Submission of the World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA)

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- Entitled by: Tim Conway
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Abstract

WITSA represents the global ICT sector. In 2014, the ICT sector and the Internet are one and the same. Both enable growing trade in information goods and services and, through cross-border data flows, underpin global economic, social and cultural development. The single, global Internet, not multiple national versions, enables this and must be preserved.WITSA supports the multistakeholder Internet governance model as the most effective means to maintaining the functionality, security and stability of the Internet, setting common goals and building shared solutions. Evolution of IG must enable enhancement of the speed, capacity, reach, access, interoperability and standardization of the Internet. These are critical guiding IG principles for any discussions about technical, governance or policy change and underline the roadmap for future IG development, which should evolve with technology, delivering access needs of developing nations, building capability and capacity.

Document

Summary

The World Information and Technology Alliance (WITSA) represents the global information and communications technologies (ICT) industry sector. The ICT sector and the Internet are now one and the same. Both enable growing trade in information goods and services and are the basis for 21st century commerce and communications, and central to global economic, social and development. Wherever it is available, the Internet provides, and must continue to provide, information that reduces gaps and inequalities in health and education. The single, global Internet, not multiple national versions, enables this, and must be preserved, extended and enhanced.

Ensuring and maintaining the functionality, security and stability of the Internet, enhancing its speed, capacity, reach, access, interoperability and standardization are critical guiding principles for NETmundial discussions about technical, governance or policy change and are the rationale for Internet governance (IG), centrally underlining any roadmap for the further development of the IG ecosystem.

The Multistakeholder model is proven effective in setting common goals, identifying issues and building shared solutions. Without politicization, the model can evolve with technology, delivering access needs of developing nations, encouraging participation from their non-government sectors, building capability and capacity.

Privacy and data protection are important issues subject to varying treatments in different jurisdictions. National action and cross-jurisdictional cooperation may be necessary to protectprivacy, standardize data protection regimes, build transparent legal frameworks covering access to data, and strengthen the rule of law to investigate and enforce penalties for violations, maintaining trust and confidence. Change must be undertaken carefully to avoid weakening either legitimate investigations or fundamental Internet capabilities, which equally affect trust and confidence

About WITSA

Founded in 1978, the World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA) is a leading consortium of ICT industry association members from over 80 countries/economies around the world, comprising industrialized and developing nations. (See map; an interactive map can be seen at http://ow.ly/ukg34) WITSA's members represent more than 90 per cent of the world ICT market. WITSA and its members are active participants in key Internet governance forums including the ICANN, WSIS follow-up and the IGF. ICT sector representatives play key roles in all key technical taskforces.

WITSA strongly supports an open, accessible and neutral Internet governed via effective, transparent multistakeholder oversight. (http://ow.ly/u2U9K) National/regional data localization and Internet regulation proposals will impede innovation based on cloud and mobile technologies that is otherwise growing rapidly, reducing economic growth, trade and social development, including that of the public sector (http://ow.ly/tV01N). Protection of data is important to all Internet users: privacy must be safeguarded online as it is offline; and cybersecurity education and transparent legal frameworks assure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of data, thus maintaining trust and confidence. (http://ow.ly/tUZQv)

(Placeholder - map: WITSA_members_2014.png)

Stakeholder Context

(Placeholder - map: Global_Internet_Time_of_Day.pdf)

The Internet is a product of information and communications technology and services. Each step of its development and growth – each innovation, new capability, and enhancement of function, speed and capability – is intrinsically linked to information technologies and services developed, and deployed globally. The ICT industry sector is a key stakeholder in the development and governance of the Internet, which in turn depends on the continuous advances generated by the ICT sector; the relationship is thus

a “virtuous circle”, and must remain so if the functional effectiveness and efficiency of the Internet are to continue to evolve.

This “virtuous circle” statement positions WITSA’s NETmundial contribution: governance arrangements for the Internet are *de facto* governance arrangements for many activities in the ICT sector; in considering any changes in governance arrangements, great care must be exercised to ensure strong incentives remain to ensure the ICT sector continues to innovate and flourish, in turn driving the digitization of economic, social and cultural activity to the benefit of all people. Internet governance arrangements directly affect trade in information goods and services; in the twenty first century, this trade significantly affects the economies of all nations. Therefore, enhancement of governance arrangements demands a comprehensive understanding of their extensive direct and indirect impact.

Internet Governance Principles

“Internet Governance” was given a working definition as part of the Tunis Agenda, which remains relevant today. One objective of the NETmundial meeting is to affirm this definition, ensuring all stakeholders understand what has been achieved, and continue to develop and apply “in their respective roles, … shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the Internet."

WITSA welcomes the *Principles for the Governance and Use of the Internet* , set out by CGI.br (http://ow.ly/uc7GL), and also acknowledges other principles from groups of stakeholders and looks forward to the discussion about the possibility of globally accepted principles. These should be reduced to high-level principles that are generally agreed to be of critical importance. Given the “virtuous circle” context above, and drawing on the CGI.br principles, WITSA ranks *Functionality, security and stability*, and *Standardization and interoperability* as primary, foundation Principles to be considered within an open, transparent Multistakeholder Governance framework. These are central to the ubiquitous nature of the Internet, and its accessibility; they provide the basis for Internet innovation, growth and development. It is WITSA’s submission that the other Principles set out by CGI.br rely on these critical, foundation principles.

WITSA therefore urges great caution in disturbing or changing governance arrangements, to avoid any actions that weaken functionality, security and stability, or reduce standardization and interoperability. Changes, if any, should instil greater trust and confidence in the Internet, and avert adverse reactions such as data localization, which will inhibit national development including the delivery of public services.

Roadmap for the Further Evolution of the Internet Governance Ecosystem

WITSA acknowledges that the evolution and growth of the Internet itself requires the evolution of Internet governance. This must not undermine the foundation Principles above. Nor should there be confusion of cause, effect, and remedy: data access and protection, which some participants may see as the underlying rationale for the NETmundial meeting, because of calls for localization of data. WITSA urges national governments to address data access and protection where necessary without inhibiting trade enabled by transborder data flows, and to work together on the cross-jurisdictional issues. (http://ow.ly/tUZQv) As stated previously, it is of paramount importance changes not undermine the ubiquity, performance and future development of the Internet.

WITSA supports the Multistakeholder model as the best mechanism to enable issues to be identified, and to build consensus solutions. There is merit in suggestions to decentralize some of these activities in order to enhance participation, cooperation and build capacity across all nations, and particularly by non-government stakeholders in developing nations.

Similarly, there is merit in the idea of globalizing Internet resources including IANA, as ICANN has recently proposed. This must be considered within Multistakeholder frameworks, with transparent processes and open discussion promoted equally within all ICANN constituencies. ICANN must remain accountable to all its stakeholders during this process, which should not be politicized; WITSA urges all stakeholders including governments to exercise restraint, and to facilitate balanced discussions that lead to consensus.

WITSA's comments supporting decentralization and globalization above do not represent any support for recent proposals suggesting unilateral or regional data localization. It is WITSA's view such proposals are regressive, and fundamentally inappropriate remedies to protect data and privacy. If implemented, these would undermine the very basis for the Internet, and impose significant global economic and social costs, and effects.