

Goals

ICANN79 | CF – At-Large Plenary Session 1: Internet Governance for the Sustainable Development Goals
Wednesday, March 6, 2024 – 1:15 to 2:30 SJU

MICHELLE DESMYTER: Hello, and welcome to the At-Large Plenary Session 1 Internet Governance for the Sustainable Development Goals. My name is Michelle DeSmyter and I'm a participation manager for this session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior.

During this session, questions or comments will only be read aloud if submitted within the Q&A pod which is located at the bottom of your Zoom Room. If you would like to speak during the session, please raise your hand Zoom. When called upon, virtual participants will be given permission to unmute in Zoom. Onsite participants will use a physical microphone to speak. Interpretation for this session will include English, French, and Spanish. Please state your name for the record and the language you will speak if speaking a language other than English. Please speak at a reasonable pace. And with that, I will hand the floor over to Pari Esfandiari, ALAC member.

PARI ESFANDIARI: Thank you very much. Welcome, everyone. And thank you for joining us on this beautiful day in San Juan, Puerto Rico. A warm welcome also extends to those joining us virtually from across the globe. My name is Pari Esfandiari, and I have the honor of moderating today's ALAC plenary session which zeroes in on a crucial subject, Internet

Note: The following is the output resulting from transcribing an audio file into a word/text document. Although the transcription is largely accurate, in some cases may be incomplete or inaccurate due to inaudible passages and grammatical corrections. It is posted as an aid to the original audio file, but should not be treated as an authoritative record.

Goals

Governance for the Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs. It's a multifaceted and complex landscape where ICANN plays a critical role since its mandate to ensure a stable and secure Internet. Infrastructure is foundational to achieving most SDGs. This topic also holds significant importance for ALAC as it champions the cause of end users who stand to gain the most from the sustainable, equitable, and thriving future envisioned by SDGs. With the 2030 Agenda swiftly approaching and the world notably lacking in its targets and with WSIS+20 offering opportunity to reimagine the framework for digital cooperation and to ensure it aligns with the evolving digital landscape and the SDGs, the urgency of this discussion cannot be overstated. As this distinguished panel highlights the upcoming high level WSIS+20 event, the summit of the future and the Global Digital Compact and WSIS+20 Review process presents critical junctures for aligning Internet governance with the goals of sustainable development.

As someone deeply passionate about both environmental sustainability and technology, I'm delighted to steer this conversation during ICANN79. To lay the groundwork for today's in-depth discussion, EURALO previously hosted a roundtable to provide a background on sustainable development and its intersection with Internet governance and discuss the ICANN environmental sustainability strategy which has been established as an objective for 2024 by ICANN's interim CEO, Sally Costerton.

Today we delve into the broader Internet governance framework and its capacity to prepare the SDGs forward amid rapid and at times disruptive innovations and evolving geopolitical landscape. Our

Goals

esteemed panelists equipped with vast knowledge and varied perspectives are posed to explore this complex context. To save time, I will skip introduction, but you will see the profile on the screen at the sort of the individual interventions. To facilitate our dialogue, I will post three rounds of questions to our speakers. After that, we will open the floor to questions from audience and online participants. As we conclude, there will be an opportunity for closing reflections from our panelists.

The objective of this session is to elevate awareness and foster an inclusive dialogue among a diverse group of stakeholders. The discussion will serve as a gateway to broader conversations about the future role of information and communication technology and its alignment with SDGs within the United Nations system, leading to WSIS+20 in 2025.

Now, the first round of question will focus on assessing the current landscape. Starting with Ambassador Gross, reflecting on your extensive experience, how has Internet governance evolved since the initial WSIS Summit, particularly in terms of supporting SDGs? Ambassador?

DAVID GROSS:

Well, thank you very much. And it's a great pleasure to be here and to be with everyone. Thank you very much for the invitation to participate on what I know will be an extraordinarily interesting panel discussion.

