# PIR Center Policy Proposals: "GLOBAL INTERNET GOVERNANCE AS A NEW COMMON AGENDA FOR RUSSIA, BRAZIL AND BRICS STATES

- Area: COMBINED INTERNET GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES AND ROADMAP
- Entitled by: Oleg Demidov
- Region: Russia
- Organization: PIR Center
- Sector: Academia
- Keywords: secretariat, convention, internet governance education

## Abstract

The global agenda of internet governance needs greater contribution from Russia, Brazil and other rising giants from the developing world - and namely the BRICS states. The way to achieve it include:1. Establishment of a permanent Secretariat on the basis of the IGF mechanism to handle internet governance issues on a really permanent basis.2. Elaboration of a Set of Principles of Global Internet Governance in the form of a UN Convention. 3. Launch of a multistakeholder global technical research initiative to determine whether governmental e-surveillance is a bug or a feature of current internet governance architecture. 4. Launch of educational programs on internet governance in BRICS states and other developing world in order to raise general awareness and the level of decision-making in the field of internet governance.

## Document

Today there is no need to stress the fact that BRICS states have become on the most massive and at the same time the most rapidly growing segments of the global internet community. Enough to mention that in 2013 total number of internet users in BRICS states exceeded 700 mln (or 30% of the world's internet audience) while still experiencing a meteor growth ranging from 10% in China to 41%. The total contribution of the internet

sector to BRICS economies in 2013 topped $500 bln, and yet the forecasts say it will double by 2015. In the nearest future BRICS will represent the most numerous and active part of the “digital society” of XXI century – and an

At the say time, the BRICS states are still underrepresented and passive in the field of global internet governance and its key trends including transformation of the global internet governance architecture. The debates conducted at the World Conference on International Telecommunications of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in December 2012 in Dubai, UAE proved that the developing countries mostly contribute to the agenda-shaping as secondary actors which support the positions of some key stakeholders – Russia, USA or the EU. But even more important is the *rising giants* from BRICS and the developing world still share a disproportionally small degree of participation in the process of forging and revision of technological principles and foundations of the global internet governance – and the Global Net itself.

Today, when the global internet governance is undergoing the period of a fundamental transformation the emerging leaders of the developing world have a unique *window of opportunities* which should be used to smooth these disproportions and to leverage non-Western participation in the global internet governance to a new level.

In this regard PIR Center has drafted Policy Recommendations on Global Internet Governance as a New Common Agenda for BRICS States which we are delighted to present at the *NETMundial* meeting.

1. The number of issues and volume of high-level debates on vital internet governance issues requires establishment of an institutionalized global and multistakeholder framework which would be able to function in a format close to 24/7/365.

In this regard, the mechanism and mandate of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) established in 2006 following the 2005 WSIS Tunis Agenda might be developed and transformed in order to establish a permanent IGF Secretariat working on multistakeholder basis on the key goals and issues in the global internet governance agenda.

The BRICS States could not only provide full diplomatic support to this initiative and promote it at coming global internet governance debates (such as High-Level Meetings in the framework of the WSIS *[World Summit on the Information Society]* +10 Process) or the Global Multistakeholder Meeting on the Future of the Internet Governance in San-Paulu, Brazil) but also take a leading role in technical and administrative work on establishment of the Secretariat. Moreover, they might bring up the initiative of hosting it on a permanent basis – e.g. in Brazil, South Africa or Russia, which might be a proper reflecting the increasing role of the rising powers in the ICT and internet governance agenda.

2. The key goal of such Permanent IGF Secretariat in a short-term and middle-term prospect might include elaboration of a Set of Principles of Global Internet Governance. It should be perceived as a milestone document summarizing the updated vision of all stakeholders on the global internet governance agenda and reflecting the major changes in this area since the adoption of the Okinawa Charter on Global Information Society of 2000.

However, unlike the Okinawa Charter, the new Set of Principles should be perceived as a next and unprecedented step in this field – a codification of the principles of internet governance which might be adopted in the form of the UN Convention or a Treaty. Thus, the idea is to negotiate and state the core principles of the global stakeholder interaction in the form of a legally binding act – which makes a great distance from the declarative status of the Okinawa Charter. The document would acknowledge and inherit already existing and widely accepted basic principles like the multi-stakeholder approach, network neutrality, openness, integrity, universality of the internet, etc.

Not going beyond far determination and postulation of key universally acknowledged principles of global internet governance the document might be regarded as a loose analogue of the *Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies* adopted on 19 December 1966.

