

**Open Regional Dialogue on
Internet Governance
Programme Statement**

September 2004



Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme

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Open Regional Dialogue on Internet Governance – Asia Pacific

UNDP-APDIP (www.apdip.net)

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Introduction

UNDP's Asia Pacific Development Information Programme (UNDP-APDIP) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada are launching an Open Regional Dialogue on Internet Governance to contribute the Asia-Pacific perspective to the global discussion on Internet Governance. UNDP-APDIP will oversee overall implementation of the initiative and it will adopt a participatory approach, engaging stakeholders at the national and regional levels through consultations, online dialogue, region-wide analysis, and the dissemination of research results.

This programme statement outlines the scope, intentions, expectations and the work ahead. An Asia-Pacific Internet Governance Advisory Panel (AP-IGAP) will be established to guide the work to be undertaken under this initiative.

Background

Internet policies, standards, rules and guidelines are established directly or indirectly by a very wide range of institutions globally. Different institutions may have responsibility for specific functions and/or geographic regions, and exercise these responsibilities in a variety of ways, through direct authority, coordinating responsibility, or facilitation of bottom-up consensus processes. Some of these institutions are dedicated solely to specific responsibilities, while others may have broader related responsibilities; some are long-established, while others have been formed only with the past few years.

Currently, these institutions include, *inter alia*, the International Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), Internet Architecture Board (IAB), Regional Internet Registries (RIRs), Domain Name System (DNS) Registries and Registrars, Multilingual Internet Names Consortium (MINC), World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), UNESCO, UNCTAD, ITU, and WIPO. Standards set by ICANN relating to the Domain Name System (DNS), for example, have major impacts on developing countries as witnessed in the disputes over some country top-level domains (ccTLDs).

Internet Governance is an ill-defined term, but can be taken to mean the collection of all activities and responsibilities relating to the development and use of the Internet. This includes not only the responsibilities and activities of those organisations listed above, but also the Internet-related activities of Governments in general, national and international law enforcement agencies, Development Agencies, and others.

The Internet is perhaps the most prominent enabling technology or development of today, and countries that have started to exploit it are more likely to participate actively in the wide range of Internet Governance activities mentioned above. Many other countries, however, are yet to begin to take substantial advantage of the Internet, and also tend to miss opportunities to participate in global Internet policy-making, or governance, activities. Without this involvement, less-developed countries are ceding control of global policies that can fundamentally affect their economic, social, legal, and political spheres.

There is adequate justification to say that Internet Governance is no longer an area developing countries can afford to neglect or ignore. Many are aware, for instance, of the success of past collaboration on international telephone tariff regimes and are therefore confident that similar success can be achieved in the area of Internet Governance. But very often, despite the interest, many countries are left behind because of various factors that include the lack of resources and local capacities.

With this in mind, UNDP-Asia Pacific Development Information Programme (UNDP-APDIP) is initiating an *Open Regional Dialogue on Internet Governance* and planning to organize a series of consultations prior to the WSIS, Tunis, to try and establish a regional perspective on important aspects of Internet Governance as viewed by stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific region. This can only come through rigorous discussions and debates in countries of the region. Awareness and know-how constitute a very important part of this debate. When decisions are made at the global level concerning a common global property, full participation of citizens, governments, civil societies and the business sector cannot be compromised.

Objective

This initiative will engage all Asia-Pacific countries and as many stakeholders as possible to create a participatory approach to address the call of the UN Secretary General vis-à-vis the objectives of the UN-WGIG¹. Furthermore, the initiative will also develop the capacities of national policy-makers on issues of Internet Governance to enable more active participation in WSIS in Tunisia, and to address pressing Internet Governance issues at the global level.

The overall objective of this initiative is to increase stakeholder awareness on the issues of Internet Governance within the Asia-Pacific region by advancing and facilitating open dialogue, research and dissemination at the national and regional levels and providing a regional perspective on the issues in discussions at the global level, through an inclusive process that ensures representation from ICT stakeholders of various interests, including policy, technology, commerce, gender and social development..

Methodology/Partnership

The initiative will be implemented by UNDP-APDIP under the guidance of the Asia-Pacific Internet Governance Advisory Panel (AP-IGAP), which comprises experts/advisors from the region. The details of the AP-IGAP are attached and we welcome any nominations. All nominations should reach UNDP-APDIP by 10 October, 2004.

The initiative shall conduct country-level surveys to assess the unique Internet Governance issues of a country and to ascertain the aggregate areas common to the region, providing a basis for the initiative. In the area of research and information dissemination, the initiative will focus on thematic areas as prioritised from the country surveys. The initiative will begin with a literature review of seminal documents on Internet Governance that will feed into a background paper for wide dissemination. Furthermore, the initiative will produce a primer on Internet Governance and Public Policies.

