

OECD FORUM 2005

FUELLING THE FUTURE: Security, Stability, Development

Development and Information Technology

William J. Drake – President, Computer Professionals for Social Responsibility, Geneva, Switzerland

1. The Importance of ICT Global Governance for Developing Countries

In the context of deepening global integration, developing countries are increasingly involved in and impacted by global governance arrangements for information and communication technology (ICT)

They are clearly impacted by those arrangements in which they are parties and have commitments, but may also be impacted by arrangements to which they are not parties

As such, attention to global governance must be mainstreamed into ICT4D programs and national/regional e-strategies

2. The Importance of Internet Governance for Developing Countries

Internet governance is an increasingly central and contested component of the ICT global governance landscape

In the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process and in other contexts, developing countries have raised serious concerns about the character and developmental implications of current Internet governance arrangements

In general, they are unhappy with the status quo, in which they believe that the important decisions are being made by industrialized country governments and the global private sector without adequate participation by them or attention to their interests

3. WSIS and Internet Governance: Process

North-South divisions on Internet governance produced a stalemate that almost wrecked the first phase of WSIS

To overcome this deadlock, the Plan of Action agreed at the December 2003 summit in Geneva inter alia called on the UN Secretary General to:

set up a working group on Internet governance, in an open and inclusive process that ensures a mechanism for the full and active participation of governments, the private sector and civil society from both developing and developed countries, involving relevant intergovernmental and international organizations and forums, to investigate and make proposals for action, as appropriate, on the governance of Internet by 2005. The group should, inter alia:

- i) develop a working definition of Internet governance;
- ii) identify the public policy issues that are relevant to Internet governance;
- iii) develop a common understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of governments, existing intergovernmental and international organisations and other forums

as well as the private sector and civil society from both developing and developed countries;

iv) prepare a report on the results of this activity to be presented for consideration and appropriate action for the second phase of WSIS in Tunis in 2005.

The WGIG, of which I am a member, comprises forty people from government, business, and civil society who work together as equal peers in a unique and lively multistakeholder dialogue

Developing country governments are well represented

The WGIG has held a series of public consultations and working meetings, and in the summer of 2005 will release a report that includes policy reform options to be considered by the WSIS

4. WSIS and Internet Governance: Substance

The WSIS process has already yielded one important outcome: a significant reconceptualization of the scope of Internet governance

For years, the term was wrongly conflated with just the governance of core resources (the DNS, IP addresses, the root zone system) and the operations of ICANN

In WSIS, consensus has grown around the need for a "broad definition" and understanding that covers the governance of both physical and logical resources and the use of the Internet

I define Internet governance as *the collective rules, procedures, and related programs intended to shape social actors' expectations, practices, and interactions concerning Internet infrastructure and transactions and content.*

The WGIG is actively considering this matter

The "broad definition" raises a widened range of concerns for developing countries as well

5. Challenges for Developing Country Participation: Issue and Forums

- Acceleration of change in the Internet and Internet governance environments
- Technical complexity of the issues
- Uncertainty in some countries about their interests on various issues, lack of clear national positions and negotiating preferences
- Distributed architecture of governance, many intergovernmental and private sector mechanisms to track
- Private sector decision-making bodies

6. Participation: Institutional Barriers in Intergovernmental Mechanisms

Few formal barriers, however:

- Multiple meetings (often simultaneous), inputs, documents, lack of institutional and financial support = mission people come for ersatz participation
- Representation: for example, 36 countries have no permanent mission Geneva, especially LDC

- Even when well represented, power disparities and bargaining dynamics can frustrate efforts to translate participation into influence

7. Participation: Institutional Barriers in Private Sector Mechanisms

Participation is much harder in bodies like IETF, WC3, IETF, ICANN, industry associations, etc.

- Often these do not provide for government participants or observers
- Technological, economic, intellectual, and political dominance of companies based in the industrialized countries
- Conversely, relatively few developing countries have robust, organized, and internationally oriented private sectors with the requisite resources and interest in joining such bodies (when that is possible)
- Where developing country governments can play a role, as in ICANN's Government Advisory Committee (GAC), they may have reasons not to, e.g. a political choice between legitimating ICANN by participating in it or pushing for its functions to be performed in the ITU or some other intergovernmental setting
- More generally, the number and diversity of private sector mechanisms make it difficult for developing countries to keep abreast of rapidly changing developments
- This is especially so when important bits of information are proprietary, or simply not made available
- Mobile meetings around the world, cost of jetting around
- Private organizations' cultures and work styles are very different from what is familiar to developing countries used to intergovernmental forums, and are driven by what is sometimes perceived to be a semi-closed community of technical experts who have known each other for years
- Their substantive approaches to the issues are also very different from what is common in intergovernmental settings, where concerns like national sovereignty, state authority, and development remain important undercurrents or explicit priorities

8. Hence, Backlash, the Push for Intergovernmental Approaches

Strong feeling that they cannot have their voices heard and influence decisions

Ye Ole' ITU/ICANN debate

- Strong preference among many for organization in which national telecom authorities are in control
- UN format and decision making style, ability of missions to represent, etc.
- Has been damaging to countries and ITU in private sector eyes, drive off interest in engagement, self defeating
- Has been a distraction from more pressing issues

The current debate on intergovernmentalism has shifted

Few key developing countries still pressing the ITU-centric model

WSIS/WGIG, growing interest in new arrangement, sometimes called the "ILO model"--- intergovernmental, with multistakeholder participation

Possible functions:

- Forum to give voice on wide range of IG issues
- Coordination among diverse organizations and stakeholders
- Focus on gaps in governance, orphan issues, multidimensional issues, horizontal integration/holistic assessment of mechanisms
- Pre-decision or decision making? Hard or soft agreements?
- Separately, a post-GAC entity for ICANN-specific issues; a Government Oversight Committee (GOC)?

9. Participation: Domestic Capacity Barriers

Obviously great variation across developing countries, but for many:

- Concentration of expertise and influence in limited set of ministries, particularly PTTs and former PTTs, vested interests, ties to dominant carriers
- Lack of strong inter-ministerial coordination
- Lack of consultation mechanisms with the private sector, civil society, parliaments, publics
- Lack of high-level leadership commitment, coherent national e-strategies, forward-looking laws and regulations, deep policy making institutions
- Lack of robust and organized Internet-related industries
- Lack of access to knowledge and information (compounded by overly strict intellectual property rules)
- Small delegations
- Human capital and expertise, inadequate awareness and lack of training
- Louder Voices study: "the wrong people attending meetings for the wrong reasons"
- Difficulties in implementing international agreements

10. Conclusion: Challenges for the International Community

- Government capacity building
- Strengthen private sector and civil society in the global South, enhance their ability to participate at
 - the national and global levels
- Make existing intergovernmental and private sector governance mechanisms more transparent, accessible, and congenial
- Easier access to knowledge and information
- Consider new arrangements that would allow for inclusive participation, horizontal analyses, enhanced coordination