



Third Meeting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

Report by Sanjay K Bihani with Stuart Hamilton

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The third meeting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) was held in Hyderabad, India from 3 - 6 December 2008 and focused on the overall theme of “**Internet for All**”. It was attended by over 1200 participants from 94 countries representing Government, Private Sector, Civil Society, Academia, Library and Information Professionals, Internet Community and Media. This reflects and reiterates the multi-stakeholder and democratic nature of the Forum.

Internet Governance Forum has evolved from the Tunis World Summit on Information Society. The inaugural first meeting of the IGF took place in Athens, Greece in 2006 and the second Meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2007. The Hyderabad programme and meeting were prepared through a series of open multi-stakeholder consultations held throughout 2008, in a process that made use of the IGF’s interactive and participatory structure. Internet today is standing at a threshold, where both limitless opportunities and daunting threats lied ahead. The challenge is to grab the opportunities and exploit them to the fullest while containing, if not eliminating, the threats. During the deliberations and discussions in this IGF, participants exchanged their rich experiences on the developmental and the substantive issues of Public Policy and Governance matters. This has provided an excellent platform to put across views and suggestions. The IGF has held extensive discussions on the main theme of “Internet for All”. Nothing could be more important than the ways by which access can be increased to those not yet linked to the Internet.

Opening Ceremony and Opening Session:

Mr Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) described the Internet as the backbone of our globalized world which was transforming our lives. Thus all users should take an interest in how it was run and managed. Mr Jomo described the IGF as a valuable melting pot for forging a common understanding of complex Internet issues from diverse points of view and he noted that the IGF was space for frank and enlightened debate, and for shaping and informing decision-making processes. He announced that the 2010 IGF Meeting would take place in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Mr A Raja, Minister for Communications and Information Technology of Government of India, underlined that the Internet had tremendous potential for promoting global partnership for development, as set out in the Millennium Development goals and stressed the role of the IGF in building an Internet Society, which was inclusive, human-centered and geared to development. India believes that IT infrastructure is the key to rapid economic and social development of the country. In order to promote education and other services and access to the Internet, the Government of India has embarked on a national programme to make the Internet available to the citizens through common service centres. Mr Raja noted that access to information by the people helped democracy by having transparency in the functioning of the government and enhanced the participation of the people in the governing process.

The First day focused on “Reaching the Next Billion”:

“Realizing a multi-lingual Internet” workshop discussed issues related to multilingualism and promoting diversity on the Internet, including accessibility and importance of enabling access for people with disabilities. Access and multilingualism are inter-twined. We cannot really talk about one without the other. The challenge of achieving universal access can be realized only if the Internet is made available to people of all languages.

“Access-Reaching the Next Billions” session examined the issues of access from the three main areas of supply, demand and development and was successful in reaching consensus in many areas.

“The Open Dialogue” Session sought to identify the linkages between the themes in achieving “**Internet for All**” and provided an opportunity for all Forum participants to deepen and enrich the discussion. More vigorous strategies need to be put in place to make sure that the required content is

produced. The importance of localization and availability of tools was also discussed.

The second day focused on “Promoting Cyber-Security and Trust”

The “Dimensions of cyber-security and cyber-crime” workshop discussed that there was a need for multi-stakeholder collaboration, cooperation and coordination at all levels; national, regional and international. The representatives of the ITU presented the organization’s Global Cyber Security Agenda. A high level expert group had been setup, comprising some 100 experts, representing all stakeholder groups. There was a general agreement to intensify efforts to tackle efforts to combat cyber-crime. A final point was made concerning the role of the IGF in this area and how it could help the organizations dealing with these issues in diverse regions, and enable various categories of actors to interact with one another and find solutions.

The growth of the Internet has created further opportunities for cyber hackers and criminals. Viruses, spyware, phishing and botnets are hurdles for the future growth of the Internet. Cyber Security is becoming more and more complex with the advance of technology. It has perhaps become the most serious challenge for all concerned.

