

**INFORMATION DOCUMENT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL  
ON THE OUTCOME OF THE INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS ON INTERNATIONAL INTERNET-RELATED PUBLIC  
POLICY ISSUES**

Please note that this document is for information purposes only, and has been prepared for the benefit of ITU membership based on the ITU Secretary-General's informal consultations with stakeholders.<sup>1</sup>

## **1. Background**

**1.1.** In 2005, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) recognized the multi-stakeholder model as the way forward for the global governance of the Internet and set the framework principles for the future work in the area of the Information Society, as captured in the [Tunis Agenda](#) (2005). In particular, the role of governments in the multi-stakeholder model can be found in many paragraphs, including Paragraph 35 which outlines the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder group. In the run up to the 10-year anniversary of WSIS, the debate on the Internet multi-stakeholder model continues in different international fora, including the [United Nations General Assembly \(UNGA\)](#), the [United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development \(CSTD\)](#) of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), [the Internet Governance Forum \(IGF\)](#), and several others.

**1.2.** Within the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), a major recent forum for discussion on this topic was the 5<sup>th</sup> World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum (WTPF-13), held in Geneva from 14 May to 16 May 2013, which was attended by some 900 delegates from diverse stakeholder groups, including non-ITU Members.

The 3-day long deliberations resulted in the adoption, by consensus, of [6 different Opinions](#) on a number of topics related to international Internet-related public policy issues, including:

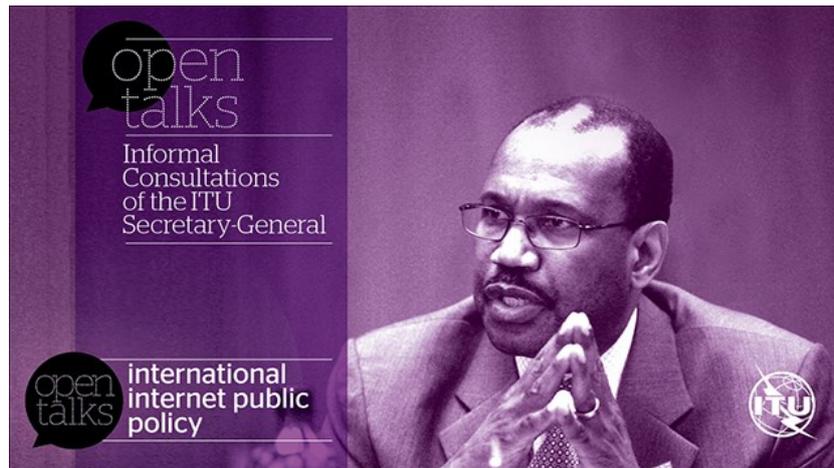
- a. Supporting Multi-stakeholderism in Internet Governance (Opinion 5)
- b. Supporting operationalizing the Enhanced Cooperation Process (Opinion 6)

**1.2.1.** The WTPF also considered a [new draft Opinion proposal on the Role of Governments in the Multistakeholder Framework for Internet Governance](#), submitted by the government of Brazil. Although there was significant discussion on this Draft Opinion and all participants recognized the importance of the issue, it was agreed that there was insufficient time left to consider all aspects in detail and that the discussion on the role of governments should be continued in various fora.

## **2. The Secretary-General's Informal Consultations on Internet-related Public Policy Issues**

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<sup>1</sup> [Document C13/120](#): Summary Record of the Ninth Plenary Meeting, Council 2013



**2.1.** Building upon this conclusion and with the aim to preserve the constructive discussion convened in the context of the WTPF, the ITU Secretary-General announced on 24 September 2013 the launch of the [“Open Talks”](#), a series of Informal Consultations, on Internet-related Public Policy Issues, with a focus on the Role of Governments in the Multi-stakeholder Model of Internet Governance.

**2.2.** The ITU Secretary-General, recognizing the fact that the Internet-related policy making processes concern a wide range of different stakeholders, as well as the broader public, who may not have the opportunity to participate in ITU’s formal meetings, applied a variety of informal, open and inclusive discussion formats, providing opportunities for anyone, anywhere in the world to participate.

