

In response to the "Open Consultation: Expression of Views on Venue for WSIS Forum 2011", EUROLINC is submitting its views on Venues for WSIS Forum 2011 and following.

So far WSIS Fora have been held in Geneva. One can understand that some participants around the world would welcome a rotating scheme distributing travel expenses on a more equitable way. The other side of the coin is additional costs for organizers operating away from their headquarters. Finding a balance in between would be an ideal objective.

Customarily a major block of participants in open conferences come from the host country and neighbouring ones. Hence, picking a venue so as to increase local or regional audience results in reducing participation from more distant countries. The net effect boils down to favouring one particular region over others.

As we are told «*several WSIS Stakeholders suggested holding the WSIS Forum 2011 in New York*». Besides the geographic factor addressed above, one particular argument for moving from Geneva to New York (NYC) stands out:

«Enhance visibility of ICT debates in UN diplomatic circles of New York; which may result in better reflection of this aspect in the relevant UNGA resolutions concerning economic, social, educational and cultural development, particularly in the least developing countries, land-lock countries;»

This is actually suggesting that UNGA resolutions made in NYC could be improved (somehow) on the ones that could be made in Geneva. In other words, a different context, audience or atmosphere, may slant resolutions in some palatable sense. Every large gathering of people being unique, this is indeed quite possible, though not really predictable.

From the early debates having taken place in the WSIS process during the past ten years, the Internet governance domain has been a topical subject of discussions and disagreements. A recurring bone of contention is what is perceived by many countries as unilateral decision making by the USA. As predicted, the reaction is a developing trend of walled up national internets.

One ingredient of a WSIS Forum in NYC is a high density of well trained powerful lobbies operating on their home turf. There is no reason to dismiss their capabilities of influencing the terms of UNGA resolutions. Combined with Internet governance issues, organizing WSIS Forum 2011 in NYC may appear as a move to strengthen USA control over Internet.

While it seems desirable to host future WSIS Fora in a diversity of countries, **rules for selecting future venues should be decided before a choice is made for WSIS Forum 2011**. If selected, NYC should be a one time event. It would be inappropriate to make NYC a recurring WSIS Forum venue.

As has been suggested in previous postings, Geneva (ITU) and Paris (UNESCO) could alternate with other cities in various regions.

==+==

EUROLINC is a non-profit association founded for the promotion of multilingualism in Internet. It is accredited to UN WSIS (United Nations World Summit of the Information Society).

contact@eurolinc.eu - <http://www.eurolinc.eu>