



ONLINE COURSE ON INTERNET GOVERNANCE

Capacity Building – The WSIS Process

by Jovan Kurbalija

BACKGROUND

WSIS confirmed that understanding of the various aspects of the Information Society, including Internet governance, is generally lacking. The following were some of the symptoms:

- a difficulty in grasping the multidisciplinary nature of the issues on the agenda;
- a difficulty in formulating clearly defined negotiating positions;
- the presence of a considerable number of ambiguities (not necessarily constructive) in the negotiation process.

The following reasons for this can be identified:

- a lack of human resources and sufficient time for the training of participants in WSIS-related activities;
- a lack of the necessary skills for active participation in future WSIS-related activities;
- a lack of capacity to process multidisciplinary IS-related issues, especially among the smaller countries, which covered this process with limited human resources (very often through a single diplomat-generalist based in Geneva).

Capacity building in the fields of the Information Society and Internet governance is clearly necessary.

This can be achieved through:

- courses on Internet governance – general courses providing an introduction to the field of Internet governance;
- **just-in-time training** (addressing the immediate needs of a delegation). This type of training should be provided prior to any meeting, in order to teach the specific skills that will be required.

In this paper, we present Diplo's online course on Internet governance, which has evolved over the last eight years from our initial course on ICT and Internet policy (introduced in 1997).

INTRODUCTION – ONLINE COURSE ON INTERNET GOVERNANCE

The course is designed to prepare decision makers to participate effectively in international *fora* dealing with Internet governance. The course is based on a simulation exercise.

Course objectives:

- to enhance participants' understanding of Internet-related concepts and terminology;
- to introduce participants to the main aspects of Internet governance;
- to increase participants' understanding of the negotiation process;
- to introduce participants to computer-based negotiation techniques.

Course duration: 12 weeks

Week 1: Introduction and methodology

Weeks 2 to 11: Negotiations (two weeks for each basket)

Week 12: Final examination

Course organisation:

The course is divided into five segments, called baskets. These are:

- infrastructure and standardisation basket;
- legal basket;
- commercial basket;
- development basket;
- socio-cultural basket.

During the two-week period assigned for each basket there will be two online sessions and a further five to six hours of one-on-one working time with each course participant.

The day-to-day process of learning is illustrated through the following detailed breakdown of activities over the two-week period dedicated to the legal basket.

COURSE SEQUENCE

WEEK ONE – Gaining knowledge ABOUT Internet Governance

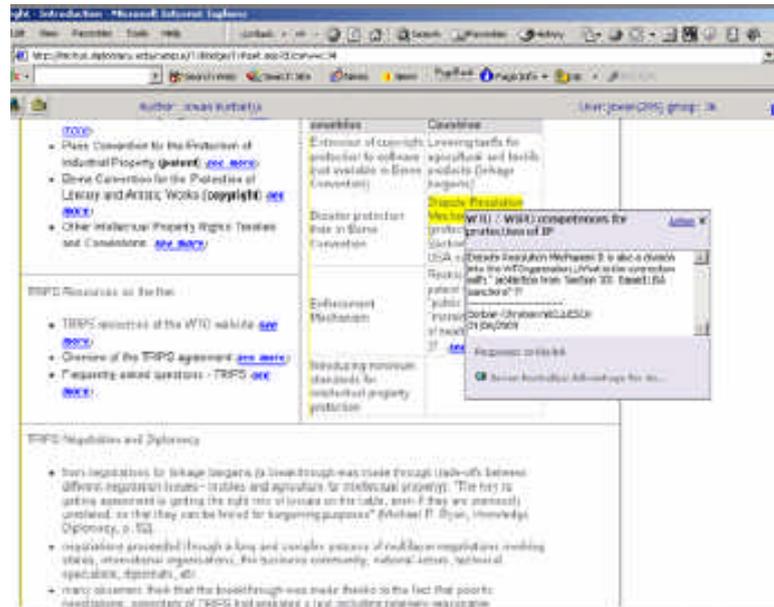
Monday – Tuesday: Study and discussion

Course participants are provided with material created to achieve specific learning objectives, such as acquiring information and making connections between similar concepts. The material is presented in a variety of ways (hypertext, cognitive mapping and multimedia) to accommodate different learning styles.

