

Best Bits – a concept note for a strategic gathering of NGOs around Internet governance and Internet principles

The past 18 months have seen unprecedented public unrest over proposed new laws and policies for the Internet that would both undermine its functioning as an open, neutral communications medium, and threaten the human rights of its users. At the national level instruments such as the United States' SOPA and PIPA, and India's Internet Intermediary Guidelines, are seen as uninformed and unduly influenced by entrenched big business lobbies. At the global level, agreements such as the secretively-negotiated ACTA, Trans-Pacific Partnership and International Telecommunications Regulations (ITRs), are rightly seen as democratically deficient and therefore illegitimate in light of norms of multi-stakeholder participation to which governments pay lip service.

At the same time, civil society has also recently been at the nexus of a flourishing of interest in a positive agenda for Internet governance, such as the development of broad statements of shared principles (including the Declaration of Internet Freedom), *ad hoc* networks for engagement on current policy processes (such as the ITU's World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT) at which the ITRs are being renegotiated), and new institutional innovations that could channel public interest inputs into policy development processes either in a reactive (eg. the Internet Defence League) or a proactive (eg. the Enhanced Cooperation Task Force) fashion.

Some of these civil society initiatives are so new that those leading them have not yet had time to adequately allow for the input of other NGOs who may have a long background working on ICT issues in their own countries, with important perspectives to contribute. In fact there is much scope for all of the NGOs working on Internet governance issues, from North and South alike, to gain valuable practical knowledge from each other. In advance of the upcoming meetings of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and the ITU's WCIT, we have an important opportunity to share such knowledge, to deliberate on issues of difference, and to produce tangible outputs to further objectives that we share.

We therefore propose an inclusive gathering of key civil society organisations from across the world, at which they would have the opportunity to highlight their various initiatives, and provide the opportunity for mutual learning and broader engagement. The gathering is to be called “Best Bits” because it does not aim to present a single solution for ratification by the assembled groups, but rather to offer an open space where each group can present and advocate for the initiatives that they believe offer the best positive agenda for advancing broadly shared civil society interests in Internet governance.

1 Objectives

- To broaden and diversify participation in the initiatives that participants are undertaking individually or in smaller networks (in particular dissolving North-South divides), by providing an opportunity for participants to report on those initiatives to their peers and thereby discover opportunities for collaboration or even merger of similar initiatives.
- To amplify the voice of civil society at the upcoming WCIT about proposed amendments of the ITRs, by sharing knowledge about harmful proposals and empowering participants to raise the shared concerns with their national delegations.
- To produce tangible shared outputs addressing pressing current issues that can be used in advocacy at important upcoming Internet governance events, most notably the global IGF in November and the WCIT in December.

- To raise the level of shared understanding about related groups, initiatives and issues and their political contexts, and thereby increase the quality of advocacy work conducted by individual groups and networks on Internet governance issues, and reduce duplication.
- To jointly outline the development of an inclusive and sustainable civil society network for Internet governance issues, that would provide a platform for collaboration and mutual learning over the longer term.

2 **Indicators and impacts**

- Within one month of the event, broader North-South participation can be demonstrated in all of the individual or joint initiatives that were presented at the event.
- Within one month of the event at least three participants make fresh contact with their national ITU delegations to raise shared concerns about proposed revisions to the ITRs.
- Joint statements expressing the shared concerns of the event's participants are delivered to all stakeholders through available mechanisms at the upcoming IGF and WCIT meetings.
- Over the year following the event, Internet governance initiatives of its participants are demonstrably better informed, more relevant, and more inclusive.
- If a consensus is reached at the event for the continuation of its objectives through a longer-term civil society network, a proposal for its formation is developed within six months.

3 **Draft programme**

The gathering is planned for 6-7 October 2012 at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel, Singapore, ahead of the International Institute of Communications conference, which is to take place on 8-9 October at the same venue.

