

Commission on Science and Technology for Development

Nineteenth Session

Agenda item 2:

Progress made in the implementation and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels

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I am very honoured to be part of this panel and I look forward to engaging in a constructive dialogue. This is a timely discussion: 5 months since the WSIS+10 Review, it is a good opportunity to reflect where we are and how best to move forward.

The discussions we had in Geneva last week at the WSIS Forum emphasized the importance all stakeholders attach to the linkages between and the alignment with the WSIS Action Lines and the SDGs.

While there is still much need for further discussion on *where or how* the WSIS Action Lines can implement the SDGs, there was a shared understanding that ICTs would naturally allow countries to meet some of the targets under the SDGs.

Let me turn to ICANN, the organization if have the honour to represent on this panel. The Secretary-General's Report underpinning our discussion gives a high-level overview of what was the focus of ICANN's activities during the past two years, that is how to replace the authority of the US Government over the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority, the so-called IANA functions.

I would like to frame this process in some broader terms, as it went far beyond ICANN and involved a wide range of stakeholders, including governments.

ICANN has a limited role and mission – but it is part of a broader system, what we like to call the Internet Ecosystem.

When discussing Internet governance, it is important to keep in mind some of the key characteristics of the underlying architecture of the Internet.

The Internet:

- is a network of networks, characterized by shared global ownership without central control

- it is engineered for innovation around some architectural fundamentals and based on open and interoperable standards.
- allows for innovation without permission and the intelligence of the network is at the edges.

These basic architectural principles have produced an unprecedented and sustained growth of technical, economic and social innovation.

The Internet governance arrangements in place reflect the distributed nature of the Internet: there is no single organization that is “in charge of the Internet”.

These arrangements are also known as the Internet model. They function through the engagement of all relevant stakeholders in many organizations. People and organizations from many backgrounds and with different expertise are involved. This diversity is key to the model’s success.

In short, the Internet model is an inter-related set of open, bottom-up, freely accessible, public, multi-stakeholder processes for both technology and policy development.

Participation is based on knowledge and need rather than formal membership. This encourages broad participation and reduces any barriers to enter Internet standards and policy development processes.

The IANA Stewardship Transition is an illustration of this open, inclusive and bottom-up collaboration. It was a significant exercise. It involved the transition of some residual oversight functions the US Government held with respect to the management of the Internet’s critical resources to the Internet Community.

ICANN has facilitated this process which involved three key components and three different communities:

- The names community, dealing with the Domain Name system (DNS), coordinated by ICANN;
- The numbers community, dealing with the IP addresses, administered by the Regional Internet Registries (RIRs);
- The protocol community, dealing with the Protocol Parameters, developed by the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF).

These three communities worked out their part of the proposal, with countless volunteers from all different stakeholder groups; who have come up with technically complex, but politically important proposals. Together, they ensure the good functioning of the logical infrastructure of the Internet.

A critical part of the output that resulted from this process is a comprehensive proposal to enhance ICANN’s accountability.

The proposals were passed to US Government in March and we are confident that they will be approved in the next two months, allowing the transition process to be completed by the end of September.

This has been a significant exercise, demonstrating how different stakeholders; including governments, businesses, civil society, academic, technical community members and users, can come together to work on and solve

complex issues through innumerable emails exchanges in list discussions, conference calls and physical meetings. The statistics are impressive:

- 800 working hours of meetings alone;
- 33 000 e-mail exchanges on lists
- 600 Calls / Meetings
- 1100 events facilitated by ICANN.

The process was also in line with SDG 16 in terms of building “effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”

It is also of particular relevance to the debate on ‘enhanced cooperation’.

The Tunis Agenda created two tracks – the Internet Governance Forum and a process of ‘enhanced cooperation’. While the IGF’s mandate was renewed for another 10 years (and ICANN applauds this outcome of the WSIS+10) the process of ‘enhanced cooperation’ remains unresolved.

The paras pertaining to ‘enhanced cooperation’ in the Tunis Agenda contain carefully crafted diplomatic language, full of creative ambiguity. In our understanding of the Tunis agenda, ‘enhanced cooperation’ takes place within and between existing organizations – it is a distributed process in line with the underlying distributed technology.

In this light, the IANA transition process is an outstanding example of ‘enhanced cooperation’, involving all stakeholder groups in an unprecedented way.

Looking forward to the Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation, ICANN is pleased and honoured to be included to play a role in this work and to contribute our experiences of how diverse stakeholders can really make a difference in society when they pool their expertise, knowledge and experience for the collective good. A concrete contribution could be to look at the respective roles and functions of different actors and the contributions they make in different Internet governance frameworks.

‘Enhanced cooperation’ is about learning to work together in the most appropriate venues, in partnership, and to look for solutions where we can have a real impact on peoples’ lives, thus contributing to the implementation of the SDGs.

While it is clearly important to work on ‘enhanced cooperation’, as mandated by the UNGA, this should not distract our efforts or diminish our resources in working on the goals of securing appropriate ways and means in which the Internet and related activities can help meet the SDGs at both national and regional levels.

In this regard, let me add a few work about ICANN’s core business, the DNS. While this is a narrow technical remit, it plays an important role. The provision of domain names generates identity with a part of a community or business, thus enhancing the attractiveness of the on-line world.

The expansion of the DNS in the last couple of years, with the introduction of more than 100 Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) – that is top level

domains in non-latin script - has significantly increased consumer choice and enhanced diversity in terms of languages and local content. This in itself contributes to the SDGs, in particular SDG 4 on quality education, by enhancing the promulgation of on-line digital content and making it accessible in a multitude of languages.

Whatever we do on the way forward: let us make sure that the Internet can continue to be an engine of creativity, innovation, economic growth and social development. ICANN is fully committed to making a constructive contribution towards this common objective -- which is also aligned with the SDGs.
