

# Internet governance: The Road to Athens and beyond

Lynn St.Amour  
President & CEO, Internet Society



# From WSIS, IGF and more

- World Summit of the Information Society (WSIS) convened in 2001, concluded in 2005 <http://www.itu.int/wsis/index.html>
- Original purpose:
  - to tackle the “digital divide” and harness the potential of ICTs to drive economic and social development
- Three focus areas:
  - 1) Internet governance, 2) financing strategies, and 3) ICT development and capacity building
  - But one, Internet governance, claimed centre stage.
- The concluding WSIS documents called for continued focus on Internet governance in the form of:
  - A multi-stakeholder forum for dialogue called the **Internet Governance Forum (IGF)** - <http://www.intgovforum.org/>  
process of “**Enhanced Cooperation**” in the area of the development of globally applicable principles on public policy issues

# WSIS – key results

- In Internet governance:
  - Minimal impact on Internet structures (for now)
  - Recognition of roles and importance of existing Internet organizations and governance mechanisms (“Internet Community”)
  - Understanding that there is a need to move the debate beyond technical aspects (IP address allocation, root servers, DNS, etc.)
  - Continued dialogue – IGF
- In general:
  - Increased focus on ICTs for economic development and capacity building
  - Solidified multi-stakeholderism
  - Outcome characterized as “Everyone was happy” which translates into “outcomes can be interpreted as one wants”
    - Areas to watch: Enhanced Cooperation (and the IGF)

# IGF – The Mandate

<http://www.intgovforum.org/>

- The Forum should be a place for “multi-stakeholder policy dialogue”
  - It can
    - “discuss cross-cutting international public policies”
    - “discuss issues that do not fall within the scope of any existing body”
  - It should have
    - “no oversight function and would not replace existing arrangements, mechanisms, institutions or organisations”
    - “no involvement in day-to-day or technical operations of the net”
  - It should be a
    - “neutral, non-duplicative and non-binding process”
  - And, it should advance development agendas:
    - “contribute to Internet governance capacity building in developing countries”
    - “exchange of information and best practices”
    - “use expertise of the academic, scientific and technical communities”.
- The Forum has a 5 year mandate:
  - Greece in 2006, Brazil 2007, India 2008, Egypt 2009, ? 2010.

# IGF

- Led by a representative of the UNSG - Nitin Desai.
  - Small focused secretariat in Geneva - led by Markus Kummer (from Swiss government)
- IGF Advisory Group appointed by UNSG, comprising
  - 47 representatives of business, government, Civil Society, the technical (Internet) community
  - + Guests from international organizations
  - + Special advisors to the Chairman – Nitin Desai.
- IGF AG's role to date has been to
  - Assist draft the agenda, shape the focus, propose speakers, address logistics, etc.
    - Challenges: organizing the event and getting the right speakers in the limited time available
  - Unclear whether this AG will continue in some form to assist in the preparations for Rio in 2007.

# IGF success criteria

- ISOC contributions have emphasized the following:
  - Focus on development - areas that impact access to and availability of the Internet
  - Focus on cross-cutting international public policy issues
  - Model is that of a Program Committee not a gov't. advisory body
  - Multi-stakeholder participation
  - Clear, focused, limited agenda
  - Share, inform, collaborate
  - Promote best practice and expertise sharing
  - Limit new organizational structures and meetings - leverage existing organizations and knowledge base
- Will these be met?
  - Largely, although the development and capacity building focus may not be as great as we would wish.

# IGF Athens: Oct. 30 – Nov. 2

- 4 key focus areas:
  - Openness
    - Access to knowledge and free flow of information/ideas
  - Diversity
    - Multilingualism, IDNs, local content, linguistic diversity
  - Security
    - Spam and malware, network security and privacy
  - Access
    - Intl. interconnect, local access, enabling environments
- Other sessions of note:
  - “Setting the Scene” for Athens
    - Likely to be a higher level, principles-based and political discussion
  - “Emerging Issues” in Internet governance
    - The future and what issues do we take to Rio....

# IGF Athens cont.

- 30 or so workshops
  - Internet community “participation” workshop
    - The importance of developing country engagement in the organizations that administer and manage the Internet.
  - Internet community also involved in a range of other workshops from local access to IDNs, etc.
- Who will be there?
  - (As of early Sept.): registrations: 700+/-
  - The Internet community leadership, ISOC membership, ccTLD managers, etc.
  - A wide-ranging sub-set of the WSIS Tunis participants
- Key concerns:
  - Lack of developing country participation.
  - Push for recommendations, findings, etc., by some governments.



# The Road to Rio

- Athens is the guinea-pig
  - AG has worked relatively well – good balance of interests
  - Political posturing has been less than expected – so far
  - Some governments, political blocs having a hard time adjusting to a different model
    - IGF is not a traditional intergovernmental meeting.
- Brazil is hosting the 2007 IGF
  - Likely to be a more “politicized” event
  - Likely that the G77 will have greater ability to shape
  - Unclear what issues will be addressed
    - Concern that more narrow Internet governance issues - critical Internet resources, root zone file – depending on Enhanced Cooperation outcome
  - Structure may change based on Athens experience
  - Costs/difficulties for developing country participation will have to be better managed

# Beyond IGF....

- This is but the beginning of an ongoing discussion on Internet governance:
  - Success of the Internet has brought a whole new range of interested parties to the table
  - Internet resources are now considered by nations to be strategic assets
  - Internet pervasiveness and openness causes concern amongst some governments.
- The IGF is but one component of Internet governance activities
- Enhanced Cooperation:
  - a process whereby “governments, on an equal footing, ... carry out their roles and responsibilities, in international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet” including “the development of globally-applicable principles on public policy issues associated with the coordination and management of critical Internet resources...” etc.
  - N. Desai, IGF Chair, has consulted informally on what enhanced cooperation is and what might be done to increase such cooperation among governments (and relevant stakeholders).
  - A report will be submitted to the UN SG imminently.
- And, the debate will continue elsewhere:
  - “Reform” of the ITU in the post-WSIS environment
  - Around the globe – “regional frameworks” for Internet governance....

# Reading the Tea Leaves

- IGF: Athens will be a success - UN events always are!
  - The difference between a success and an outstanding success (in UN speak) will be, in our view, the degree to which developing countries feel their concerns and needs have been addressed. This is still an open item....
  - Each party to Athens will put their own spin on the event.
  - The road to Rio will be just as arduous – the organizational aspects will be familiar but the “political” pressures may be greater.
    - And what issues will Rio address?
- Enhanced Cooperation: a balancing act
  - The report will likely review existing mechanisms that contribute to enhanced operation and explore options for strengthening cooperation further
    - The report will likely mention the new USDoC-ICANN JPA and the improving ICANN-GAC relationship as examples of movement in the right direction
  - However, the report may not satisfy those governments that have sought to new governance mechanisms
    - If this is the case, pressures will accrue in Rio at the IGF.