Goals

Of course, the question you've given me, I think, summarize quickly in about two or three days of explanation. Knowing that I only have about two minutes, let me just hit a couple of points. The World Summit on the Information Society, which was a heads of state UN meeting, which is as big a thing in the United Nations world as there is, was held in two phases, 2003 in Geneva, 2005 in Tunis. Then dictator Ben Ali was our host in 2005. I had the honor of being the head of delegation for all the prep comms, which were thousands of people, for a number of years, and then co-headed the U.S. delegation for the actual summits themselves. Interestingly, I think the purpose of the summits initially was to talk about development, which would lead you fairly quickly into talking about things like SDGs and the like. But unfortunately, from my perspective, it devolved very quickly away from the use of the Internet and technology for development purposes and became in a fairly typical fashion at the United Nations, in my view, a discussion about rights and responsibilities. And ultimately, it came down to a question about this organization, ICANN. I have to say that I was very firm over a lot of, enduring with a lot of turbulence, in ensuring that ICANN, the U.S. position was to ensure that ICANN continued on as a multistakeholder institution, without control by governments and the like. Ultimately, it was a very difficult fight. 2003, we were not able to resolve that. 2005, we did. The outcomes of that really were, in essence, a continuing independent ICANN, the creation of the Internet Governance Forum, which of course plays an important role with regard to SDGs today, and reaffirms the importance of the multistakeholder process for technology. Let me just sort of summarize and say that in terms of the SDGs, when we did the WSIS

Goals

back in 2003, 2005, we had the Millennium Development Goals which are a precursor to the SDGs. There were eight of those. And now we have in 2015, the SDGs. Last point I probably would make would be I was very disappointed when the SDGs were created, not because of their substance, which, of course, are extraordinarily important, but the failure to recognize the importance of technology and particularly the Internet initially in solving the problems that were identified.

Having said that, today, there's widespread recognition about the importance of the Internet and technology in meeting those goals. I think it's highly unlikely we will meet those goals by 2030. That's a widely held view, I think. One can always hope. But as we think about the future, the key will be how do we harness the incredible power of the Internet and technology to meet the development goals that the world has clearly identified? Thank you.

PARI ESFANDIARI:

Thank you very much. We now move to Ana Cristina des Neves. Throwing all your leadership insights, how well do the current Internet governance mechanisms are supporting SDGs and how could they improve? Over to you.

ANA CRISTINA DES NEVES:

Thank you very much. A very interesting question. And, of course, Ambassador David Gross just said that, very unfortunately, in 2015, Internet was not considered and technology as a whole was not really considered. And we will know by now that emerging technologies and Internet and all the technologies that are developed on the Internet,

Goals

they really changed the world and they are changing the world. And maybe in 2015, it's because some of us were very aware of the importance of Internet and technologies, its power, and so it's why it was not included and it was not part of the agreement on SDGs. But nowadays, it's difficult not to discuss any SDG without talking about Internet.

Of course, all the UN system landscape is embedded with Internet. It's embedded with the problems or challenges and opportunities that Internet brings. Emerging technologies are everywhere, are used for everything. So the UN landscape is full of Internet, it's full of emerging technologies. And its governance is a key thing and continues to be a key thing. And it's very good that we are here today in ALAC within ICANN discussing these kinds of things. Because, of course, here we are discussing civil society more, academia as well, the end users, but academia is very important, knowledge is very important. Well, today, I'm here as the chair of the CSTD, and never forget that we have the scientific and technological component as well, which was not so far developed in such a way to link it with the WSIS, but I think, in my humble opinion, should in the future. Who knows? Thank you very much.

PARI ESFANDIARI:

Thank you. So we now move to Jorge Cancio. Switzerland is hosting the upcoming high-level WSIS+20 event, following the NETmundial. How do you perceive the current state of Internet governance in relation to SDGs?

Goals

JORGE CANCIO:

Thank you, Pari, and thanks very much for inviting me, for having me here. I had some longer notes, but I'll try to make it brief after the other interventions.

Really, 2024, 2025 is the pivotal period now on digital governance. We have many processes going on, as we discussed, that we will further discuss. And there's a big change from the period that Ambassador Gross mentioned before, 2003, 2005, many of us were there—I was very young—in Tunis, and it was a time of techno optimism, a time of potential development. There was a strong development orientation in WSIS, but everybody saw the Information Society as a great thing for human advancement and also for the development of our democracies.

