Towards Enhancing Multi-stakeholderism For All

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Abstract

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Document

Internet Governance Initiatives: Towards Enhancing Multi-stakeholderism For All

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Persian IGF Background:

The Persian Internet Governance Forum (PersianIGF) was launched by IJMA3 and Tehran ICT Guild (TIG) in 2013. Its purpose is to provide a multi-stakeholder venue where different stakeholder groups discuss and exchange information, viewpoints and ideas about current and emerging Internet governance issues. PersianIGF is a thematic forum and strives to reach out to the Persian speaking community in Afghanistan, Iran and Tajikistan as well as the Persian speaking diaspora in other countries.

Roadmap for the Further Evolution of the Internet Governance Ecosystem

Internet governance literature advocates the use of a multi-stakeholder model. It is one of the main means for maintaining an open Internet which facilitates social, cultural, and economic development. However, multi-stakeholderism is in its infancy especially in developing countries. Many developing countries striving to democratize their processes have established state-centric approaches. The existence of different stakeholders may be in various stages of evolution in many countries. Introducing new models of governance may need discussion and examination to create understanding and awareness.

In such regions, civil society and other non-state actors, including business, NGOs, etc. may be just emerging, or simply yet to make their interest in articipation in a multi-stakeholder process known. This creates unique challenges that must start with awareness and outreach. Care should be taken to enable weak and fragile stakeholder groups to contribute to global collaboration on Internet governance decision making. In the absence of such stakeholder groups, representative expert individuals should be afforded the opportunity to participate in the Internet governance process.

Capacity building programs, regional, national and thematic Internet governance initiatives

can help with enhancing the experts' and stakeholder groups' abilities to participate in these processes. Just as the Internet connects the world, such initiatives connect truly global constituencies to the important work of Internet governance. Their voices are important but it is the responsibility of the wider multi-stakeholder community to help them become engaged, and supported in participation.

Enhancing the voice of new and emerging stakeholder groups and individuals in Internet governance especially helps developing countries to participate in and benefit from economic and social opportunities that the Internet provides. The Internet is a means for social change and economic growth and the multi-stakeholder Internet governance is a key tool for its realization.

Multi-stakeholders governance cannot be truly implemented when the stakeholder groups representation criteria is vague. This would lead to weakening the regional and national actors and create a power imbalance

Evolution of new participants in stakeholder groups:

Flexible procedural mechanisms that can identify the stakeholder groups and their representatives and bring onboard new participants should continue to be a core activity to strengthen the IGF. Awareness of the need to create and support such mechanisms will benefit the IGF, and also different regional and national Internet governance initiatives. The procedures however should be flexible to preserve the evolution of stakeholder groups and Internet governance and maintain its inclusiveness.

Some of the core characteristics of the procedures are as follows:

· The stakeholder groups are divided into governments, private sector, academics, technical community, civil society and international organizations. [1] While this has been an accepted categorization it can also limit diversity and equal participation in Internet governance process. When a stakeholder group is weak in certain region the more flexible procedures could address this issue by recognizing the limitations and looking for other existing actors that Internet governance have an impact on their social and economic development. This may also lead to the evolution of the broadening of the general categorization of stakeholder groups.

· Procedural mechanisms that are implemented in global Internet governance initiatives should address the issue of power imbalance between national, regional and international stakeholder groups' representatives. The procedures should truly give the stage to all the actors equally. This is especially important for the regional and national private actors and civil society actors in developing countries that may have less access to resources in order to take part in the process.

· Allowing expert individuals to take part in the process without having to select a stakeholder group may represent an innovation that should be piloted in the upcoming IGF in Turkey, but also may be welcomed in national and regional IGF initiatives. This in the long term may result in the evolution of stakeholder groups and also allows for those countries that cannot relate to the main categorization of the general stakeholder groups to participate in the process. Moreover, it prevents non-genuine affiliation of organizations and individuals to specific stakeholder groups or multiple stakeholder groups.

· The Internet governance initiatives and other entities should consider the best practices that are used in emerging countries for empowering different stakeholder groups.

Openness, Economic Development and Multi-Stakeholder Fora

Maintaining an open, interconnected, and interoperable Internet is crucial for social, cultural, and economic development. Internet governance ecosystem should be able to efficiently maintain the openness of the Internet and consciously consider social and economic development as key goals. Strengthening the multistakeholder model in Internet governance eco system can support this. However, multi-stakeholder model should not only consider the global, regional and national Internet governance issues, but should also consider diverse viewpoints that cannot be categorized under the geographical indications. The openness of the Internet should not be a motto; concrete action plans should be drafted and implemented to achieve utmost openness of the Internet through a multi-stakeholder governance model.

For the upcoming NETMundial, the PersianIGF Initiative wishes to acknowledge the communication from the IGF MAG, that both noted the NETMundial Conference, and also supports welcoming inputs from the NETMundial Conference, along with other inputs, to report on and discuss their work at the IGF 2014 in Instanbul.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide inputs into the NETMundial Conference.

[1] TUNIS AGENDA FOR THE INFORMATION SOCIETY, WSIS 05/TUNIS/DOC/6(Rev. 1)-E, 2005.