

IGF Workshop Proposal

Governance of Critical Internet Resources – Exploring Commons and Public Interest Based Frameworks

1. Provide a concise formulation for the proposed workshop theme.

Issues and mechanisms of public policy regarding critical Internet resources was a key concern at the WSIS, and remains an issue that is still a work-in-progress. Part of the reason may be that the various parties involved in this matter have remained most focused on *who*, rather than *what*. This issue remains dominated by concerns of whether private governance systems are better; or governments should have a greater role; or an international organization should step in; or whether the multi-stakeholder principle is appropriate, and to what extent, and in what manner, it can be applied in an area of substantive policy decisions.

It may be better to approach the problem from a different direction, focusing on *what* should drive and inform public policy regarding critical Internet resources rather than *who*. This will entail an examination of the normative principles which determines and/or should determine the governance of critical Internet resources. Stability and security are the more obvious issues here; development of the Internet may be an issue that requires greater elaboration, and may involve policy trade-offs; and, beyond these, there are many other issues of public interest that need to be elaborated and articulated in the context of IG .

The proposed workshop will seek to explore the normative basis of present systems of governance of critical Internet resources, and also alternative normative bases or frameworks – like ones based on the ‘commons’ principle, public interest principle, ‘public nature’ or ‘public-ness’ of the Internet principle, and such. Obviously, such an exploration will also go into examining what constitutes public interest in Internet Governance (IG), and which publics are involved here.

2. Why do you think the proposed theme is important?

Exploring the normative basis of governance of resources critical to what has become perhaps the most important social, economic and political infrastructure of the world – the Internet - is obviously important. Taking up such an exercise in a public forum, with full and open participation for all, will help in the use and development of the Internet in the best public interest.

3. Describe the workshop’s conformity with the Tunis Agenda in terms of substance and the mandate of the IGF.

Tunis Agenda in paragraph 72 outlining the role and mandate of the IGF, in part (j) mentions its role to ‘discuss, *inter alia*, issues relating to critical Internet resources’. Tunis Agenda also speaks of the need for developing public policy principles with regard to governance of critical Internet resources.