

High-Level Policy Statements

Policy Statements I

Mr David Gross, Partner, Attorney At Law, Wiley Rein LLP /Internet Governance Coalition



Distinguished colleagues, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Ambassador David A. Gross. Formerly, I had the great honor of serving as United States Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy from 2001 to 2009. During this time, I led the United States delegations to the preparatory meetings and I was the co-head of the United States delegations to the United Nations' World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005).

Today I am appearing on behalf of the Internet Governance Coalition, an industry coalition with broad representation from the communications, Internet, and related industries, including Amazon, AT&T, Cisco Systems, Comcast NBCUniversal, Facebook, Go Daddy, Google, Juniper Networks, Microsoft, Telefónica, The Walt Disney Company, Time Warner Cable, 21st Century Fox, and Verizon Communications. As a group of international companies whose businesses are increasingly based upon the Internet, the Internet Governance Coalition has seen first-hand the successes of the Internet's bottom-up multistakeholder model, rooted in the 2003 *Geneva Declaration and Plan of Action* and the 2005 *Tunis Agenda for the Information Society*.

The WSIS meetings and the path breaking 2014 WSIS+10 High Level Event Outcome Document, as well as the outstanding success of the Internet Government Forum (IGF), have materially contributed to Internet-driven economic, social, and political developments during the past two decades. But, as always, there is much more that should be done to benefit everyone, especially for those living in the developing world and those not yet connected to the Internet. Therefore, I am pleased to deliver this statement about the Coalition's views about the positive outcomes that can be accomplished by this WSIS

Forum and the "Overall Review of the Implementation of the WSIS Outcomes" being conducted by the United Nations General Assembly this year.

In preparation for the NETmundial meeting hosted last year in Brazil, the Internet Governance Coalition developed its vision of sustaining principles for Internet governance, rooted in, for example, paragraphs 55, 56, 89 and 108 of the 2005 *Tunis Agenda*, which we believe continue to be relevant today. The Internet Governance Coalition believes that the world benefits by having the governance structure of the Internet be open, transparent, and representative of all stakeholders. The multistakeholder approach taken towards the Internet's technical functions has allowed for the creation of a decentralized system that has resulted in historically profound economic, social, and political benefits. This decentralized structure of the Internet has enabled individuals to access information and services, to connect to each other, and to share ideas and knowledge globally. By offering new possibilities for entrepreneurial creativity, the Internet has become a powerful engine for technological innovation, economic growth, and the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity, especially in the developing world. We believe this model, strengthened as necessary, will continue to best serve these shared goals far into the future.

At NETmundial and since, the Internet Governance Coalition has emphasized that we all must join together to ensure a safe, secure, open, interoperable, and sustainable Internet. This means supporting policies that stimulate sustainable investment in, deployment of, and access to Internet networks and the industries and services that create demand for those networks. It also means supporting capacity building and implementation of best practices in relation to network security.

We are mindful that policies must support opening and maintaining international markets allowing the seamless flow of legal digital services, applications, products and information. Actions taken here and elsewhere should foster innovation and investment across Internet networks, services, and other sectors of the Internet ecosystem, including ensuring both the protection of human rights and the protection of intellectual property. These goals are best advanced through strengthened rule of law, which governments can advance greatly by establishing even-handedness and predictability in decision-making.

Finally, policies must support increased and appropriate transparency and openness in intergovernmental organizations and multistakeholder mechanisms, to ensure that all stakeholders can participate meaningfully in key Internet policy discussions. The quality of Internet governance decisions increases when diverse stakeholders choose to actively and consistently participate.

In addition to reaffirming these principles, this year at WSIS Forum and at the upcoming UNGA High Level Event in December, one of the main priorities for our Coalition is the

renewal of the mandate of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). IGF is one of the great successes of the WSIS, and its impressively large and growing number of participants illustrates the IGF's great value that is well understood by governments, industry, academics, technological innovators, and by the Internet community. The success of the IGF is confirmed by its annual growth, both in the form of the numerous “day zero” and concurrent side events, which are themselves informative and successful, and by the more than thirty regional and national IGFs that have emerged.

The IGF also has an excellent record of strong support from host countries around the world, including, most recently Turkey in 2014 and soon Brazil in November of this year. And, as the CSTD recently reiterated (Draft Resolution, Assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, at 6), when the IGF's mandate is renewed (as we strongly hope that it will), Mexico has offered to host the 2016 event.

As an event where anyone and everyone interested in the Internet can convene to exchange ideas, information, and best practices—to identify challenges and emerging issues, and to help find solutions—IGF has fulfilled the mandate set forth for it in paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda. As the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) noted (in its report to the ITU's WSIS+10 High Level Event on the implementation of Action Line C-11), “[t]he IGF has embodied the multi-stakeholder model for Internet governance, responding to the Tunis Agenda.” (10-Year WSIS Action Line C11 Facilitator's Report - Executive Summary (Document: WSIS+10/4/22)).

Beyond issuing a strong endorsement for the renewal of the IGF mandate, this WSIS Forum should encourage the UNGA WSIS review to take stock of the tremendous progress in the ten years since 2005, as reflected in the WSIS+10 Outcome Document (June 2014), the Report of the Secretary General of Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels (23 Jan. 2015), UNESCO's review of action implementing the WSIS outcomes, *Building Inclusive Knowledge Societies* (2014), UNESCO's *Connecting the Dots: Options for Future Action* (2015), as well as elsewhere.

A fundamental technological and societal transformation has taken place since 2005. The world has been connected, via submarine cables, and continental and national networks, by the proliferation of mobile broadband, and by lower-cost satellites, coming closer to the vision of people around the globe connected to each other over a seamless, interoperable Internet. This connectivity has facilitated the explosive growth of the Internet economy, with the benefits increasingly being felt in the developing world, with the explosion in cross-border transactions, mobile banking, local user-generated media, and multilingual applications and content. And Internet innovation has changed the way



we deliver traditional human services too, with developments in E-Government, E-Education, and E-Health having a positive impact on our daily lives.

As we move from taking stock to looking toward the future, we must reaffirm policies set forth in the WSIS + 10 High Level Event Outcome Documents – which will sustain and accelerate progress experienced during the last ten years and promote further growth and opportunity around the world. That means 1) continuing to promote investment and innovation in, and access to, networks and services; 2) reinforcing policies supporting the seamless flow of information; 3) protecting, promoting and respecting human rights; 4) addressing privacy and security interests, without imposing unnecessary barriers to trade; and 5) redoubling our commitment to capacity building, training, and information exchange in developing countries.

In closing, the Internet Governance Coalition appreciates this opportunity to address this important gathering of Ministers, policymakers, and thought leaders. This group should take this historic opportunity to send a clear message to the upcoming UNGA review endorsing the successful, bottom-up, multistakeholder model of Internet governance, to encourage strongly the renewal of the IGF mandate, to applaud the progress made since the WSIS, and to support continuation of the policies that have been so successful to date.