There is no need to say that BRICS states can't and should not be the only initiators and conveyers of this process since it is obviously a global initiative requiring contribution from all stakeholders including all members of the UN. However, the new leaders from BRICS – each of them including Russia, China, Brazil, India and China – might take the lead of this process, thus making it more oriented towards the developing world stressing the changes in the global composition of stakeholders since the adoption of the Okinawa Charter and past WSIS Agendas.

One BRICS member should be specially mentioned here, and it's Russia. With its huge experience in global debates on the internet governance and cyber security issues which goes back to 1998 Russia has much to share with its BRICS partners and might lead them in implementation of this initiative.

3. Another *Big Issue* which should be included in the mandate and Strategic Plan of the Permanent IGF Secretariat is determination of the roots and reasons behind the massive governmental surveillance in the internet. Revelations made by Edward Snowden in 2013 made the global technical internet community and policy makers face a fundamental question: is systemic and global governmental surveillance in the Net a *bug,* or a *feature* of the existing global internet governance model? The answer might imply very concrete and far-reaching consequences on the technical level.

Acknowledging massive e-surveillance a direct consequence of systemic malfunction of the internet architecture in its present day form might imply far-reaching consequences on the technical layer. Let alone policy makers and the issues of trust in the international relations, this conclusion might trigger significant revision and update of the technical backbones of the internet. This includes the work of basic internet protocols (HTTP, TCP/IP) and traffic encryption standards. Such ideas already were announced at the recent meeting of the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) which took place in November 2013 in Vancouver, Canada.

BRICS states could facilitate the establishment and work of a Research Committee on Fundamental Vulnerabilities and Risks of the Internet Governance Architecture in the framework of the IGF Permanent Secretariat - or some other UN-based multistakeholder framework. The work of the Committee should be aimed at production and discussion of a Report with recommendations to international policy makers and the global technical internet community (Internet Society (ISOC), IETF, ICANN, Internet Architecture Board (IAB), etc.).

It is important to use this initiative to promote inclusive and open character of activities in the field of exploring the internet governance architecture and its potential drawbacks. The Western states and Western stakeholders should not be driven out of the scope of the research and preparation of the recommendations otherwise the result would only contribute to balkanization and politicization of the internet governance. Hence, this initiative should incorporate or at least take into account both the outcomes of the Global Multistakeholder Meeting in Brazil and the activities of the two-year Global Commission on Internet Governance established in the end of 2013 and chaired by Sweden's Foreign Minister *Carl Bildt.*

4. Finally, if we go back to the thesis about underrepresentation of BRICS states in the global technical community and the internet governance policy-shaping process, we can’t help mention the need to nurture technical experts and internet governance leaders in our countries.

In this regard, BRICS needs its own non-governmental Expert Council on Technical Issues of Internet Governance which would bring together technical experts from BRICS states and bridge them with such bodies as IETF, IAB, ISOC and others.

But a more important task is the launch of training and educational programs on internet governance, which would incorporate not only technical but also legal and political aspects of this agenda. Educational programs, higher educational courses should be not only supported with money and expertise, but also incorporated in the academic programmes of state universities and other institutions of higher education. In a middle-term and strategic prospect this will contribute to a greater contribution and a louder voice of BRICS experts in the work of IETF, IAB and other organizations shaping the future of

the Net on technological level.

Strengthening of BRICS-ICANN cooperation is another perspective step in this direction. In fact the process has already started – the first steps were made with the decision to hold the Global Meeting in San Paulu negotiated between the Brazilian President Ms. Dilma Rousseff and the ICANN President Fadi Chehade in Fall 2013. Even before that ICANN launched dialogue on strategic cooperation with China and announced opening of its regional office in Beijing in 2012. In February 2014 ICANN President also made a three-day visit to China where his negotiations with three Chinese Ministers further strengthened this strategic dialogue and cooperation. Russia now looks “a missed link” in this chain of emerging cooperation between ICANN and BRICS states, and the BRICS format might become an optimal framework for Moscow to advance its level of dialogue with ICANN.

Finally, BRICS analogue of the Internet Governance Forum might be organized to provide a framework of cooperation between BRICS and ICANN (and ISOC) and provide greater internal integrity of the positions of the BRICS states towards key issues of global internet governance. This step might be implemented in 2015 already.

***

PIR Center does not regard BRICS and its activities as a *panacea* for the problems existing in the field of global internet governance. Neither have we considered global internet governance to be a future backbone of the BRICS format.

However, we feel that ICT agenda might significantly strengthen the added-value of the Forum in one of the most topical areas of international relations and at the same time strengthen BRICS identity and integrity. Transborder nature of the internet makes the BRICS format free of its most serious weaknesses such as clash of regional interests and mismatch of geographically determined agendas. Instead the Net brings our states and stakeholders together in its digital reality, and this is a chance not to miss for BRICS.