UNDP-APDIP will adopt a participatory approach, the initiative will engage and welcome relevant stakeholders and build synergies/partnerships with national, sub-regional and regional institutions, agencies and organizations to ensure the most cohesive and comprehensive perspective as possible. UNDP-APDIP will collaborate with local focal points to organize national consultations concurrently with national surveys on Internet Governance, and public campaigns supported by the initiative.

Further stakeholder dialogue and outreach is planned under regional consultations on public policy and Internet Governance. These consultation will be organized in conjunction with regional events with an aim (*-inter alia*) to build synergies with regional institutions/agencies/organizations.

¹ The first phase of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva has paved the way for a coordinated effort on Internet Governance at the global level. Due to the various concerns and debates raised on the issues of Internet Governance, the Summit asked the UN Secretary General to work on a four-point agenda to address this important subject: 1) define Internet Governance; 2) identify public policy issues; 3) chart out roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, and 4) to report the result of such activities to WSIS-2, Tunis.

To broaden participation in discussions and to ensure wide-spread dissemination, an Asia-Pacific Internet Governance Portal will be launched to facilitate virtual dialogue and review, and to serve as a resource centre on Internet Governance issues pertaining to the region.

The *Open Regional Dialogue on Internet Governance* is based on a planning meeting held in Kuala Lumpur in May 2004 that involved stakeholders from governments, private sector, civil society and multilateral organizations.

The meeting noted that ongoing national ICT policy formulation processes have to be targeted to prepare an appropriate channel of national consultations and debate on Internet Governance issues within countries. Besides the need to define Internet Governance itself, It highlighted public policy, cyber crime and security, e-commerce, Intellectual Property Rights, and International/multi-lingual DNS (IDNs) as some of the core issues that require to be addressed.

We welcome any constructive comments and suggestions on all aspects of the initiative.

Please submit your comments and suggestions to:

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ANNEX

Asia-Pacific Internet Governance Advisory Panel (AP-IGAP)

UNDP - Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme TERMS OF REFERENCE

Background

UNDP-Asia Pacific Development Information Programme (UNDP-APDIP) is initiating an *Open Regional Dialogue on Internet Governance* to establish a regional perspective on important aspects of Internet Governance as viewed by stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific region. This initiative aims to facilitate consultations at the national, regional, and sub-regional levels, while surveys and research will be undertaken that will result in a consolidated input to WSIS (Tunis) and the UN Working Group on Internet Governance (UN-WGIG).

A multi-stakeholder Asia-Pacific Internet Governance Advisory Panel (AP-IGAP) consisting of about 10 members will be established. Regional organizations such as ASEAN and SAARC, and global Internet Governance players such as ITU and ICANN shall be invited to partake in the Panel.

The Panel will serve in an advisory capacity to UNDP-APDIP, which will be responsible for overall implementation of this initiative. AP-IGAP will work primarily online and via electronic communications, however, at least two face-to-face meetings of the Panel are planned.

Members of the Asia-Pacific Internet Governance Advisory Panel will:

- advise on the overall thematic scope, framework and direction of the Open Regional Dialogue and Awareness Raising on Internet Governance, including strategies for conducting country surveys and consultations and disseminating findings;
- contribute to the work of the UN/WSIS WGIG, including the development of a working definition of Internet Governance, identification of relevant public policy issues, and description of the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders;
- advise on involvement of possible local and national partners from government, academia, civil society, and the private sector, and
- advise and provide input on the final, comprehensive paper summing up the findings, conclusions and recommendations from the entire initiative, and specially the various country surveys and regional consultations, to be submitted to UN-WGIG and WSIS.

Selection of AP-IGAP Members

Members for the Asia-Pacific Internet Governance Advisory Panel shall be selected from all regions of Asia-Pacific on the basis of experience and proven work/knowledge in the area of Internet Governance, and on peer recommendations and referrals.

The Advisory Panel is expected to commence work in October 2004 and conclude soon after the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis in November 2005.

All contributions by members of the Advisory Panel shall be on a pro bono basis.

Meetings/Consultations

Members will be expected to participate in at least two working meetings of the Advisory Panel to discuss issues and provide recommendations, and all members are expected to attend. UNDP-APDIP shall cover travel and living expenses of AP-IGAP members.

Advisory Panel members may also be requested to attend, on behalf of and at the expense of UNDP-APDIP, national, sub-regional, or regional consultations/events related to the initiative and/or Internet Governance in the region.

For further details, please contact:

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