the Internet is for
everyone

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Internet Governance

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Content:

- Background and context.
- The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)
- The Internet Governance Forum (IGF)
- Enhanced cooperation.
- What is at stake?
- The future of multi-stakeholder cooperation.

Carl Bildt:

"It would be profoundly dangerous to now set up an international mechanism, controlled by governments, to take over the running of the Internet. Not only would this play into the hands of regimes bent on limiting the freedom that the Internet can bring, it also risks stifling innovation and ultimately endangering the security of the system."

(IHT, 10 October 2005)

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The Internet – the backbone of globalization

- The Internet creates unprecedented opportunities...
- ...but also challenges and problems on a global scale.
- The Internet has no borders.
- Whenever there are global problems = calls for global solutions.
- The UN is the place to find global solution (e.g. climate change).
- Is there a need for a global solution for the Internet?

Internet governance – or form follows function

- The Internet is a distributed technology.

- …a network of networks based on voluntary cooperation.

- Value added at the edges (innovation without permission).

- Internet governance arrangements are based on this underlying technology.

- Nobody is in charge and everybody works together in a bottom-up collaboration.

- This is known as the Internet Ecosystem.

- It is diametrically opposed to traditional forms of government-led top-down cooperation in Intergovernmental Organizations.

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WSIS

WSIS 2003: Clash of two visions:
-        Classical intergovernmental cooperation vs. multistakeholder cooperation.
-        Compromise: WGIG. Mandate to "investigate and make proposals for action".

WSIS Principles

- The management of the Internet should be multilateral, transparent and democratic.

- Open to interpretation: what does it mean?

- Traditional IGO cooperation vs. bottom-up multistakeholder co-operation?

Outcome of WSIS-II

-	All parties "equally happy".
-	Existing institutions confirmed.
-	Process continues.
-	Agreed texts sufficiently ambiguous to allow everybody to claim victory.

The Economist:

- "**A peace of sorts – no one controls the Internet, but many are determined to try**"
- "America is able to maintain its formal power over the addresses through ICANN largely because it does not exercise much in reality."
- "Its largely hands-off approach has worked remarkably well."

Internet Governance

- WSIS adopted a broad definition of Internet Governance ("more than naming and addressing");

- identified a broad range of public policy issues;

- proposed a "new space for dialogue" (=IGF);

- proposed further internationalization of Internet governance arrangements.

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Main conclusion:
Internet Governance needs to be based on Multistakeholder Cooperation

Multistakeholder cooperation between:

-Governments

-Intergovernmental organizations

-Internet institutions (Academic and Technical Communities)

-Private Sector

-Civil Society

Roles of stakeholders

- Different roles for different stakeholders.

- Governments are the 'decision makers', but…

- …decisions need to be based on solid understanding of issues.

- Need for dialogue between private sector, civil society, the technical community and governments.

- Governments need to signal issues of concern.

- Other stakeholders need to advise on feasibility and consequences of envisaged solutions.

Important cornerstones

WSIS recognizes:

- Academic and technical communities as a new stakeholder group.
- Importance of a multistakeholder approach at all levels – national, regional, global.
- Role of private sector and technical community as a driver of innovation in the development of the Internet.

Tunis Agenda

Recognizes that "existing arrangements (…) have worked effectively" but…

…there is room for improvement.

Two pronged decision:

- WSIS invites UNSG to "convene a new forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue";

- WSIS recognizes "need for enhanced cooperation to enable governments, on an equal footing, to carry out their roles and responsibilities".

Open questions

- Meaning of "enhanced cooperation"…

  - reform within existing institutions?

  - reform debate outside existing institutions ?

- Relationship between "enhanced cooperation" and IGF?

Post WSIS Internet governance

- Mandate to UNSG to convene a "forum for public policy dialogue" – the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

  What is the IGF?

  Easier to define what it is not…:

  …not a UN Conference;

  …not a new organization;

  …not a decision-making body;

  …no defined membership.

  == >widely divergent expectations among stakeholders.

  In essence: the IGF is a platform to discuss public policy issues related to the Internet.

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What is the IGF about?

- IGF provides a space for a structured policy dialogue on Internet related public policy issues.
- IGF provides a platform for sharing best practices at national and regional levels.
- IGF provides a neutral meeting place for all relevant institutions – IGOs and 'Internet institutions'.
- IGF helps build trust and confidence among all Internet users

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Importance of process

- Process is as important as substance – process was **the** major issue in WSIS negotiations.
- Process from the conception of the IGF aimed to be in line with WSIS:
    - "open and inclusive";
    - "full and active participation of all stakeholders".
- IGF built on WGIG and developed a process that allowed all stakeholders to participate on an equal footing in open consultations.

Soft governance model

- Based on the convening power of the UN.

- IGF has no power of redistribution.

- IGF has the power of recognition:

  - can identify issues of concern;

  - can draw attention to an issue;

  - can put an issue on the agenda of international cooperation.

- Example: multilingualism and IDN:

  - IGF did not take any decision, but highlighted the urgency many non English speaking Internet users attach to this issue.

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IGF Methodology

- Exchange of information.

- Sharing of best practices.

- Think globally, act locally.

- No one size fits all solution.

- Solutions adapted to the needs of each country.

- Emerging interest in creating national and regional IGFs.

The IGF Mandate

- IGF original mandate was for 5 years, subject to review.
- UN Secretary-General was requested to hold "formal consultations with IGF participants on the desirability of a continuation of the Forum."
- Consultations took place at the 4th IGF Meeting in Sharm EL Sheikh in 2009.
- Based on consultations, Secretary-General recommended extension of IGF mandate by another 5 years.
- UN General Assembly in 2010 decided to extend the IGF mandate, "with improvements".

What is at stake?

- Athens, Rio, Hyderabad, Sharm, Vilnius and Nairobi confirmed the value of a multi-stakeholder dialogue:

- Non-governmental stakeholders add substance and provide a reality check.

- The IGF is the only multi-stakeholder space in a UN context. (All other UN bodies follow UN procedures.)

- UN procedures are made for Member States. The participation of non-governmental stakeholders (as observers) depends on Member States' approval.

The future of multistakeholder cooperation

-   The IGF has validated multi-stakeholder cooperation in a UN setting.

-   The IGF is the best bet to defend the distributed, bottom-up and collaborative nature of existing Internet governance arrangements.

-   Recent proposals by India and China, Russia,Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to set up new UN bodies undermine the multi-stakeholder principle.

-   'Enhanced cooperation' needs to be carried out in existing institutions – creating 'government only' bodies goes against the spirit of the Tunis Agenda.