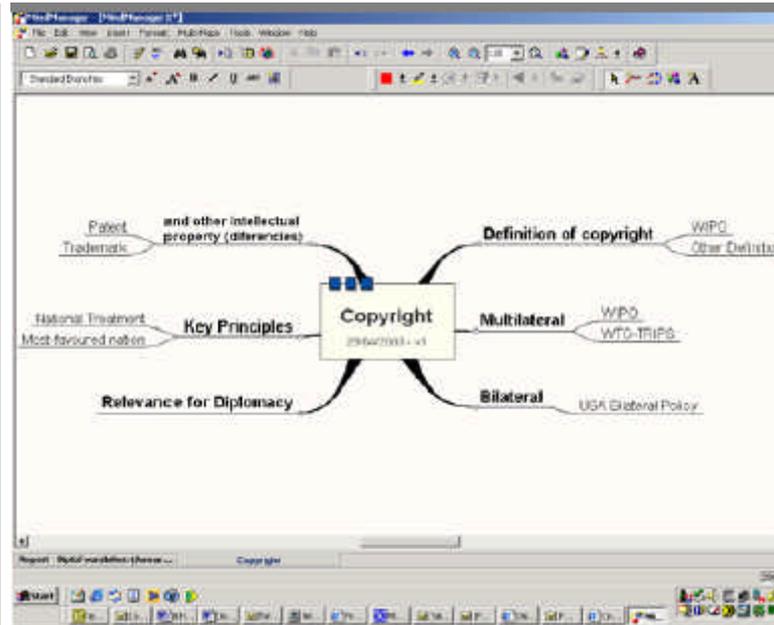
During these first two days, course participants are involved in intensive interaction through making and responding to annotations on the text, both with other course participants (peer-to-peer) and with the lecturers. The intensity of interaction tends to be higher than in traditional lectures as timid participants who might abstain from contributing verbally usually feel comfortable to contribute online. Course participants are evaluated on the quantity and quality of the annotations they make.

The lecturer's role in this phase is to monitor the annotations made and to gather them into clusters representing different issues/problems. By Wednesday, the participants are ready for their first test.

Hypertext: Annotations made by course participants allow them to engage in discussion with the author of the document by asking questions and providing comments, examples and counter-arguments. Each generation of participants leaves a layer of annotations on the basic text. This text, annotated by multiple groups, remains accessible in the future, providing an element of continuous learning and knowledge-management.



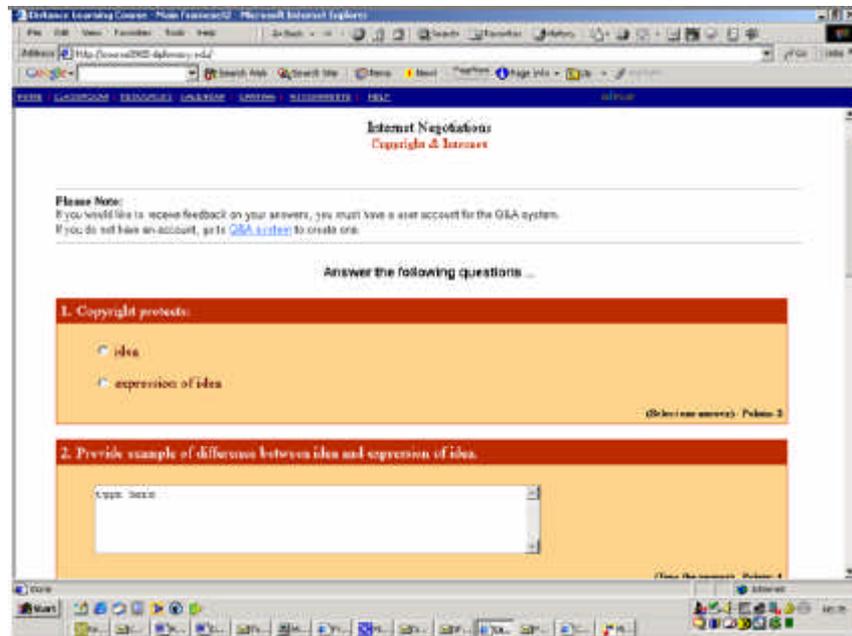
Cognitive Mapping: Cognitive mapping provides a structural representation of a complete subject area. The maps allow participants to develop individual and/or group mental representations of the subject matter, a technique which has proven to be very effective in dealing with complex issues.



