

The Internet Governance Caucus, as the main coordination framework for civil society participation in Internet governance discussions at the WSIS and then at the IGF, would like to provide feedback and opinions on the subjects of this meeting.

The first IGF meeting in Athens was without doubt a great success. It was interesting and well organized, and many important matters were discussed. Specifically, we express our satisfaction for the widespread embracing of the multi-stakeholder principle in the structuring of panels and workshops and in the definition of themes. We would then like to provide some practical suggestions for an even better meeting in Rio.

We think that the plenary sessions as designed in Athens were interesting, especially for the general public, but that adequate attention should be put to all the issues pertaining to one main theme, rather than focusing on just a few. This could be obtained by shortening the plenary sessions, which should be kept as a “special focus” event on certain “hot” issues, designed in a journalistic style. At the same time, separate, more traditional plenary sessions (though always in a fully multistakeholder style) should host the general summarization of the discussions, including those from the workshops.

Workshops were usually interesting, though some effort should be made to better integrate them with the overall themes and flow of discussions of the IGF. Specifically, it should be ensured that all workshops meet the multi-stakeholder criteria, and that at least half of their duration is allocated to open floor discussion rather than to panel presentations, to prevent some workshops from becoming just a showcase for the organizers, or a lobbying event for a single group of stakeholders. Clear guidelines should be given to workshop moderators to this effect; also, the Advisory Group, after collecting all workshop proposals, should consider fostering the organization of workshops on issues not addressed anywhere, or requesting organizers to merge their workshops if too similar. Finally, workshop results should be collected and presented with more evidence as outputs of the IGF meeting, for example in a final “Acts” book.

Alternative formats for workshops should be suggested and considered by workshop organizers. For example, one room could be laid out in table groups, to allow workshops held there to foster intensive deliberation on the issues under discussion, rather than encouraging the passive receipt of information. Again, one room could be laid out with computer terminals allowing participants to directly engage with remote participants in the use or collaborative development of online tools and resources.

While commending the efforts done, we see the need to further develop effective online tools for information, participation and discussion, not only to facilitate the participation of those who cannot afford to travel to IGF meetings, but also to enable those who do attend in person to continue their work in between meetings.

From a practical standpoint, it would be important to ensure that sufficient time is allocated for a lunch break, and that adequate “quick food” options are offered to delegates. Also, it should be kept in mind that many participants, especially from developing countries and civil society, are on a tight budget; adequate accommodation and meal options should be provided.

Finally, we think that the IGF should put special attention in seeking stable, greater sources of funds that could be adequate to support its mandate.

About the Advisory Group, while supporting the concept, we note that its composition, including

the proportionate representation of stakeholder groups and the cross-cutting technical and academic communities, was not openly and transparently discussed prior to its appointment; nor there is any transparency or clear norm on its terms, mandate and working principles. We think that clear terms and rules should be established for the Advisory Group between now and Rio, through an open process involving all the participants in the IGF, as a shared foundation for our common work. We further consider that if these rules and the quotas for representation from each stakeholder group were openly established, it would be possible for the Secretary General to delegate the actual process of selection of Advisory Group members to the stakeholder groups themselves.-

Moreover, we express our dissatisfaction for the very limited representation of civil society in ~~it~~the first instance of the Advisory Group, which amounted to about five ~~or less~~ members over about forty. We think that the significant participation of civil society and individual users, as proved by the WGIG, is key to making Internet governance events a success both in practical and in political terms; thus we would like to see such participation expanded to at least one fourth of the group, if not one third, and to the same levels of the private sector and of the Internet technical community. We confirm our support to the civil society members of the incumbent group, and stand ready to provide suggestions for additional members with direct experience from diverse civil society groups.

We also reiterate the need for the IGF to be considered as a process, rather than as an event. We support the concept of “dynamic coalitions” and their activities; however, there needs to be a way to “bless” their work and give some recognition, even if not binding, to their products. A transparent, multi-stakeholder and democratic process should be commenced to develop criteria for the recognition of “dynamic coalitions” by the IGF, whereby the output of coalitions that satisfied those criteria could be formally received for discussion at a plenary session of the following IGF meeting. The IGF was created to help solving global problems that could not be addressed anywhere else; simple discussion is not enough, and would betray what was agreed in Tunis and is clearly stated in the mandate of the IGF itself. We stand ready to provide more detailed procedural suggestions on how this could work in practice, or to participate in any multi-stakeholder working process to define it.

We think that this and future consultations before Rio should examine in detail the various parts of the IGF mandate as defined in paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda, and specifically how to deal with those that were not addressed in Athens. For example, commas (f) and (i) require the IGF to discuss the good principles of Internet governance, as agreed in Tunis, and how to fully implement them inside all existing governance processes, including how to facilitate participation by disadvantaged stakeholders such as developing countries, civil society, and individual users. We expect this to be an additional theme for Rio.

About the themes for Rio, we are generally satisfied with the areas of work as defined for Athens, but note that some of them are much bigger than others, and thus many issues falling into them failed to get adequate attention. We would like to propose to break the “Openness” group of items in two, one about human rights and freedom of expression, and the other one about intellectual property rights and access to knowledge. We raise the attention on the importance of access not just in terms of physical connections for developing countries, but also in terms of accessibility of technologies to the disabled and other disadvantaged groups; this could also become another group of issues per se. As noted above, we also feel the need for a “meta-governance” theme.

We are aware of the complex discussion on whether the “narrow” Internet governance themes, such as the oversight of the Internet addressing and naming system, should be part of the agenda in Rio. Inside civil society, there are different points of view about this matter; however, we all agree in the deep dissatisfaction for the lack of transparency and inclusion in the so-called “enhanced cooperation” process, which, as agreed in Tunis, should discuss these matters in a multi-stakeholder fashion. We ask that prompt communication is given to all stakeholders about the status and nature

of this process, and that, independently from the venue chosen to host it, steps are taken to ensure the full inclusion of all stakeholders in this process.

We would like to close our statement by thanking Mr. Desai, Mr. Kummer and all the members of the Advisory Group for their hard work in favour of this process. We fully support Mr. Desai as the chair of the IGF Advisory Group, and recognize his expertise and professionalism as a major factor in the advisory group's successful completion of its tasks. We look forward to another fruitful and successful meeting in Rio.