**2.3.** These formats comprised:

- a) A World Café, held on October 8, 2013 at the ITU Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland
- b) A [Town Hall meeting](#), held on October 25, 2013 at IGF 2013, in Bali, Indonesia
- c) An [Online Crowdsourcing platform](#) launched on October 15, 2013

### 3. World Café on International Internet Public Policy



#### 3.1. Discussion

**3.1.1.** The World Café assembled about 50 representatives of different stakeholders, including ITU’s membership and non-members. The World Café session was based on an open and interactive

discussion format, where participants engaged into group discussions around small tables, in a rotating manner. The session was divided into three conversation rounds, each guided by a strategic question:

**Question 1:** What is the role of governments in the multistakeholder model of the Internet?

**Question 2:** What are the key issues that government should play an active role in?

**Question 3:** How can governments improve their interaction with other stakeholders?

In addition, two town-hall-style discussions were held to connect the various ideas that emerged, identify common opinions, and share different views.

### 3.2. Key findings

**3.2.1.** The ideas deriving from the individual discussions, were captured in short notes placed around the meeting room for everyone to consider. In total, 105 ideas and suggestions were formulated, broken down as follows:

- **Conversation 1:** 44 ideas
- **Conversation 2:** 38 ideas
- **Conversation 3:** 23 ideas

The following is a summary of the outcome of each conversation. A detailed list of all the expressed ideas can be found in the full [World Café report](#).

#### 3.2.2. The role of governments in the multistakeholder model of the Internet

The participants reiterated the importance of the role of governments in the multi-stakeholder model and acknowledged that each and every government can make an impact.

More specifically governments were viewed as conveners and facilitators within the multi-stakeholder model, enabling dialogue and interaction among the different stakeholders and bridging the various activities. In this regard, the establishment of an enabling framework to stimulate cooperation and encourage open and transparent policy development processes was considered necessary.

The provision of an effective regulatory framework and the assurance of law enforcement in cases of illegal online activity (e.g. child sexual abuse) was pointed out as a key contribution of the government to a functional and safe Internet. Governments were further identified as having a moral responsibility towards citizens and were advised to take the public interest into account, in their various actions, and thus build trust within the society.

The protection of Human Rights online and also in the context of a government's regulatory and other Internet-related activities was also considered as an essential element of the governmental responsibilities within the multi-stakeholder framework.

#### 3.2.3 Key issues where governments should play an active role

There were a number of ideas expressed on the areas where the role of Governments should be more active.

The Provision of a regulatory framework, which would provide a level of protection, equal to that of the offline world, focusing also on the protection of privacy, freedom of expression and consumer rights, was reiterated as a key role for governments.

The protection of critical national infrastructure for the use of the Internet, as well as the enhancement of cybersecurity were identified as the prevailing responsibility areas of governments.

Protection of the vulnerable or the marginalized sections of society was highlighted as a key responsibility of governments. It was recognized that the national governments can have a fundamental role in the awareness and education of the Internet users, especially children, enabling them to develop the necessary skills for their safe navigation in the World Wide Web (WWW). Ensuring Accessibility for people with disabilities was another area highlighted. The role of governments in ensuring Internet access to poor areas of the countries was also listed.

### **3.2.4 Improving interaction with other stakeholders**

There is a growing acknowledgement of the need to strengthen government's relations with different internal and external stakeholders. The participants of the World Café made various suggestions regarding the way forward.

The enhancement of openness and transparency in the policy making processes was identified as a key first step for nation states to consider. It was further suggested, that governments should acknowledge the existence of other stakeholders and strengthen their communication with all relevant communities. In addition, governments were urged to consider the inclusion of other stakeholders in their national policy debate, through the establishment of multi-stakeholder fora and the promotion of open consultation processes.

To achieve this, national governments were advised to facilitate financial mechanisms, as well as provide further incentives for different stakeholder groups to join the dialogue. The use of ICTs as a key means for interaction with a broader audience was an additional idea brought to the table.

## **4. Town Hall Meeting at the IGF 2013**



### **4.1. Discussion**

The Town Hall Meeting was held on 25 October 2013, in the context of the IGF 2013, organized in Bali, Indonesia. It was attended by some 30 participants consisting of representatives of different stakeholder groups, such as the civil society, private sector, UN Agencies and other International Organizations, as well as governments.

The meeting began with a short overview of the background and concept of the “Open Talks”, followed by a presentation of the Brazilian proposal on the “Role of Government in the Multistakeholder Framework for Internet Governance”, which was submitted to the WTPF in May 2013, and initiated the debate on this topic. The presentation and general remarks were made by H.E. Ambassador Benedicto Fonseca Filho of Brazil, who explained that the aim of this specific proposal was to initiate the discussion on the operationalization of the role of Governments, as this was described in the Tunis Agenda.

After the conclusion of the introductory part, the floor was opened for the comments and views of the audience. The discussion was carried out in a highly constructive manner and a number of different perspectives were brought to the table by the various speakers.