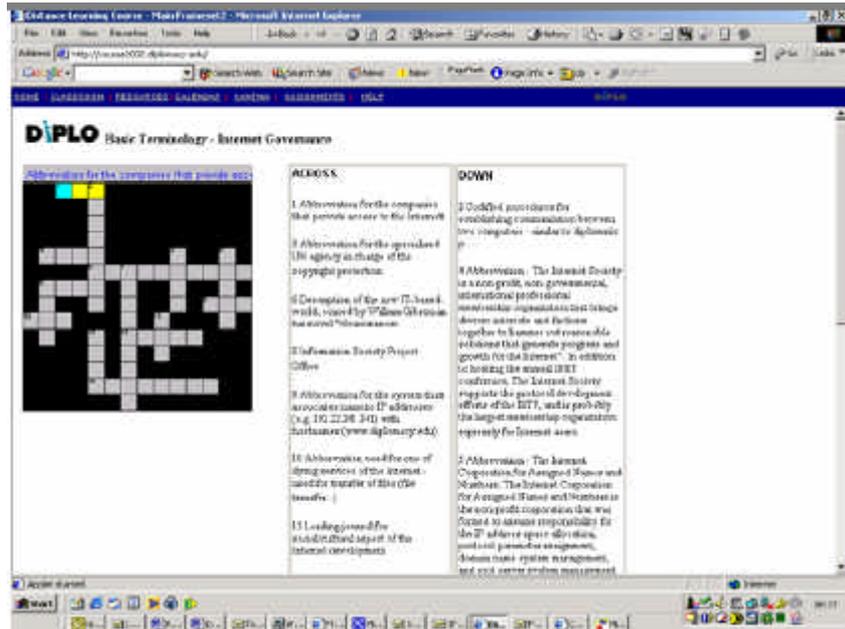
Wednesday: First test

The purpose of this first test is to ensure that course participants have understood the main elements of the subject matter. Testing is performed in a variety of ways, including multiple-choice questions, short text questions, and crossword puzzles. Participants receive individual feedback with marks and comments. A group evaluation is also provided, showing typical mistakes and trends.

Q&A: This example shows a test combining multiple-choice and short text questions.



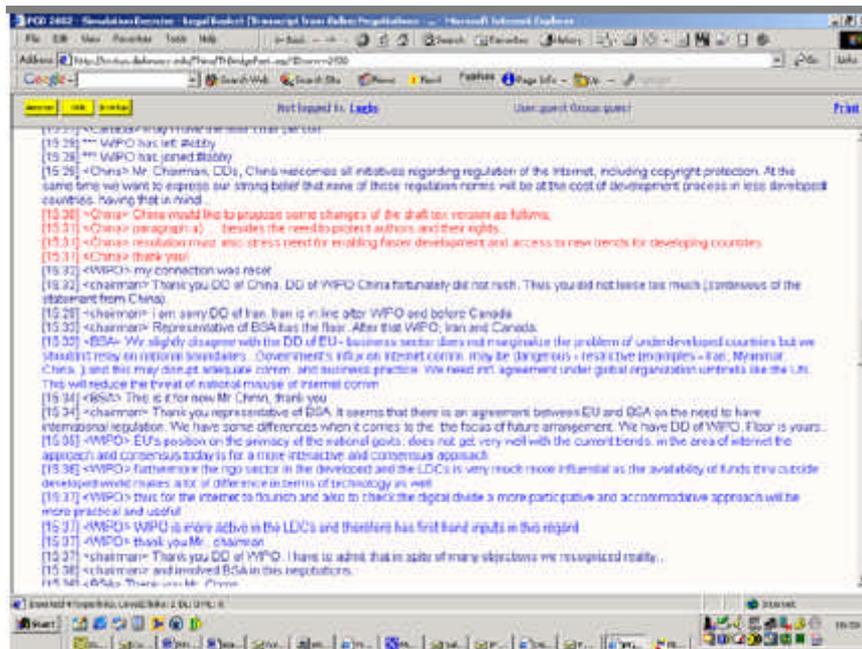
Crosswords:
Crossword puzzles are used to check the level of understanding of basic terminology (including acronyms).



Thursday: Online session

The online session is structured by the lecturer to deal with any weaknesses or gaps in the participants' understanding, as revealed by their activities in the first three days. The online session is an important component of creating positive group dynamics within a community that may have only met online. One challenge for online lecturers is that the discussion may move in several directions at once; the lecturer needs to keep the discussion focused.

Online Classroom:
An example of the transcripts of an online session, posted into the online classroom for future reference and hypertext annotations.



On Friday the lecturer prepares a summary of reflections on the week's activities, including significant annotations and questions. All interactive parts of the material provided remain open for comments via hypertext so that participants can continue to provide their input and comments if they wish.

