CSTD Working Group on IGF - Questionnaire on improvements to the IGF

Response from the Association for Progressive Communications
19 November 2010

1. What do you consider the most important achievements of the first five IGF meetings?

- Increased acceptance that there is a need for dialogue and debate framed by a broad definition of Internet Governance (IG) that includes policy that impacts on social, economic and human development (as opposed to a narrow 'names and numbers' approach.
- Better understanding among participants of IG issues and how, and why, the are important to different stakeholder groups and people from different parts of the world.
- The process of the IGF itself. It has pioneered an innovative approach to discuss and debate global issues across multiple stakeholders. It has harnesses 'self-organisation' and empowered participants to feel responsible for the success of the event. It is able to influence policy in an indirect way which sometimes is very effective.

2. How satisfied are you with the delivery of the results of discussions at the IGF and the impact they have had on developments in national, regional or international Internet governance?

- The APC is generally satisfied even though the results vary between countries and regions. The regionalisation of the IGF has contributed to the identification of national and regional priorities on internet governance and have offered platforms for multistakeholder political dialogue which leads to policy action at those levels.

3. Which, if any, new mechanisms would you propose to improve the impact of the IGF discussions, in particular as regards the interaction between the IGF and other stakeholders? Please specify the kind of mechanism (e.g. reporting, exchanges, recommendations, concrete advice, etc.) and the stakeholders (e.g. intergovernmental bodies, other fora dealing with Internet Governance, etc.).

- Thematic IGFs allowing stakeholders to focus on a given theme
- A more 'outcome' oriented approach to the global event. This does not imply negotiated agreements which we do not believe is the role of the IGF. However, if IGF workshops and main sessions can distil messages, or suggestions for further discussion, or even concrete advice, it will facilitate follow up interaction between stakeholders and it could consolidate and elevate the IGF's impact.
- Increased participation from developing countries. This requires investment of effort many actors, including developing country governments. We propose that the MAG

initiates discussions with these governments very early on in the preparation for the 2011 IGF. It also requires a more effective means of supporting participation of stakeholders from developing country governments. We are aware that the ITU is currently administering scholarships for participating in the IGF but have found this process difficult to understand and interact with thereby reducing participation.

- Shifting from 'remote' participation to 'enhanced' participation to enable more distributed and diverse involvement of different stakeholders in both the process of setting the IGF agenda and the debate during the event itself.
- A budget for inviting speakers for main sessions so that their selection is based on expertise rather than on 'they are attending already'.

4. In your view, what important new issues or themes concerning Internet governance have emerged or become important since the Tunis phase of the Summit, which deserve more attention in the next five years?

- Internet governance and public policy in relation to sustainable development – development considers human, social, cultural development as well as impacts on the environment.
- Social networking and related issues of rights, changes in how people interact online in large communities that exist across national boundaries on privately owned platforms.
- The internet's role in building more open and inclusive societies: While this is happening in certain societies, we are also witnessing governments who feel threatened by the explosion in freedom of information, expression and association responding with repressive legislation t
- The internet as an important element in protecting and expanding the global information commons. The APC fully supports economic opportunity, but not if it is at the expense of the public interest.
- The rise of the mobile internet, including vertical integration where mobile operators also run money transfer services, entertainment, content and other services. Are new monopolies being established in the process?
- The threat to net neutrality (both on the mobile internet and the traditional internet)
- Access from the perspective of people, not networks.
- Openness as disparate from privacy and security issues. It is important to address openness from its own specificities and as its own issue in terms of access to knowledge, freedom of expression, open governance, open infrastructure and technology, among others.
- Human rights and internet governance, particularly the relationship between different rights, the indivisibility of rights, and the fundamental facilitating role played by the right to access internet infrastructure, and the right to freedom of expression and association

5. What do you think should be the priority themes and areas of work of the IGF during the next five years?

- Consolidating the established internet governance mechanisms and processes that are widely accepted as being international, and in which all stakeholders are able to participate effectively.
- Ensuring the transparency, accessibility and accountability of such mechanisms
- Closer links between the IG community and communities that are not currently involved: human rights, environmental sustainability, development, culture, content, libraries, and more.
- Exploring the links between human rights and internet governance.