The “Fostering Security, Privacy and Openness” session discussed how the Internet was global, but privacy could be local, regional and national in context. As the Internet had become a way of life, there were societal issues which needed to be addressed. In the Indian context, it was explained that nine million subscribers are being added every month. Governance was considered to become a relevant point in these circumstances.

Cyber Security is the key to user’s trust in e-business, e-governance, and other on-line applications. The openness and trust of users on the Internet needs to be maintained and encouraged. The fight against Cybercrime, therefore, should be given utmost priority in building not only confidence but also “User-centric Information Society”.

The third day focused on “Managing Critical Internet Resources”

“Transition from IPv4 to IPv6” was described as a self-regulating process. Projections were made that at the present rate of depletion, the IPv4 address space would be exhausted sometime around 2011. The panel also noted that there was a great need for private as well as public sectors and civil society

to be involved in the process. It was a shared responsibility that required promotion and enabling of a smooth transition from IPv4 dominance to an environment where IPv6 becomes dominant. The new IPv6 architecture is designed to solve this address space problem in an effective way. It supports more features such as secure routing, effective security as well as auto configuration, thereby offering complete mobility. The need for deployment of the IPv6 protocol is real and urgent. Because of the huge size and diverse coverage of the Internet it is not practical to expect a rapid and complete transition from IPv4 to IPv6. Co-existence of both IPv4 and IPv6 must be managed in a practical and simple way to enable a speedy migration.

The “Arrangements for Internet Governance-Global, Regional and National” session left participants with a broader understanding of different stakeholder positions on the issues. The IGF has a valuable role as a non-threatening environment for discussion, where participants could talk, share practical experiences from different perspectives, and move to the point where people listen to each other, moving from a disconnected series of statements to shared conversation.

The “Open Dialogue” Session discussed the issue of the transition or migration period which required a shared responsibility if it was going to be completed in time. This would require the governments, the operators, the vendors, the consumers, all of them, taking charge of their respective roles, and a certain coordinated approach to make sure that an orderly migration would happen. The IGF would be a space where work could be done to take these ideas forward.

The Fourth day focused on “Emerging Issues”

“The Internet of Tomorrow- Innovation and the Evolution of the Internet” session noted the Forum should consider new pedagogical models. How to teach tens of thousands of people at the same time, utilizing the opportunities of ICTs. The session was shown a video from the Council of Europe which launched an idea for a new multilateral treaty on certain minimum principles, including positive obligations to ensure the ongoing functioning of the Internet. A new treaty would promote solidarity and cooperation between states and underline the public value of human rights law. Signing up to a new multilateral treaty which ensured the functioning of the Internet would be of fundamental importance to keep the Internet open and free in the interest of future generations.

Taking Stock and the Way Forward:

The session was chaired by Mr Nitin Desai, Special Adviser to the Secretary General for Internet Governance and Chairman of the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (MAG). It was noted that the IGF had matured and had become a space where difficult issues could be addressed. The IGF Secretariat provided an overview of the anticipated schedule for the review of the IGF.

Librarians' Voice at Internet Governance Forum : {IFLA Team included Stuart Hamilton, IFLA HQ; Sanjay Kumar Bihani, Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi and IFLA/RSCAO Member; A R D Prasad, DRTC Bangalore; Marilen Daum, Gothe Institute New Delhi; and Renu Seth, Gothe Institute New Delhi }

The IFLA Team under the leadership of Mr Stuart Hamilton raised the voice of Librarians and Libraries in the IGF 2008 meeting. He spoke as a panelist in two major workshops of IGF 2008 representing IFLA.

In the first workshop organized by IP Justice on “Dynamic Coalition: Access to Knowledge (A2K)” he was one of five panelists that included representatives from Google India, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) and a representative of Brazilian Government. He spoke on the needs of libraries in the electronic information society. He tried to cover the problems libraries face just getting connected to the Internet in many parts of the world, and then he focused on the important role that copyright exceptions and limitations play in helping libraries provide access to knowledge. There seemed to be a good consensus among the panelists that a move towards standardizing exceptions and limitations for use of copyrighted works would contribute positively to an increased flow of information online.

