



**Contribution<sup>1</sup> to the Establishment of the  
Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG)  
First Open Consultation Meeting, 20-21 September 2004, Geneva, Switzerland**

*“We are committed to realizing our common vision of the Information Society for ourselves and for future generations. We recognize that young people are the future workforce and leading creators and earliest adopters of ICTs. They must therefore be empowered as learners, developers, contributors, entrepreneurs and decision-makers. We must focus especially on young people who have not yet been able to benefit fully from the opportunities provided by ICTs. We are also committed to ensuring that the development of ICT applications and operation of services respects the rights of children as well as their protection and well-being.”*

Youth Paragraph (para. 11) of the  
WSIS Declaration of Principles

## **I. Introduction**

1 At present, over 3 billion individuals or just over 50 per cent of the world's population are children or youth. In terms of youth alone, there are 1.3 billion young people aged between 15 and 24, according to the 2003 UN World Youth Report. If there was ever an area where young people are the leaders not only of the future, but also of today, it is the emerging Information Society. From web development to information access, youth are growing up with the latest technologies – extending them, providing innovative solutions to global challenges. Youth are creators and consumers of technologies ranging from mobile telephones to email, to instant messaging, radio, print media and television. As both business and social entrepreneurs, young people are creatively using technology to address community needs.

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<sup>1</sup> The introductory texts make broad reference to WSIS Youth Caucus Geneva Phase and Youth Creating Digital Opportunities ([www.ycdo.net](http://www.ycdo.net)) documents. The WSIS Youth Caucus wishes to thank all those who have provided insightful comments to the initial drafts of this paper. This contribution was drafted; transmitted for comments to the WSIS Civil Society Plenary, Internet Governance Caucus and Youth Caucus mailing lists; and finalized by Robert Sagun (The Philippines), Policy Coordinator of the WSIS Youth Caucus. For comments and inquiries, please send correspondence to [facilitators@wsisyouth.org](mailto:facilitators@wsisyouth.org).

2 Young people are central to the evolution of a “people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented” Information Society. They are heavily represented in almost every category of the Information Society from the development of software products, establishment of technology infrastructure and creation of Internet communities.

3 With the introduction of the Internet, youth have acquired a powerful new tool to connect and communicate. Today, young people constitute the largest percentage of those online: they go online more than anyone else, they stay online longer, and they have more diverse online activities. Yet, youth are rarely given the opportunity to be engaged in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) policy development. As put forward in para 2.7 of the 2003 WSIS Asia-Pacific Regional Conference Declaration, young people are “...a force for socio-economic development. Equipping young people with knowledge and skills on ICTs to prepare them for full participation in the Information Society is an important goal.” If the WSIS is to effect real change, it must involve youth in program/project implementation as well as in the broader context of youth participation and multi-stakeholder consultation in ICT decision-making such as Internet Governance and national e-strategies for development.

4 Like other stakeholder groups, youth are organized within a Caucus. The WSIS Youth Caucus, formed on the occasion of the 1<sup>st</sup> WSIS Preparatory Committee Meeting in July 2002, is acting as an umbrella for all young people and youth non-government organizations (NGOs) interested and/or involved in the WSIS process and ICT policy formulation. The WSIS Youth Caucus aims to mainstream youth perspectives into civil society, the private sector and government inputs throughout the WSIS process.

5 Youth were one of the most organized and successful stakeholder groupings in the first phase of the WSIS process – participating and speaking at meetings, publishing a regular newsletter, running an award program, conducting significant national-level outreach, and much more. If it is to achieve its ambitious goals, the WSIS must continue to actively engage young people, the pathbreakers of the ICT revolution, in creating digital opportunities for all.

## **II. Basic Principles of Structure**

6 As put forward by the WSIS Civil Society Declaration, global governance frameworks “must reflect the diverse views and interests of the international community as a whole”. It further states that “decision-making processes must be based on such values as inclusive participation, transparency and democratic accountability.”

