



## **Consumer Project on Technology (CPTech)**

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The Internet was developed with open standards to allow for interoperability, that is, the ability of all hardware and software to interact efficiently. To avoid market segmentation and as a consequence, web fragmentation, the standards for web languages and protocols are open, i.e. non-proprietary. The strength and attractiveness of the Internet is largely based upon the "network effect," where users "work together to provide a benefit that is greater than the simple sum of their parts" (2 August 2006 IGF Submission: CPTech, Sun Microsystems, IPJustice, Professor Ghosh, and EFF). The catalyst of this network effect in the world of ICT is best executed and maintained through an environment of open and interoperable ICT standards.

For this GENI/OECD workshop, we propose to examine the relationship between the "openness" of ICT standards, economic and social development, and government policy making to help governments to better understand the tension between intellectual property rights holders in ICT standards and the public. We will explore how levels of "openness" affect economic development and social goals and how governments concerned about improving information access can make informed policy decisions on ICT standardization, particularly through government procurements.

A good illustration of the issue is a comparison between hypertext and document format. Web pages are built upon the foundation of open format, called HTML for hypertext mark-up language. The standards for HTML, determined by the World Wide Web Consortium are open, well documented, and designed to work with different software and hardware. It has been the most influential and important data standard in the history of publishing. There are now many high quality and innovative tools to author web pages. This is not the case for the dominant "desktop" document formats. However, by using the example of the OpenDocument Format standard, we propose to highlight the positive impact open ICT standards can have on information access. ODF is an open specification for the formats of common documents created by word processors, such as texts, spreadsheets and presentation graphics programs. If governments select to use and promote this new open standard, they will achieve a number of important public policy objectives, including create more competition among software developers, improve the ability to manage archives of data, and enhanced ability to use and re-purpose data contained in documents.

There are also quite important discussions about the need for more open formats for audio visual content, particularly as the Internet becomes a more important platform for publishing audio and video works, including works that involved "user" generated content, and record important public events and collaborations involving internet linked communities.

The development and use of open, interoperable, non-discriminatory and demand-driven standards that take into account needs of users is a basic element for the growth and diffusion of ICTs and for more affordable access to them. We believe the requirement for open IT standards that promote affordable access is important for the future of the Internet and should be discussed at the workshop to help inform and prioritize key areas of focus for the organizers' programs of work on Internet-related policy issues, in view of an OECD Ministerial meeting to take place in June 2008.