By the end of the first week, through study, discussion (both via hypertext and the online session) and testing, participants have acquired a basic theoretical background and are ready to move from theory to practice.

WEEK TWO – From Theory to Practice (HOW)

The simulation exercise aims at drafting (learning HOW) an International Declaration on the Internet covering all five baskets. Participants are assigned the roles of major players (the USA, the EU, Japan, China, India), countries with specific interests in ICT-related issues (Canada, Singapore, Brazil), international organisations in the field (WIPO, ITU, WTO), or other players (NGOs, business associations, etc.).

Supervisors and lecturers play the role of the Secretariat. Participants are provided with frequent feedback on their performance, in terms of content, procedures and technology.

Monday: Information gathering

Participants are briefed on the countries or organisations they represent, including their basic positions on the main issues under discussion. Finding additional information is the responsibility of the participants. Participants are also briefed on the correct procedures for multilateral negotiations.

At this point, negotiations begin. A draft text is prepared by a committee for each topic. If the participants are not ready to prepare the draft text this task is performed by the Secretariat (lecturers/supervisors).

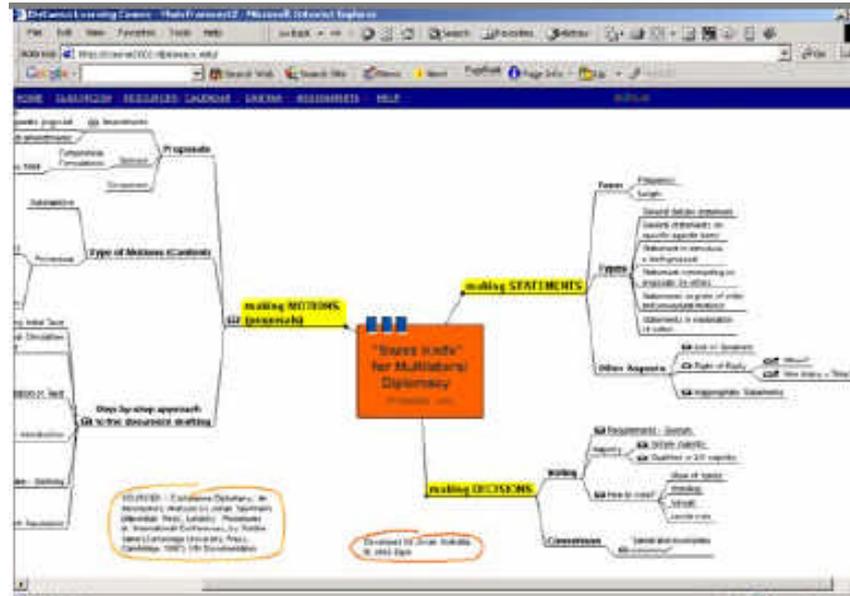
The first step involves asynchronous negotiations. Participants suggest amendments to the draft by making annotations on the draft text. Emphasis is on document drafting as an aid for transforming previously acquired tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge.

Initial Briefing:
Presentation of the position of a country or organisation.



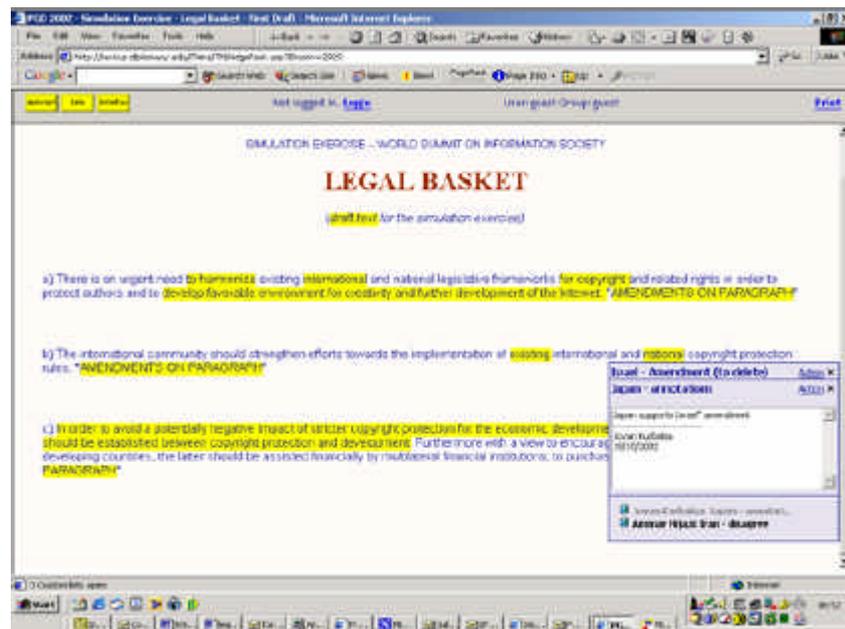
The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "Distance Learning Course - Multi Track2012 - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows "http://course2012.8losway.edu". The page content includes a navigation menu with "CLASSROOM RESOURCES/CALENDAR", "CARTINA", "ASSIGNMENTS", and "HELP". The main heading is "Simulation Exercise International Meeting on the Internet". Below this, there is a sidebar with links for "Simulation Exercise International Meeting on the Internet", "Scenario", "Simulation Roles", "Themes/Baskets", and "Who is Who". The main content area displays the role for the "European Union". Under the heading "European Union", it says "France" and "You believe that it is too early to adopt an international legal document... This meeting should adopt a non-binding declaration that could allow for the possibility of adopting an international legal document in the future." Below this, it says "Canada" and "Governance and Standardisation" and "You are in favour of the internationalization of the Internet, governance and standardisation. The internationalisation should be hybrid - participative. G-B mechanisms will play an important role (ISPD, etc.)."