#### **4.2. Key findings**

The developing country perspective was one of the prevailing elements of this discussion. A number of speakers highlighted that the multi-stakeholder model has a different function, depending on the development status of each country, as well as its financial and cultural structure.

Developing countries often rely on their governments for the establishment of the necessary environment for the provision of effective and safe Internet services. In countries where the private sector is not as strong, the governmental support and investment is viewed as the enabling factor, for encouraging growth in the ICT and other sectors. It was therefore suggested by some speakers, that the governments should have a leading role in the Internet model, which would allow them to safeguard the interests of their citizens in the best possible manner.

In doing so, the governments should work on building trust and establishing a continuous and constructive dialogue with all different stakeholders, in the context of their policy making processes. Some of the speakers also shared their positive experiences with the application of the multi-stakeholder model in their countries and explained specific organizational models for stakeholder engagement by governments, highlighting that governments should be open to different views and approaches shared by other stakeholder groups. Particularly with regard to the discussions in the context of the Council Working Group on international Internet-related public policy issues (CWG-Internet), the question was raised regarding the potential of establishing opportunities for the physical participation of more stakeholder groups in future meetings.

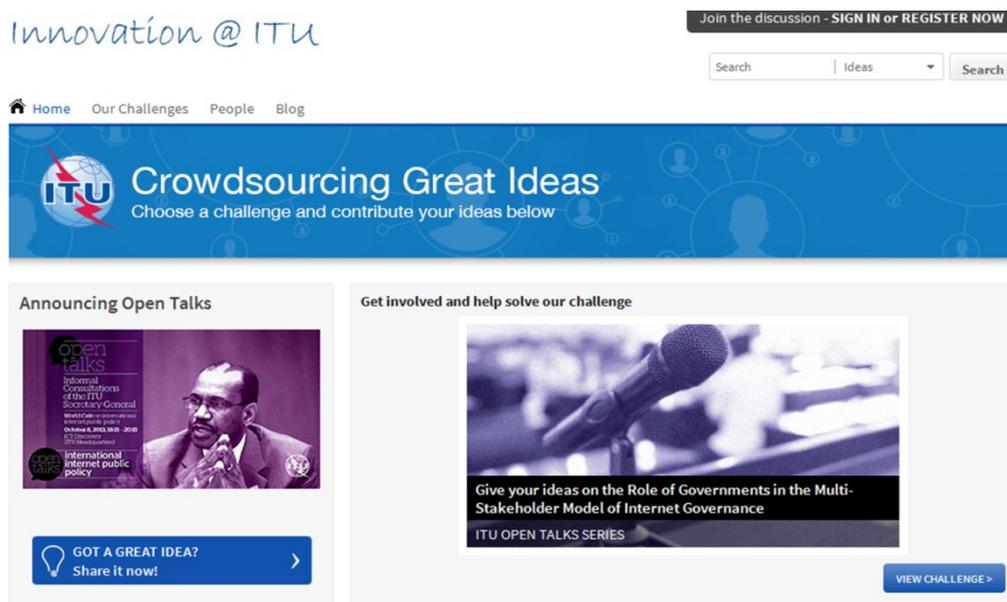
With regards to the different stakeholder groups participating in the model, it was suggested by many that the technical sector should be considered more often for consultation, as they have the necessary expertise for ICT development. The start-up community should also be encouraged to participate in the consultation process, as they are often the growth and innovation drivers within the countries.

Particularly from the side of civil society, it was suggested that nation states should not only acknowledge and allow their involvement in policy matters, but also support and facilitate their active participation, including through funding as appropriate. This was especially noted as essential in the area of Child Online Safety, where cooperation and engagement with the relevant civil society groups and other expert organizations is strongly recommended, in order to enhance awareness among all governments.

As a general remark it was further noted that the Internet community should continue working towards bringing Broadband to the unconnected areas, as electronic services often compensate for the slow development of other services and infrastructures within a country, as for example in the areas of education and health.

Some expressed doubts on the general effectiveness of the multi-stakeholder model, in particularly with regard to its connection with the every-day Internet experience of the average user, which is often not tackled in the Internet-related meetings; as well as whether current models of global stakeholder engagement truly enable representative participation of all stakeholders. The complete Town Hall Meeting discussion is available [online](#).

## 5. ITU Online Crowdsourcing Platform



### 5.1. Discussion

The online component of the Secretary General's Informal Consultations was facilitated by the ITU crowdsourcing platform specifically developed to gather ideas and promote collaboration and knowledge sharing. This platform offers the opportunity for anyone to participate in the dialogue on the Role of Governments in Internet Governance, thus potentially opening the discussion to a much broader audience compared to the other two formats. The informal Online Consultation on the Role of Governments was launched on 15 October 2013.