Day 1 – Information sharing and organisational empowerment	
Morning session 1	Internet governance history and review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping Internet governance – institutions and actors • Last 20 years of Internet governance: ITU, ISOC, WSIS and IGF • Last 2 years – ACTA, SOPA/PIPA and online activism • Southern perspective – MDGs, ICT4D, community informatics
Morning session 2	The ITU and the International Telecommunications Regulations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the real dangers of the proposed ITR revisions? • Remaining opportunities for input into the WCIT process • How to engage with your national delegation to the ITU • Beyond WCIT – WTPF, WTSA, IMPACT, and the Dedicated Group
Lunch	
Afternoon session 1	Process towards enhanced cooperation on Internet public policy issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The global vacuum on Internet-related public policy issues • Likely scenarios (favourable or not) if the vacuum is not filled • Discussion of reform proposals – Committee on Internet Related Policies, Enhanced Cooperation Task Force

Afternoon session 2	Declarations of Internet rights and Internet governance principles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background to Internet principles declarations 1999 to 2012 • Declaration of Internet Freedom – first and second iterations • Other current initiatives – “rival” Declaration, Marco Civil, etc. • Respective advantages of consolidation and maintaining diversity
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Day 2 – Working and outreach	
Morning stream 1 – Open space for joint exercise, suggested to be: Drafting a civil society statement to WCIT	Morning stream 2 – Open space for joint exercise, suggested to be: Drafting civil society IG principles for the IGF
Lunch	
Afternoon session 1	Streams return together, present and discuss draft texts from morning
Afternoon session 2	Next steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making an inclusive civil society network on IG issues sustainable • Other existing civil society+ networks – Internet Defence League, Internet Governance Caucus, Global Network Initiative, CSISAC • Recap of upcoming events and campaigns for possible joint action
Afternoon session 3	Press conference and close

4 Participants

We aim to secure the participation of the most active and influential global and regional NGOs working on Internet governance issues. From the following 40 key organisations, it is hoped that a representative from at least half can attend the gathering in person, with the remainder engaging through remote participation. The list is not closed, and some additional organisations might attend.

Global

Association for Progressive Communications

Civil Society Internet Governance Caucus

CIVICUS

Consumers International

Diplo Foundation

Freedom House

ICANN Noncommercial Users Constituency

Internet Society

Africa

African ICT Consumers Network

CIPESA

Asia-Pacific

Australian Communications Consumer Action Network

Australian Digital Alliance

Bangladesh Institute of ICT in Development

Bytes for All

Centre for Internet and Society

Computer Professionals Union, Philippines

Digital Empowerment Foundation

IT for Change

Southeast Asian Centre for e-Media (SEACeM)

Thai Netizen Network

Europe and Middle East

EDRI

Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights

Global Partners

La Quadrature du Net

Open Rights Group

Latin America

Center for Technology and Society - Getulio Vargas Foundation

cgi.br (Brazilian Internet Steering Committee)

Coletivo Digital

Derechos Digitales

Instituto Brasileiro de Defesa do Consumidor

North America

Access Now

Centre for Democracy and Technology

CIPPIC

Electronic Frontier Foundation

Fight for the Future

Free Press

OpenMedia.ca

Public Knowledge

5 Logistics

It is planned to hold the gathering in Singapore, on 6-7 October 2012, which is the weekend prior to the International Institute of Communications Annual Conference (see <http://www.iicom.org/annual-conference/annual-conference-2012>).

The selection of Singapore is due to its convenience for participants from the global South, who are the most disenfranchised in Internet governance discussions, and hence will benefit the most from the ability to attend the event in person. Singapore is a well connected international hub, which is relatively easily and cheaply accessible from most major world cities.

The dates selected have been chosen because of their proximity to both the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT), and the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), both of which are important advocacy targets for the NGO network.

There are useful synergies in hosting the meeting alongside the IIC Annual Conference. There are some participants who would attend both events, which will be of mutual benefit to us and the IIC. Further, the IIC has agreed to act as a supporting organisation for the meeting, providing us with access to their event organiser, a reduced registration fee for any NGOs wishing to attend their Conference, and to extend to us their preferential hotel room rate.

6 Estimated budget

Participants with the resources to fund their own participation will be asked to do so. Priority for travel funding will be given to participants from the global South and who do not already have an adequate travel budget for work on Internet governance. The following is an estimate of the budget required:

Expense item	Units	Unit cost	Total USD
Economy air travel to Singapore	30	\$1,500.00	\$45,000.00
Accommodation, 2.5 nights	30	\$500.00	\$15,000.00
Per diem for ground transfer, meals	30	\$100.00	\$3,000.00
Conference package, 2 days	30	\$100.00	\$3,000.00
Video conferencing package	2	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00
Materials, communications, admin	1	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Contingencies	1	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00
Total			\$70,000.00

7 Contacts

This proposal is not put forward by a single organisation but by a nascent network of NGOs from across the world, which this gathering will help to actualise. However, loosely coordinating the work for now is:

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Also supporting the initiative, and offering to receive and administer funding for the gathering, is
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