“Swiss Knife of Multilateral Diplomacy”: this guide to multilateral diplomatic procedures assists participants with mastering the processes of negotiation.



The first layer of the map presents the main multilateral techniques in three groups: making motions, decisions and statements (see the image). The second layer explains each technique in more detail (references to UN procedure, comments, case studies, etc.).

Draft Text: This is an example of a draft text for the legal basket. Each delegate proposes amendments through hypertext annotations, while other delegates can suggest modifications, or express agreement or disagreement with the amendments.

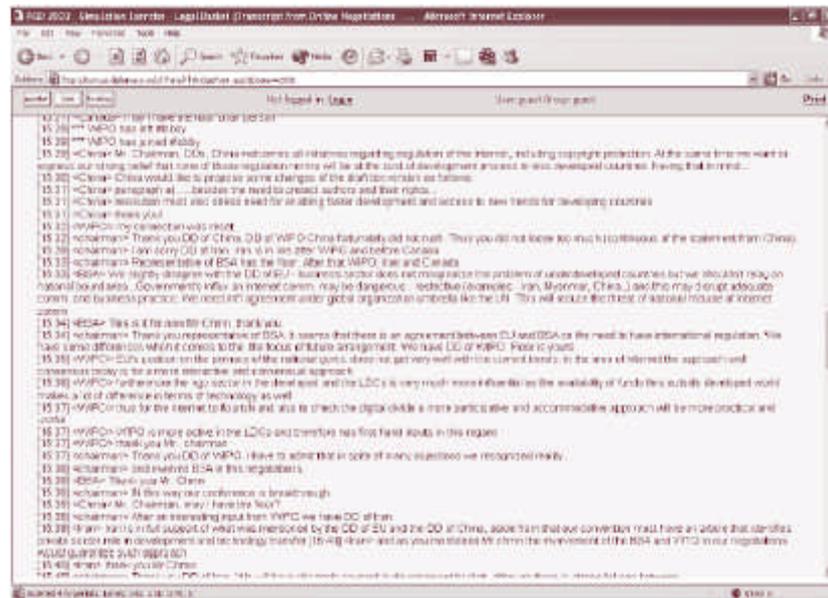


Tuesday: Online negotiations

The activities for the remainder of the week are attuned according to the group dynamics. Typically, after the first set of hypertext amendments the Secretariat prepares a consolidated version of the text and invites participants to the first online negotiation session.

At the end of the online session, the Secretariat prepares a new consolidated version of the text and makes it available for the next round of hypertext negotiations (performed by submitting hypertext annotations and amendments).

Conference Room: Discussion in the conference room can be more or less structured, or even moderated, depending on the needs. Although online chat tends to be an informal medium, the negotiation exercise follows strict diplomatic procedures (adoption of the agenda, delegates ask the chairman for the floor, use of points-of-order, etc.).



