

Consultations on the Establishment of the Working Group on Internet Governance

Geneva, 20-21 September 2004

Chairman's Summary

In my opening remarks, I stressed that in the debate on Internet governance, rather than focus on differences, we should see this process as an opportunity for improving access to the Internet as well as fostering economic and social development.

I think we had a very useful and fruitful exchange of views and our deliberations were more constructive than anticipated. They achieved the aim we set ourselves at the outset; that is to move closer to a common understanding on how to manage the process.

Of course, as I emphasized at the beginning, this was not intended to be a forum for negotiations. We were therefore not looking for a negotiated outcome but rather we were here to listen to the views of Governments, private sector and civil society. It is important that all participants are aware of the diversity of views. We have to bear in mind that the WGIG also is not a negotiating forum. The purpose of its existence is to facilitate the negotiations, which will take place at the second phase of the WSIS in Tunis. The WGIG process therefore will have to be designed in a manner to assist the WSIS negotiations. In order to do so, it is of paramount importance that it carries credibility.

Most contributions from Governments were shaped by the experience gained in the negotiations leading up to the Geneva phase of the Summit. Contributions from stakeholders, while recognizing the role of governments, focused on their role in the development of the Internet. By and large they emphasized that nothing should impair the functioning and growth of the Internet.

After two days of deliberations, we have a much clearer view of the different perspectives. In my brief to the Secretary-General, I shall convey the views expressed by all of you.

There was a remarkable convergence of views on some key ideas:

- There was a general convergence of views on the need to treat Internet governance from a broad perspective and that we should take into account what has been done elsewhere and build on what already exists. Topics that were particularly highlighted by the participants include the management of Internet resources, network security, cyber-crime, spam, and multilingualism. However, many participants stressed that the WGIG should concentrate on a few priority issues
- There is also a broad understanding that the WGIG should be based on a multi-stakeholder approach and that this approach should be reflected in its composition.

- There is a general feeling that the composition of the WGIG should be balanced. Different views were held as to how this balance could be achieved and it is clear that we are looking at a balance across different dimensions. Among the considerations put forward were regional representation, stakeholders, gender, developed and developing countries, and differing schools of thought.
- There was a widespread consensus that the process should be open, transparent and inclusive. Regular consultations in an open format such as the ones held during the past two days could greatly contribute to this objective. It also became clear that the WGIG was expected to be different from classical expert groups and that an innovative approach will be needed to meet these expectations. To increase the efficiency of this process, best possible use should be made of electronic working methods including online consultations. In this regard, the WGIG could learn from the Internet community.
- Different views were held with regard to the composition, size and structure of the WGIG. These differences may appear to be larger than they really are; in my view, they are not unbridgeable. Some delegates proposed that the Working Group should be open-ended, whilst in contrast some wanted a small group of up to twenty participants. A size that seems to find favour among different constituencies is a group of between thirty and forty members. Many delegations stressed the need for the WGIG to be constituted at a working or expert level. What we are looking for is a group that is being accepted as being representative by governments and all stakeholders.

Let me also make a few comments on resources. The Secretariat is in need of human and financial resources. I would therefore like to make a plea for support and call on governments and the private sector to contribute to the Trust Fund we have set up for the financing of the Secretariat. It is important for the process to be well funded and well run in order to be successful. Support can also take other forms, such as staging events related to Internet Governance or holding regional consultations

The UN has not sought the role it was given by the Geneva phase of WSIS, but at the same time is not shying away from it. We have come into this process as facilitators and will strive to establish “a dialogue of good faith” among all participants.

I will report back on these consultations to the Secretary-General. My central message will be that the WGIG process will need to be open, transparent and inclusive.