**Recommendation to the UN General Assembly for an Open Ended mandate of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)**

In response to widespread multi-stakeholder support for continuing and strengthening the Internet Governance Forum, many participants at the 2014 IGF in Istanbul have agreed on the need for a more stable mandate. We believe an open-ended mandate would facilitate the strengthening of IGF procedures, support the IGF Trust Fund, and enable participants to secure long term funding for projects.

In 2005, the World Summit for the Information Society asked the UN Secretary-General in the Tunis Agenda, to convene a meeting for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue—called the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

The mandate of the Forum was to discuss public policy issues relating to key elements of Internet governance, such as those enumerated in the Tunis Agenda, in order to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet for all. The Forum was not to replace existing arrangements, mechanisms, institutions or organizations. It was intended to constitute a neutral, non-duplicative and non-binding process, and have no involvement in day-to-day or technical operations of the Internet.

The Tunis Agenda also asked the UN Secretary-General “to examine the desirability of the continuation of the Forum, in formal consultation with Forum participants, within five years of its creation, and to make recommendations to the UN Membership in this regard”. At its sixty-fifth session, the General Assembly decided to extend the mandate of the IGF, underlining the need to improve the IGF “with a view to linking it to the broader dialogue on global Internet governance”[[1]](#footnote-1).

In his note on the continuation of the Forum, the UN Secretary General confirmed that many participants considered the Forum to be “unique and valuable” and should be preserved. It is a place where governments, civil society, the private sector, the UN and international organizations build a common understanding of the Internet’s great potential.

The Secretary-General recommended

(a) That the mandate of the Internet Governance Forum be extended for a further five years;

(b) That the desirability of continuation be considered again by Member

States within the context of a 10-year review of implementation of the outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society in 2015[[2]](#footnote-2);

The Forum is a valuable part of the international dialogue on Internet issues and is worth preserving.  However, the revolving five-year mandate is a barrier to long range planning and investment. Many voices have called for the strengthening of the IGF, but a longer planning horizon is also necessary to meet the needs of the Internet global multi-stakeholder community.  While more work needs to be done, some ~~i~~nitiatives to strengthen the IGF are already taking place:

·       To address the need for sustainable funding, the **Internet Governance Forum Support Association** ([http://www.igfsa.org/)](http://www.igfsa.org/%29) was formed at IGF 2014.  The goal of this non-profit is to promote sustainable funding for the IGF.

·       A comprehensive report on the successes of this Forum will be published following the 2014 conference in Istanbul.

·       More than 30 regional and national IGF initiatives have developed in all continents, which have enabled new forms of open and inclusive participation in Internet governance, including the direct involvement of governments of the concerned UN member states among other stakeholders.

·       Dynamic coalitions have emerged and produced substantive work on complex issues.  These inter-sessional initiatives need to be taken to the next level of maturity.

Many of these collaborative community-designed initiatives are in danger of sunsetting, because of the lack of certainty in funding continuity. This is why we are asking that the matter of mandate be addressed urgently, now, so that we do not lose momentum.

In order to allow the IGF to reach its full potential as a forum for all stakeholders in Internet Governance, we the undersigned participants at the 2014 IGF in Istanbul recommend an extension of its mandate which is open-ended, as soon as possible.

This letter will remain open for signature until November 1, 2014.

1. http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/6rev1.html [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. General Assembly, Sixty-fifth session, Item 17 of the preliminary list\*,  Information and communications technologies for development, Economic and Social Council, Substantive session of 2010 New York, 28 June-23 July 2010, Agenda item 13 (b)\*\* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)