COAI Proposal - NETmundial-Global Multistakeholder Meeting on the Future of Internet Governance

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- Entitled by: Vikram Tiwathia
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Abstract

The Internet in India has only taken 3 years to grow from a subscribers? base of 100 million to 200 million. Mobile Internet is going to be the game changer for Internet in India. Multi-stakeholder or multi-lateral - two words encapsulating diametrically opposite views on internet governance stands at the heart of a raging debate across the globe. COAI, which represents the largest industry association and serves nearly 800 million mobile subscribers, believes policies that shape the Internet impact not only the development of the technologies themselves, but also the realization of internationally agreed human rights, social equity and interdependence, cultural concerns, and both social and economic development. Our vision is that Internet governance should be inclusive, people centered and development oriented. Any policy framework for the Internet must support openness and connectivity.

Document

NETmundial-Global Multistakeholder Meeting on the Future of Internet Governance
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COAI Proposal

A. **Internet Governance**

1. The phenomenal growth of the Internet has facilitated individual empowerment and access to information, goods and services across borders; it has lowered entry barriers and supported the rapid development of small and medium sized enterprises; it has generated jobs for millions of people. In sum, the Internet has led to significant benefits to the society and the economy.

2. The Internet in India has only taken 3 years to grow from a subscribers' base of 100 million to 200 million. This has been catalysed by the growth of wireless telecom networks in India. On the back of higher adoption of mobile devices as a means to access the Internet according to the I-Cube 2013 report, the number of Internet users in India is expected to reach 243 million by June 2014. India is also expected to overtake the US as the second largest Internet base in the world by the same time. The robust growth is a result of fast growing Internet ecosystem with a multitude of local and global players and a thriving Internet economy.

3. Mobile Internet is going to be the game changer for Internet in India. Compared to 0.4 percent mobile Internet users in 2012, the penetration has grown to 2.4 percent, indicating a substantial growth in the mobile Internet user penetration levels. The National Telecom Policy (NTP) 2012 envisages broadband penetration to reach 600 million connections by 2020, this implies adding 7 million broadband connections each month from now onwards. According to an analysis conducted by McKinsey, the Internet economy in India could grow to $100 billion by 2015 to average 2.8 to 3.3 per cent of GDP, which could facilitate 22 million jobs, if India follows an inclusive path of Internet expansion.

4. Internet governance can be considered as the development and application of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programs that shape the evolution and use of the Internet. It applies to activities as diverse as the coordination of technical standards, the operation of critical infrastructure, development, regulation, and legislation of Internet. There is a need to develop a coherent strategy for Internet governance ensuring that difficult trade-offs between competing interests, as well as between distinct public values, are managed in a consistent, transparent and accountable manner that accurately reflects internet users priorities.

5. Multi-stakeholder or multi-lateral - two words encapsulating diametrically opposite views on internet governance stands at the heart of a raging debate across the globe. Multi-stakeholder control over the world wide web means parties other than governments, which include the tech community, academia, businesses and civil society. In a multi-lateral arrangement, only the governments will be the decision-makers and every other stakeholder barring the state, is relegated to a purely advisory role. Simply put, the choice is between total state control over the internet or a more democratic set-up where other sections of society are also represented.

6. Civil society and businesses are concerned that being relegated to an advisory role rather than a decision-making one could lead to disregarding or relegating their positions to a secondary level. Also with the internet being enhanced largely by private investment and individual demand it is important to safeguard their interests to enable sustained investment interest by potential investors who will enable the enhancement in networks providing access and services on the internet.

7. The internet architecture has traditionally been controlled by the US. The demand for a more democratised set-up, where other countries also have a voice, started in early 2000s. In 2005, a consensus document, Tunis Agenda, had been signed under the aegis of the UN. It laid out much of the terms of the debate around internet governance, including the focus on enhanced cooperation and the need for a multi-stakeholder model.
8. The internet architecture has had a significant bering on the leadership of the US in this regard. The demand for a more democratised set-up, where other countries also have a voice, started in early 2000s. In 2005, a consensus document, Tunis Agenda, had been signed under the aegis of the UN. It laid out much of the terms of the debate around internet governance, including the focus on enhanced cooperation and the need for a multi-stakeholder model.

9. In 2011, India put forward a detailed proposal for a multi-lateral UN body that was widely criticised by activists and business bodies at home. In Geneva, Government of India's response to a question on implementing "enhanced cooperation" in a WGEC questionnaire stated: "A suitable multilateral, transparent and democratic mechanism must be created where governments, on an equal footing, may carry out their roles and responsibilities in international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet and public policy issues pertaining to coordination and management of critical Internet resources, in consultation with all other stakeholders." This position has been crticised by cvil society and businesses.

10. A critical factor in the success of the Internet has been the multi-stakeholder framework and open access. In recent days, however, there is a growing concern about the excessive influence of one country over some of the internet governance mechanisms. Governments are coming to terms with their new role in the internet and social media space. The Tunis Agenda 2005 recognizes a role for multi-stakeholders such as government, businesses, civil society, technical community, academia and media.

11. Several meetings are expected to be held in 2014 including WSIS+10 Review (February), UN CSTD Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation (February), the Brazil conference “The Global Multistakeholder Meeting on the Future of Internet Governance” (April), ICANN High Level Meeting (June), UN Internet Governance Forum, Istanbul, Turkey (September) and ITU Plenipot in Busan, South Korea (October – November). Much of the discussion in these meetings is about initiating dialogue on core internet values and principles that must govern the internet at a national and global level.