Internet Governance Observations and Recommendations From Members of the Internet Technical Community

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Abstract

Developed by members of the Internet technical community, this contribution supports the view that the technical viability of the global Internet can only be preserved if the current Internet governance discussions lead to a consensus that preserves the essential principles that have promoted the development of the Internet since its inception ? the open and inclusive process for developing Internet protocols and standards, the impartial stewardship of Internet naming and addressing resources, and the decentralized cooperation and collaboration of network operators around the globe.As the Internet evolves in the future, its continued security, stability, accessibility and usefulness will grow to be even more important to support most critical aspects of human activity. These recommendations are a contribution to this effort, based upon the Internet technical community?s long term and intensive involvement in the technical development, deployment and operation of the Internet.

Document

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List of organizations and individuals who have endorsed this statement: http://www.internetcollaboration.org/ig-recommendations-itcg/

Context

The Internet technical community consists of individuals and organizations from around the world that understand the global Internet as a complex interaction of technology, standards, implementation, operation and application. They bring this expertise when working with governments, national and international organizations, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and private sector entities to maintain a technically viable Internet that can also respond to societal needs. While participants have a wide range of missions and roles to play, the Internet technical community shares a **common culture that is grounded in a clear understanding of the unique technical characteristics of the Internet.** These characteristics are essential to the Internet's past, present, and future success as a platform for advancing the economic and social well-being of all of its users.

In a remarkably short period of time, the Internet has evolved from a research effort to test the then-new theories of computer networking to a powerful, pervasive, and now indispensable tool for global communication, business innovation, government, social networking and the activities of daily life. Even those who were responsible for the technical choices that provided the foundation for that evolution have different perspectives on how much of today's Internet and its impact were anticipated and intentional, and how much was fortunate and unplanned. Regardless of how this history is interpreted, many of the **early technology and architecture choices** that created the Internet that we know today were made as integral, original elements of the network itself. They remain essential to the Internet as a complex, multi-dimensional system. In particular, the network operates with only the minimal central authority required for essential coordination, allowing for the autonomy and growth of constituent networks.

To avoid compromising the Internet's technical core functions and processes, the policy debates of Internet governance would benefit from being informed by the experience and insight of those who have been directly responsible for developing and operating it. The **principles that have promoted and sustained the development of the Internet** since its inception — the open and inclusive process for developing Internet protocols and standards, the impartial stewardship of Internet naming and addressing resources, and the decentralized cooperation and collaboration of network operators around the globe — are the Internet technical community's critical contribution to these debates.

The **Internet technical community is an indispensable stakeholder** and contributor to the global Internet governance dialogue. The organizations and individuals in this community have had over four decades of cumulative experience in creating, improving, deploying, and managing the Internet in almost all countries of the world, under a wide variety of legal, administrative, and regulatory regimes. We are concerned that the technical viability of the global Internet is at risk unless the current Internet governance discussions lead to a consensus that preserves the essential principles that have contributed to making the Internet we have today.

The impact of different governance regimes on the Internet as a robust and remarkably generative connectivity infrastructure may not be evident to those who are not familiar with its history, do not have an expert understanding of its technology, or have not had direct experience with its deployment and operation. As a contribution to the global Internet governance dialogue, the following recommendations are made by individuals and organizations to whom, by virtue of their involvement in the technical development and deployment of the Internet those potential impacts are evident.

Recommendations

The openness and transparency of Internet policy and technical development processes are intrinsic to the success of the Internet itself, which depends on a global and interoperable fabric of information and communications technology and the people who operate and use it. We recognize that the multi-stakeholder model of decision-making, articulated around the following principles and practices, has proven to be the most effective model of governance for the Internet's technical development, and has the potential to enhance and reinforce future Internet evolution:

A. Open and inclusive participation: Participation in Internet technical development and operation, including technical standards development and allocation of the Internet number resources, is open to all interested and informed parties. This has been key for the Internet's success. Participation of all interested and informed stakeholders in

governance processes is necessary to ensure that outcomes are accepted as legitimate and that solutions are effective.

B. Consensus-based: The development of Internet technical standards and processes is done on the basis of open consensus. This allows for all views to be considered, and agreement to be found across a range of interests. Internet governance decisions should also be grounded on open, transparent, and collaborative work. Policy-making processes should be informed by individual and collective expertise and practical experience, and decisions should be arrived at by open consensus rather than as a result of a voting process.

C. Permission-less innovation: The remarkable growth of the Internet, the fostering of innovation and its uses follows directly from the open model of Internet connectivity and standards development. No central authority should be established, as part of any future Internet governance arrangement that would constrain or regulate the ability of individuals or organizations to create and use new standards, applications, or services.

D. Collective stewardship and empowerment: Strong notions of equity and fairness among participants mark the technical development of the Internet. The success of Internet development and operation is secured by the recognition of respective roles and responsibilities by Internet community members who cooperate, respectful of each organization's autonomy, integrity, and processes. To ensure the continued security, stability, and resilience of the Internet, governance structures and principles must be developed in an environment of strong cooperation among all stakeholders, each contributing a perspective informed by their respective roles and responsibilities.

E. Transparency: Internet technical standards bodies and operating entities function in a transparent way. They provide advance public notice of proposed activities, which describes the scope of work to be undertaken and the conditions for participation. The principle of transparency assures that all interested stakeholders can directly observe the work being done and have access to its results.

F. Pragmatic and evidence-based approach: In the technical world, solutions are chosen and defined based on technical merit, judged according to the collective expertise of all participants. Processes are driven by the ability to devise practical solutions to concrete problems, based upon informed discussion. We observe that lack of clarity in emerging issues in Internet governance results in incomplete agreement about how to address the problem. In this spirit, Internet governance discussions and debates must be informed by and depend upon objective and empirical information.

G. Voluntary adoption: Internet standards and processes are voluntarily adopted by network operators, equipment manufacturers, and other infrastructure participants, and their success is determined in the marketplace. In the realm of Internet technical policy development, the principle of voluntarism means that success is determined by users and the public at large rather than by any central authority.

As the Internet evolves in the future, its continued security, stability, accessibility and usefulness will grow to be even more important to support most critical aspects of human activity. The above recommendations are our contribution to this effort, based upon the Internet technical community's long term and intensive involvement in the technical development, deployment and operation of the Internet.