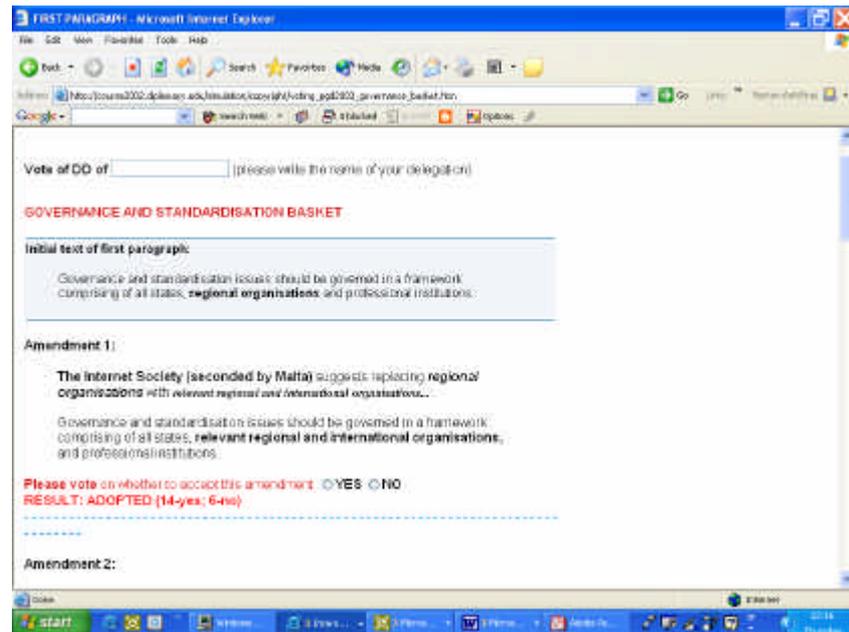
Feedback from Diplo participants on the use of this method for learning the negotiation procedure has been very positive.

Wednesday to Friday – Continuing negotiations

Depending on the dynamics of the negotiations, various negotiating and didactic techniques are used. Here are a few possible scenarios:

- After the online negotiations on Tuesday, the new version of the text is presented for hypertext annotation. If the hypertext annotations lead towards consensus and adoption of the final text, the negotiation will be concluded in this manner. However, this is not usually the case, so...
- A second online negotiation session is scheduled for Thursday.
- Sometimes the Secretariat establishes drafting committees for particular issues.
- Delegations or the Secretariat may call for voting.

Online Voting: Here is an example of an online voting procedure.



Feedback

Throughout the exercise, participants are provided with frequent feedback. This is essential to ensure the acquisition of tacit knowledge. Feedback is provided in three areas:

1. Theoretical aspect (during negotiations participants revisit the knowledge they acquired through a practical perspective).
2. Diplomatic aspect (feedback on diplomatic procedures, drafting, amendments, etc.).
3. Technical aspect (proficiency in the use of technology).

Feedback: Feedback is provided for theoretical, diplomatic and technical aspects of the negotiations.



Reality Check:
 For each basket, a “reality check” evaluates the closeness of the participant’s contributions to the role that particular country or organisation would be expected to take. This reality check keeps the negotiations close to “real life”, and is an essential tool for transferring tacit knowledge from mentors to participants.

NAME	COUNTRY	REALITY CHECK	PARTICIPATION
Sharon Harris	Canada	Canada in other countries considered the importance of the right of the USA. Obviously it is not easy to the (SE) regulation of a trademark. In the field of security Canada closely follows US security policy. In other fields such as development and ICT Canada has a more independent policy. It is interesting to note that many leading officials of the WTO (including the secretary-general) are from Canada. In this field Canada would like to be a bridge between the developed and developing world (and to compete with the EU for this role). Having provided the information I would like to stress that Sharon's simulation of Canada's role was not close to the position of developing countries.	Active participation. Constructive proposal regarding EU/Canada agreement.
Tatiana Mitels	European (France)	The EU and Canada have similar positions in the WTO negotiations. Like Sharon, Tatiana went too far in protecting the interests of developing countries. She made an interesting contact with China and that Mitels should have used a Point of Order on a few occasions when DG's comments were not in the spirit of the conference deliberations.	Active participation in online sessions and face-to-face negotiations.
Mali Vuyiswa	South Africa	N/A	No participation.
MWANGI M. AYOI	Kenya	Ajay provided some good information (like to the possible position of Ghana in the context of the simulation exercise. Ghana could have played more constructive role in developing world coalition.	Participation in the simulated phase.

As this example has shown, through this two-week process, participants simultaneously acquire both explicit knowledge (ABOUT the topic): theoretical knowledge, main concepts, basic terminology, procedures, and tacit knowledge (HOW TO): skills and experience.