

# **Best Bits – a strategic gathering of NGOs around Internet governance and Internet principles**

***Baku, Azerbaijan, 3 and 4 November 2012***

## **Background**

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Internet Intermediary Guidelines, are seen as uninformed and/or unduly influenced by industry lobbyists protecting outdated business models. 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 foster 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.

To ensure that the discussions are adequately and authentically deliberative, participants will be invited when registering to contribute a background paper covering one of a list of areas relevant to the agenda. These will be compiled these into a briefing pack together with an introduction that would summarise and tie them together. This will be distributed to all delegates one week prior to the meeting and they will be asked to familiarise themselves with it before the meeting opens. A parallel online dialogue will also take place, and each face-to-face session will be expertly moderated.

## 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 allowing 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.

## Draft programme

<b>Day 1 – Information sharing and organisational empowerment</b>	
Morning session 1	<b>Internet governance history and review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mapping Internet governance – institutions and actors</li> <li>• Last 20 years of Internet governance: ITU, ISOC, WSIS and IGF</li> <li>• Last 2 years – ACTA, SOPA/PIPA and online activism eg. StopTheMeter.ca, government assertions of sovereignty over IG</li> <li>• Southern perspectives on global Internet governance</li> </ul>
Morning session 2	<b>The ITU and the International Telecommunications Regulations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the real dangers of the proposed ITR revisions?</li> <li>• Remaining opportunities for input into the WCIT process</li> <li>• How to engage with your national delegation to the ITU</li> <li>• Beyond WCIT – WTPF, WTSA, IMPACT, and the Dedicated Group</li> </ul>
Lunch	
Afternoon session 1	<b>Declarations of Internet rights and Internet governance principles</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Background to Internet principles declarations 1999 to 2012</li> <li>• Declaration of Internet Freedom – first and second iterations</li> <li>• Other current initiatives – “rival” Declaration, Marco Civil, etc.</li> <li>• Respective advantages of consolidation and maintaining diversity</li> </ul>
Afternoon session 2	<b>Process towards enhanced cooperation on Internet public policy issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If not the ITU, then what?</li> <li>• The global vacuum on Internet-related public policy issues</li> <li>• Likely scenarios (favourable or not) if the vacuum is not filled</li> <li>• Discussion of reform proposals – Committee on Internet Related Policies, Enhanced Cooperation Task Force</li> </ul>

## Day 2 – Working and outreach

<p>Morning stream 1 – Joint exercise: <b>Drafting a civil society statement to WCIT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draws together points of consensus</li> <li>• Defines the legitimate role of the ITU</li> <li>• Judges it against the WSIS criteria</li> <li>• Refers to statement on IG principles</li> </ul>	<p>Morning stream 2 – Joint exercise: <b>Drafting civil society IG principles for the IGF</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of existing statements</li> <li>• Reinforces multi-stakeholder approach</li> <li>• Suggests roadmap for improved implementation of enhanced cooperation</li> </ul>
Lunch	
<p>Afternoon session 1 Afternoon session 2  Afternoon session 3</p>	<p><b>Streams return together, present and discuss draft texts from morning</b></p> <p><b>Next steps</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making an inclusive civil society network on IG issues sustainable</li> <li>• Other existing civil society+ networks – Internet Defence League, Internet Governance Caucus, Global Network Initiative, CSISAC, OpenMedia network</li> <li>• Recap of upcoming events and campaigns for possible joint action</li> </ul> <p><b>Press conference and close</b></p>

## **Participants**

We aim to secure the participation of the most active and influential global and regional NGOs working on Internet governance issues. If you would like to participate, please visit the invitation tracksheet at <http://bit.ly/SqnzeS> and complete (or add) the row for your organisation. If you are not already planning to attend the IGF in person, you have the choice of requesting financial assistance from our sponsor Google, or attending through remote participation. *Please note that only a very limited amount of assistance will be available and not all requests will be granted.*

## **Contacts**

For further information please join the mailing list at <http://lists.igcaucus.org/info/bestbits> or contact:

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To participate in preparatory work towards the preparation of the two outputs from the event (the civil society statement to WCIT, and civil society Internet governance principles for the IGF), you can also contact the designated coordinators of the working groups that are leading those activities. The working group coordinators are yet to be confirmed, so for now please use the details above.