The submission process is direct and simple, allowing also the contributors to submit their comments anonymously, if they wish to. The contributions were published on the website immediately after their submission and are publicly available for anyone to read and comment on in the comment section at the bottom of every submission. This feature gives the consultation an interactive character, as individuals can engage into discussions, explain their thought process, provide arguments for their views and mobilize others to join the community and contribute to the debate.

Contributors were called to submit their views on the following questions:

**Question 1:** What is the role of governments in the multistakeholder model of the Internet?

**Question 2:** How can governments improve their interaction with other stakeholders?

Due to the short period available since its launch and the demonstrated interest of the youth community in the topic, the platform will remain open for submissions after the third meeting of the

Council Working Group on International Internet-related public policy issues (CWG-Internet) on 11-12 November 2013, offering the opportunity for more interested parties to share their views.

## 5.2 Key findings

The essence of the online discussion on the role of governments in Internet governance seemed to reiterate some of the views, which were brought to the table during the two physical meetings.

The role of governments was recognized as a transparent and neutral moderator of the pursuits of all other beneficiaries of the world wide web; and also as a regulator, who promotes and ensures the continuous interconnectivity of local and global networks, while accepting and considering the inputs of the wider community in their decision making processes.

Some of the online contributors further considered the Internet as a global initiative, beyond specific governments and constituencies, and called for a focus of the governments' direct involvement in Internet governance on combatting illegal activities performed online (e.g. child pornography, trafficking etc).

With regards to cybercrime and cybersecurity, the requirement was recognized for sovereign states not to act in isolation, but combine their efforts, in the context of all international institutions, in order to develop an agreed set of international legal provisions to deal with cyber malpractice of any sort.

It was further noted that there is often an understanding gap between the developed and developing world in terms of the real dimension of cyber threats and the importance of cybersecurity, causing the latter to often be not adequately responsive in times of emergency.

Consumer protection was further identified as an area where the governments could play a role. An active role of national governments working towards standardisation of e-commerce rules could thus be considered beneficial. In addition, it was suggested that consumer representatives should be given the opportunity to participate in the national and international debate on the Internet, as their interests are often at stake due to the current e-commerce practice.

The work of the governments towards connecting rural areas and thus involving citizens in remote areas in e-government services was also viewed as important.

In terms of the government's interaction with other stakeholders, the online contributors strongly suggested that increased transparency and the creation of multi-stakeholder fora at national and international levels for a productive view and information exchange, constitute mandatory requirements for the operationalization of the governmental role in Internet governance. In the context of ITU, there was also a suggestion for Member States to agree on making working documents publicly available, in order to increase transparency of the international processes.

The complete list of contributions and comments received can be viewed online at:

<http://ideas.itu.int/>

## 6. Conclusion

In view of all the above, this Informal Consultation has been a fruitful one, bringing in new perspectives and reiterating some of the existing ones. The participation of a significant variety of stakeholders in all three applied formats has shown the global interest in Internet public policy,

especially among the much promising youth community, and demonstrated that the dialogue should be opened to more voices, more frequently.

Within the different panels of discussion, there was a general agreement that the governments have an important role to play in the multi-stakeholder model of the Internet by establishing the necessary regulatory frameworks and providing the legal instruments for the online protection of their citizens. Security and combat against illegal online activities constitute further key areas where governments' involvement is vital for the smooth function of the Internet. Furthermore, governments should continue working on helping connect the remote and unconnected areas of the globe, allowing more people to become an active part of the online community and benefit from its vast opportunities.

In doing so, governments are expected to safeguard fundamental rights, such as privacy and freedom of expression, as well as providing the necessary awareness and education to more vulnerable user groups (e.g children, persons with disabilities, people unfamiliar with technology etc.) for an efficient and safe use of the online environment.

As a recognized contributor to the Internet governance model, governments were further encouraged to assume their leading role and use their convening power for the operationalization of the multi-stakeholder model of the Internet, while also acknowledging the role of other stakeholders and facilitating their involvement and experience sharing in the several national processes. In this process, it was considered important to recognize the social, financial and cultural differences between the various countries and the impact that these can have on the implementation of the multi-stakeholder model at a national level.

The views and suggestions captured in this document constitute a valuable resource for the Council Working Group to consider in its deliberations on topic of the Role of Governments in the Multi-Stakeholder Model of Internet Governance.

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