

The Working Group on Internet Governance-WGIG

Thank you Mr Chairman for giving me the floor .May I seize this opportunity to thank the Secretary General of the United Nations for having put up this working group in the wake of the WSIS Geneva Summit and the Executive Director for driving the process.

We in Mauritius believe that the WGIG process offers us a tremendous opportunity for putting together the very important elements towards a consensus on this very important but rather difficult subject .In order to really come to terms with this subject, and to suggest how in practice this working group has to move ahead it is imperative the very complex nature of internet governance.

Mr Chairman, allow me to highlight some elements of this complexity. The internet environment is today characterized by

- The fact that it already exists and is a going concern
- It is a matter which interests multistakeholders
- It is a vehicle on which a substantial number of operations is being conducted and is the backbone of commerce for many
- The fact that many states have to different degrees started legislating nationally to render the internet user friendly in an environment where efforts are being made to make it more secure
- The existence of international legal instruments, though newly made, which address issues from an international perspective
- The development of several international entities which have made the present system work
- It is based on open and non-proprietary standards
- The growing recognition by States to be more present in this field especially from a public policy perspective.
- The one element which we consider most important and on which consensus has already been achieved i.e there is no going back on what has been achieved. This is the base line from which we believe the WGIG process must start. One delegation has yesterday talked about and I quote “stocktaking the activities already in place, evaluating what is and what is not working, and analyzing their reasons” unquote. My delegation fully subscribes to this.

Mr Chairman if the contours of the internet environment which we have attempted to trace do in fact reflect the reality of it, the method of procedure that could be adopted for the WGIG process has to closely follow those contours. What we mean by this is that the WGIG must not fall prey to the temptation of having to invent a new structure into which existing elements

will perform have to fit in. Before suggesting a few elements for consideration by this august assembly way we highlight some constraints with which the WGIG is already confronted because they are the real stumbling blocks lying in the path of the working group.

- The time constraint
- The difficult task of carving out an acceptable definition of internet governance
- The different level of State's involvement in the process
- The need for consensus on almost every disputed element.

Consequently Mr Chairman, this working group has to be very innovative and responsive to all elements that we highlighted earlier. The composition, the basic principles characterizing its process, the selection of its members, the working methods are crucial to the success of this complicated enterprise. How can we attempt to make it less daunting is a real challenge?

We shall be very bold to ask the question whether the group can only deliver after an accepted and workable definition of internet governance has been achieved? Can there be an alternative to which we could all subscribe so that the working group can go into effective work.

Yesterday the concept of basket was used in one of the presentations and we would venture to suggest that internet governance must be seen at this point in time as being a big receptacle wherein the different parts comprising (I mention these at random)

- Management of domainnames /addresses
- Spam
- Intellectual property rights
- Standards
- Data protection
- Privacy
- Security
- Trade/taxation
- Cybercrime
- Telecom/internet convergence
- Local content
- Multilingualism
- Reliability/usage
- Policy issues

would be contained.

Instead of expecting that the working group will develop a working definition of internet governance within the time frame and under the constraints earlier raised, we suggest that agreement is reached on what are the elements which best reflect, for the time being, the notion of internet governance. It can then articulate the process which the working group will adopt around this notion. It will then enable a classification exercise as to which matter can be addressed by specialists, some by governments and other stakeholders.

In this context, Mr Chairman, my delegation sees the working group divided into several subbodies which regularly report to the working group as a whole whenever decision, consensus or agreement is required.

Mr Chairman as for the putting up of the structure of the group and decide on its composition we subscribe to the earlier proposals that it must always reflect inclusiveness, flexibility, transparency and pluralism i.e representation of all stakeholders.

Before concluding I wish to highlight a national initiative regarding internet governance in Mauritius. Government has through the enactment of the Information and Communication Technologies Authority Act established an Internet Management Committee which comprises representatives of the NGO's, government and private sector to manage the .mu domain to look at other aspects of internet governance.

Moreover the government has decided to make the ICT sector the fifth pillar of the economy and our presence here and in the future proceedings is testimony to our commitment to take the fullest advantage of the internet as a tool for development and to address the issue of the digital divide. Internet governance, Mr Chairman, however defined is thus of the utmost importance to small States like Mauritius.

To conclude, Mr Chairman, may I be allowed to inform this august assembly that the government of Mauritius with the collaboration of the Economic Commission for Africa and the Bamako Bureau for WSIS is organizing the first face to face consultation on internet governance from 8-10 December 2004.

I thank you Mr Chairman.

