-General, on 14 July 2005[25]. With this done, the work of WGIG officially came to an end.

Conclusion

The main aim of this chapter has been to provide a brief, step-by-step account of how WGIG carried out its work on the basis of documentary records that include the papers and reports produced by the working group, which are available on the WGIG web site, and the e-mail

---

25 See www.wgig.org for the Final Report and the Background Report.

correspondence exchanged among WGIG members during the course of their work, which will become publicly available, as well as the notes taken by the author during WGIG meetings. There are many other documents that could be drawn on in order to write a fuller account of how WGIG did its work. Other important sources of information could include the summaries, real-time captioning of proceedings, and webcasts of WGIG's open consultation sessions; comments on WGIG papers and other contributions submitted by stakeholders and other interested parties to WGIG meetings; the reports of regional conferences and other events organized by various stakeholders throughout the process; notes kept by the Secretariat and other members of the working group; the different versions of papers that track the evolution of WGIG's thinking; papers written by other WGIG members as a contribution to this volume; and the study of WGIG as a multi-stakeholder process that is being conducted at the time of this writing by the Diplo Foundation.

History, of course, is much more than documents. It also includes the memories, perceptions, intentions, reactions, questions, judgments and reflections of participants. From this perspective, the author believes that WGIG was a success as a multi-stakeholder process that enlarged our understanding of Internet governance and contributed to the central goal of WSIS, which is to link the Internet and other ICTs to the global development agenda – a result that will stand no matter what the outcome of WSIS-II.

A number of factors contributed to WGIG's success. These include: the highly complementary knowledge, skills, experience and personalities that WGIG members brought to the group, and the commitment and mutual respect they demonstrated; the strong leadership and effective support provided by the chairman and Secretariat throughout the process, and their unfailing good humour; the transparency with which the group operated internally and in relation to stakeholders; and a series of very good tactical decisions, beginning with the initial decisions to work in a bottom-up fashion and to use the WSIS principles as a touchstone, and the subsequent decisions to simplify the potential complexity of Internet governance and stakeholder roles and responsibilities by clustering issues, and by recognizing that different issue areas presented fundamentally different governance challenges and opportunities.

Above all, WGIG was a success because it was an eminently fair and reasonable process in which all points of view were not only expressed, but also were heard, discussed, and reflected in the products of the group, no matter how rough the resulting consensus. In WGIG the perfect was never allowed to become the enemy of the good.

A more detailed and comprehensive study of WGIG's history would find all of these features reflected in the working group's documentary record. Such a study would also raise questions that have not been touched on in this short account, but which merit investigation. In essence many of these questions relate to the general problem of designing, constituting, managing, and

operating a multi-stakeholder policy process. What kinds of people are needed to make the process a success, as participants and leaders? How should they be selected? What should be their relationship with the constituencies they represent during the process? How should they be organized and managed? What are the most effective working methods and means of communication? How should decisions be made? What are the responsibilities and accountabilities of participants once multi-stakeholder processes are over? The history of WGIG may have as much to say about these kinds of questions as it does about Internet governance.