UNESCO organized a workshop on “Freedom of Expression in Cyberspace: Internet Filtering and Censorship” and Mr Hamilton joined panelists from Freedom House, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OCSE), Google, and Issac Mao - who has the distinction of being referred to as China's first ever blogger. Mr Hamilton spoke in front of an audience of around 100 participants on the subject Internet filtering and censorship. He was able to talk about IFLA's World Report, and the worrying trend of increasing use of filtering software in libraries worldwide. He described the role of IFLA as a true representative of librarians and libraries world wide

with more than 1400 members in over 140 countries. He also emphasized the role of National Library Associations of various countries in regard to development of libraries and the need for Internet governance in libraries. He replied to specific questions on children and the Internet in libraries, and the filtering situation in Russian libraries. This was a great session that gave an overview of Internet censorship around the world.

One of the extended IFLA team members, ARD Prasad from DRTC in Bangalore, spoke at the Workshop on “Access to Public Held Information with a Development Perspective”. He spoke on the “role of libraries” in accessing public held / public sector information”. He approached the topic from an Indian perspective, and outlined how libraries can play an effective role in making freedom of information legislation real for users, by providing access to the right channels and offering advice on how to find the information they are looking for.

I attended almost 14-15 workshops and Open Forums during IGF meeting also related to one or many aspects of modern librarianship. It was a great experience to attend so much workshops and forums at one platform. I also participated in one workshop on “Low Cost Sustainability Access” and spoke for the Access group on the requirement of low cost Internet access for libraries, so that the benefits of Internet could reach to the masses or general public. In my view, free Internet access in libraries can thus fulfill the theme of this year’s IGF “**Internet for All**”. Libraries are a major source of information dissemination and should remain so in the future.

Conclusion:

The issues addressed in the 87 self-organized events that took place in parallel to the main sessions provided an opportunity for the meeting participants to share experiences, ideas, and best practices. These thematic events built around the Forum’s main theme “**Internet for All**”, discussed specific ideas, heard presentations on successful projects and exchanged views on next step to address the use and misuse of the Internet.

While in general the themes highlighted in these events were fairly diverse, there were a number of events examining different aspects of critical internet resources. National and regional IGF activities featured prominently, as did issues of protecting children and ensuring a safe online environment. A new issue for the forum was ICT and Climate Change.

The IGF is important because of its uniqueness as a multi-stakeholder forum that can address issues not being discussed anywhere else. The IGF looks at topics like access, diversity, security, openness or critical Internet resources not as purely technical issues, but in terms which are more in the province of social, political, or economic analysis. Access, for instance, needs to be addressed like other basic issues of society, politics or economics.

The Internet today is standing at a threshold, where both limitless opportunities and daunting threats lie ahead. The challenge is to grab the opportunities and exploit them to the fullest while containing, if not eliminating the threats. It was clear that achieving these objectives would be possible only by concerted and collaborative action by governments, businesses, civil society, organizations and academia. The IGF as a forum holds great promise as a platform to forge precisely such a grand coalition for universal good. Although with only two scheduled IGFs remaining - in Egypt next year, and then in Lithuania – it is not yet clear if this promise will be realized. The next IGF meeting will be held in Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt from 14-17 November 2009.

For more information about IFLA's involvement at the IGF, see Stuart Hamilton's blog at: <http://blogs.prodigio.nl/stuart/>

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IFLA Team: ARD Prasad, Renu Seth, Stuart Hamilton, Marilen Daum and Sanjay K Bihani (from left to right)



Stuart Hamilton, Sr Policy Advisor, IFLA with Fellow panelists in an UNESCO workshop on “Freedom of Expression : Internet Filtering and Censorship”



IFLA Team in relax mood during lunch hour



Stuart Hamilton, Senior Policy Advisor, IFLA with other Fellow panelists in a workshop on “A2K” (Access to Knowledge)