

Open Letter by Indian civil society organizations to the Chair of the 'Multistakeholder Meeting on the Future of Internet Governance' to be held in Brazil in April, 2014

Dear Prof. Virgilio Almeida,

As civil society organizations working on Internet governance in India, we would like to express our strong reservations about the appointment of Ms. Subi Chaturvedi from India, as the civil society co-chair for the NetMundial meeting in Brazil.

Before we explain these reservations we do want to commend you for the effort that the government of Brazil and co-organisers of the event have made towards including all stakeholders, including civil society. Civil society organisations from around the world, and this includes those of us based in India, have always valued the openness with which we have been able to collaborate and interact with representatives from the Government of Brazil in Internet governance forums.

It is precisely because we hold your commitment to inclusion of civil society in such high regard that we feel compelled to express our reservations.

These reservations are based on Ms. Chaturvedi's lack of experience, expertise and standing in civil society networks in the area of Internet governance, all of which are required to ensure that civil society views and processes are adequately reflected in the work of the Net Mundial meeting and co-chairs. We would be grateful, therefore, Mr. Chair, if you could clarify why you thought it appropriate to appoint Ms. Chaturvedi to this position. For the sake of transparency, it may also be shared who recommended her name and what credentials were presented. In the interest of retaining the credibility of the Brazil meeting, and its co-ownership from across the concerned community, we request you to please reverse the decision of her appointment.

Ms. Chaturvedi has not been an active in any of the national or global civil society networks working on Internet governance that we are aware of. While she was appointed to the Multistakeholder Advisory Group last year, within six months of entering the Internet governance space, even that appointment was not based on nominations from established civil society networks or organisations. Her entry into the Internet governance space appears to have been during the Internet Governance Conference organised by Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) in October 2012. Before this, she did not write about, teach courses related to, or participate in events about Internet Governance, to the best of our knowledge. We have also not seen any evidence of substantive work on Internet governance that Ms. Chaturvedi or her organisation, Media for Change has produced since, nor has she participated in any of the established forums where civil society deliberates on Internet governance issues. The only initiative that is mentioned on Media for Change's website is its involvement in the Stop Think Connect campaign, a digital security campaign of the Data Security Council of India, in association with businesses such as Facebook, Google, Kaspersky and Microsoft.

We want to bring to your attention that appointing someone who is not known to, or respected, by civil society stakeholders involved in Internet governance is compromising the legitimacy of the NetMundial process. We are also worried about the impossibility of two-way feedback, critical to the processes linked to NetMundial, which results from the appointment of a 'civil society' co chair without strong connections to the constituency that she is supposed to represent.

The Brazil meeting is one to which all of us have looked forward as initiating a phase of more open,

participative and democratic global governance of the Internet. In the circumstances, we admittedly received the news of this inappropriate appointment of the civil society leader of the meeting with great disappointment. We would be grateful if you could review and reverse this decision in order to restore the credibility of the proposed meeting, and to ensure that it lives up to its claim of being open, representative and accountable to the global community.

We would like to request you to appoint a civil society co-chair who is able to ensure that the very diverse concerns and interests of the civil society community in the Internet governance arena are genuinely taken into account in the NetMundial Meeting.

If you would require further information to understand us reservations, do please let us know. We would be happy to provide this.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

The following Indian civil society organization working in the area of Internet governance:

1. Chinmayi Arun for the *Centre for Communication Governance*
2. Sunil Abraham for the *Centre for Internet and Society*
3. Osama Manzar for the *Digital Empowerment Foundation*
4. Kiran Chandra for the *Free Software Movement of India*
5. Prof. Vivekanandan for the *Institute of Global Internet Governance and Advocacy*
6. Dr. Anja Kovacs for the *Internet Democracy Project*
7. Parminderjeet Singh for *IT for Change*
8. Rajen Varada for *Open Knowledge Community*
9. Prabir Purkayastha for the *Society for Knowledge Commons*
10. Mishi Chowdhary for the *Software Freedom Law Centre, India*