**7 The WGIG must have a multi-stakeholder, multi-disciplinary membership and conduct an inclusive consultation process.** As succinctly stated in the WSIS Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action, it should be “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...” Its multi-actor character will broaden the ownership of its outcomes and consultation process and provide a multi-dimensional approach to the debates and discussions. **Regional representation and gender balance must be central to its establishment. Particular attention to its membership is the effective participation of developing country experts, sectoral representatives and stakeholders. Their participation must be accorded with high importance and travel support.**

**8 Its operations must be independent of the WSIS process.** Though the basis of creating the WGIG is based on negotiated WSIS documents, it should be functioning with full independence

from, yet contributing to, the WSIS process. The WGIG and its consultation process should be structured separately from the WSIS Tunis Phase's intergovernmental political debates.

**9 The WGIG must conduct its work with utmost objectivity, clear direction and rationality.** Aside from organizing multi-stakeholder consultations, **it must encourage academic, well-researched stakeholder inputs that are factual and impartial.**

**10 It must be accountable and transparent at all times.** The WGIG should conduct its activities and consultations in an accessible and widely open and transparent process. Its reports, as well as background documents and stakeholder contributions, must be uploaded to a devoted, broadly broadcasted website. The WGIG website must be user-friendly and updated at the most regular, yet economical manner with documents accessible to the public, easily downloadable and archived.

### **III. Scope of Work**

11 In programming the WGIG's scope of work and operational strategies, its reporting deadlines and membership expertise should be taken into account. The WGIG, at the very least, should be made responsible of the following tasks:

- a. Crafting a working definition of 'Internet Governance' agreeable to all and harmonizing it with other global governance processes and agreements
- b. Identifying and prioritizing the relevant, most pressing Internet Governance issues through an open, inclusive and multi-stakeholder consultation process. Among the relevant Internet Governance issues that should be of high priority, and which are important to and for young people, are:
  - a. the increasing number of unsolicited commercial/bulk email or "spam";
  - b. data and information protection and network security vis-à-vis cyber-crime and cyber-terrorism and consumer safety;
  - c. protection of personal privacy and other civil liberties in an Information Society;
  - d. enhancement of linguistic diversity;
  - e. promotion of Internet telephony or Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and secured environment for e-commerce;
  - f. advancement of freedom of expression vis-à-vis elimination of discrimination in all forms in the Internet;
  - g. balance between government control/regulation and user censorship;
  - h. innovation offered by wireless or mobile Internet (wi-fi); and
  - i. proliferation of illicit, immoral websites such as those showing pornography in all its forms.
- c. Researching, collecting and critically analyzing pertinent data and information based on the Internet governance issues identified. Make use of available literature from recently held Internet Governance fora (including, but not limited to, the UN ICT Task Force Meeting and ITU Workshops on Countering Spam and Internet Governance) and, if need be, commission independent and academic papers.
- d. Learning both the successes and failures of past global governance efforts, for example the World Trade Organization on global economic governance.

- e. Based on the results of literature reviews and broad-based consultations, recommend options, solutions, framework for action and, if need be, institutional reforms as it relates to Internet Governance.
- f. The Secretariat and its members must be ready to brief stakeholders and report to interested parties. The WGIG Secretariat must regularly update its website and make use of other electronic forms of communication to disseminate information on developments and results of the consultative process.
- g. Clearly defining appropriate roles for major stakeholder blocks (Government, private sector, civil society and international organizations).
- h. Consciously encouraging each stakeholder to actively contribute inputs and gather support on the WGIG and promoting research and research communities on Internet Governance and, in general, ICT policy and governance.
- i. Provide travel support for WGIG members and stakeholders originating from developing and least developed countries and representing marginalized, less-heard groupings such as indigenous peoples, disabled peoples, youth and women.

#### **IV. General Structure**

12 The WGIG should be multi-stakeholder with members representative of Governments, private sector, civil society and international organizations. Marginalized sectors such as youth and women should be given opportunity to contribute to the debates as working group members. Developing countries, as well as developed nations, should be equally represented. Regional representation and gender balance must be given high consideration in the selection process. Consumers/users and providers/developers of Internet services and applications, most of which are young people, must likewise be represented.

13 The size of the membership of WGIG is critical. It must be reasonably representative and supportive of the structural issues enumerated above yet its total membership must neither be too small nor too large that will negatively impact on its work given the limited time available.

14 Aside from having core members from the major stakeholders already listed above, the WGIG should have an external support group, assisting its core members in preparing the report(s) and organizing stakeholder dialogues, composed of experts on the policy, legal, economic, social and technical aspects of Internet Governance as well as on related issues such as, among others, ICT for Development, multi-stakeholder diplomacy and partnerships, human rights, consumer protection and global policy processes.