6. How can the capacity of those groups that are not yet well represented at the IGF be improved? In particular, what could be done to improve the capacity of representatives from developing countries?
- Preparatory meetings, involving them in national and regional and then the global IGF

- Ensuring that the IGF agenda responds to issues that matter to under-represented groups.. They often have existing capacity in relation to these areas, and can share their knowledge with the IGF community. The IGF can focus on building their capacity in integrating IG more closely into their existing priorities (e.g. affordable access). The IGF should find a way to balance taking into account the priorities and particularities of differing regions while continuing to address global dimensions of issues .
- Stimulating exchange, debate and collaboration between conveners of national and regional IGFs.

7. How do you think more awareness of Internet governance issues and the IGF process can be raised amongst groups whose lives are affected by Internet governance but who are not yet part of the IGF process?

- Including those issues and concerns in the agenda
- Focusing on the internet and IG from a societal perspective and not a narrow institutional perspective.
- Embracing the concept of 'sustainable development'

8. How, if at all, do you think that the IGF process (including the format of the meeting, the preparatory process, the development of the agenda, etc.) needs to change to meet changing circumstances and priorities?

Having been deeply involved in every IGF process, the APC has numerous suggestions on how to meet changing circumstances and priorities.

Preparation and format:
Number of Speakers
Workshops frequently have too many speakers. The Secretariat/MAG should limit the number of speakers and inputs or strongly encourage workshop proponents to do so. The goal of the IGF is dialogue and debate. Therefore it is the organisers' responsibility to make sure that workshops enable this. Too many speakers results in one way conversations and disengagement

Merging of Workshops
The agenda's of many workshops are often incoherent. When asked, organizers reported that they had been asked to merge with too many other workshops and had had difficulty maintaining a common and coherent thread. The increasing number of workshop proposals that are received every year is indeed an indicator of success. However, a balance has to be struck between trying to please everyone (with the possibility of diluting the quality of discussion and debate through multi-mergers), and making hard decisions based on stricter criteria (but thereby increasing the possibility of higher quality discussion and debate).

Application of the multi-stakeholder format
The current mechanism for ensuring multi-stakeholder participation in workshops has become too 'formulaic'. Organisers scramble around rather chaotically in the months leading up to the event to make sure that they have "a civil society speaker" and "a government panellist".

We believe that workshops would benefit from ensuring that they include speakers who are stakeholders in the topic under discussion in the sense that they 'have a stake' in it, rather than simply being representatives from business, from civil society, etc.. Perhaps the workshop proposal template can be changed to make it clearer that those actively involved in the issues are invited to participate. A revised template could also encourage people to plan their workshops in such a way that enough time is left for discussion.

Main sessions
There needs to be a stronger link between mains sessions and the rest of the activities in IGF. A format which allows for more synthesising at main sessions, inputs from the workshops on a

theme rather than just a list of what was discussed, for example, could make these sessions more dynamic. We could also envision experimenting with "experts" responding to what came out of the workshops and posing further challenges. In both cases we hope for more discursive dialogue in IGF main sessions

We recommend that the IGF continue to explore innovative and creative meeting formats as well as effective facilitation methods to involve remote participants in sessions and workshops. Given that there was a general consensus that this year's IGF lacked the same level of energy as previous IGFs, and that to be successful the IGF must continually evolve and adapt, the timing is propitious to experiment with format and process.

9. Do you have any other comments? (You may find it useful to refer to the Note by the Secretary-General on the continuation of the Internet Governance Forum (document A/65/78 – E/2010/68) or to the contributions made in the formal consultations held online and during the IGF meeting in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt in 2009 (http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/2009-igf-sharm-el-sheikh/review-process)).

We look forward to a continuously evolving, and improving IGF. While we do believe the IGF can be improved, we have still found uniquely open and inclusive compared to other international policy forums.