15 The WGIG must have a Government representative, preferably from a developing country, as Over-All Chair; and Private Sector, Civil Society and Internet Community representatives acting as Co-Chairs. The Co-Chairs could later be appointed to coordinate the work of Sub-Thematic Committees or Sub-Working Groups based on collectively agreed Internet Governance themes. It must be convened on a working level, not a High Level Group.

16 All the members of WGIG must have credible expertise and experience in at least one of the following fields:

- a. Policy and Governance, including national e-strategies for development and legislation
- b. Technical and Academic
- c. E-business, Internet and ICT development, including operations and applications
- d. Civil society outreach and social development work
- e. ICT for Development
- f. Multi-stakeholder diplomacy and partnerships
- g. Human rights, education and gender advocacy, especially in an Information Society environment
- h. Consumer protection and safety
- i. UN global processes and/or international, multi-cultural working environments

17 The members must ensure they are able to contribute ample time needed by the work as well as widely communicate, by means of participating in e-consultations and panel presentations, to stakeholders developments in the work of the WGIG. On this regard, linguistic diversity, with an emphasis on fluency in any major UN language, and the ability of the members to effectively communicate, both in written and verbal modes, must be equated in the selection process.

18 As most young people would not have wide expertise and strong experience in some of the fields enumerated above compared to their adult counterparts, the more that their participation as working group members must be accorded with high consideration to build their full capacity and knowledge and to empower them as stakeholders of and contributors to Internet Governance and, in general, ICT policy formulation processes. Aside from creating dialogue and partnering in action amongst themselves, young people also need opportunities and spaces for engagement, communication and dialogue with the adult world. Building structures and mechanisms for inter-generational partnerships with young people is essential to nurturing democratic institutions, enhancing political and social security; and promoting people empowerment and development. Youth, by definition, are a transitory demographic, and providing them an opportunity to gain experience and networks will provide continuity and diversity to the Internet Governance debate in the future: a key mechanism to enhance inter-generational equity, understanding and cooperation.

19 Selection of the WGIG members must be made transparent and based on core competencies, with criteria for selection widely consulted and reasons for selection made public.

## **V. Mode of Operations**

20 Aside from having closed-door meetings, the WGIG must ensure it utilizes open consultations, both online and physical, to harness the knowledge and expertise of a wider range of interested parties. Taking into account cost considerations, the WGIG must work to organize regional, sub-regional, thematic and sectoral meetings and consultations. The WGIG Secretariat should enter into partnerships with relevant groups in organizing these meetings such as, among many, the regional nodes of the UN ICT Task Force.

21 To support its information dissemination activities, the WGIG could set up an email notification/alert system within its website to inform subscribed stakeholders of latest news and developments. The website must also be developed as a repository of knowledge and databank on Internet Governance and its sub-themes.

22 The WGIG must ensure real-time translation of meeting plenaries and debates in major UN languages to ensure meaningful participation of members and stakeholders. Official meeting

documents such as background papers and reports should be translated in the same manner. Stakeholder contributions, regardless of language used, should be accepted, uploaded and likewise be translated, whenever possible.

## **VI. Conclusion**

23 The Internet Governance debate must be aligned with the general aim to contribute to the cause of human development. The WGIG must examine and address relevant issues relating to Internet Governance and, in general, ICT policy and governance from a broad social development perspective, not only focusing on the technical, political and economic angles.

24 In his address to the 1998 Lisbon World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan argued that “No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline.” In the global Information Society, young people are often the leading innovators in the use and spread of ICTs. Increasingly, youth are adapting and using these technologies, including, telephone, fax, radio, television, film, computers and, most importantly, the Internet, to meet local information and communication needs. But young people can remain an untapped resource in developing a “people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented” Information Society if decision-makers do not integrate their knowledge, vision and experience.

25 With these recommendations and proposals, the entire membership of the WSIS Youth Caucus stands ready to assist, provide input and actively participate in the consultation processes of the WGIG. The WSIS Youth Caucus will be forwarding names of young people, taking into account gender balance and development dichotomies, who are best suited and well qualified to represent the youth of the world and have the relevant expertise on the Internet Governance debate.