Today, probably the tide has turned. As we all know, probably in this room, digital is no longer something different to our lives. It's our lives. It's pervasive. So we also see the downsides because, of course, it's not only the bright side of it, we see the challenges. And the event we are organizing together with ITU, with all the other agencies, in the end of May, the high-level event it has been branded, it's the WSIS Forum of this year, has a role in this process of WSIS+20. This review process that should not only look backwards but also forward, and it's a big opportunity to really refresh the vision, but being also realistic about the challenges, but not only seeing the dark side of things as sometimes people also in the 38th floor of the UN in New York seem to see the digital world. And just connecting it also to NETmundial+10, we are engaging with this process. We, the Swiss government, because

Goals

we see it as a critical moment to engage with the Global South multistakeholder community, which, many times, is not as included in these kinds of processes as we would wish, but who play a critical role also in influencing their governments in their positions in the GDC, in the Global Digital Compact, and WSIS+20 processes.

So we hope that high-level event in Geneva at the end of May where everyone is a welcome, there are invitations on the website. You can download it, you can go to Geneva, you can apply to go, and you will be very welcome there. We hope it will be one piece in this process of updating our common vision, the WSIS vision, into a WSIS+ that really is up for the critical moment, really. Thank you.

PARI ESFANDIARI:

Thank you. With that, I would like to go to Nigel Hickson. What insights can you share about the UK's approach to aligning its policies with the SDGs within the global Internet governance landscape in the context of WSIS+20? Over to you.

NIGEL HICKSON:

Thank you very much. I'm very honored to take part. I work for the UK Government. I'm sitting in between two much more important people, the ambassador here, who I had the pleasure to work with many years ago, and our distinguished colleague, Maarten, who has inspired many of us in the work he has done.

I've got very little to say on this particular issue. I think later on, we might come to some of the more detail. But on this question, it seems

Goals

self-evident to us that as we go through this WSIS+20 Review, that we shouldn't be concerned about people. We should be concerned about the aspirations of those that gathered in 2003 and 2005. And we should be looking at how we can fulfill some of the aspirations that people had and still have in terms of connectivity, in terms of sustainability, in terms of affordable connections, in terms of safety, in terms of security. Those are the issues that we should be focusing on in relation to the sustainable development goals, how technology can help people, how technology can help in medicine, can help in education, can help in skills training. Those are the issues that we should be concentrating on. We shouldn't be worried about IP addresses. We shouldn't be worried about domain names. We should be focusing on what really matters to people in relation to the sustainable development goals, and that's what we think WSIS should focus on.

PARI ESFANDIARI:

Thank you very much. And on that note, we go to Chengetai Masango who is joining us virtually. How can the upcoming UN WSIS+20 event and IGF Review be strategically utilized to align Internet governance frameworks more closely with Agenda 2030? Over to you.

CHENGETAI MASANGO:

Thank you very much. I also like to join everybody else in thanking you for inviting me to speak. I'm so sorry I couldn't be there physically because it's a very busy period for us.

Goals

Now, the Internet and its associated tools and services have already proven to be a great enabler and accelerator of the SDGs. But significant challenges still hinder the realization of the goals. It is crucial to continually raise awareness and encourage participation and engagement among local communities about initiatives like the WSIS and the IGF, ensuring they understand and take part in benefits offered by information and communication technologies supported by good public policies. There is a pressing need to invest more in capacity development at both individual and institutional levels, adopting a tailored cross-sectorial approach through the multistakeholder model. Our focus on enhancing skills and fostering collaboration among stakeholders should encompass everyone, including national public servants, parliaments, the judiciary, and sectors such as education and health. Special emphasis must be placed on empowering vulnerable and marginalized groups, including youth, women, girls, people with disabilities, and the elderly. The WSIS+20 events and the IGF processes provide a valuable opportunity to direct our investments towards those in need, leveraging the global community's attention on Internet governance. We can work collaboratively with local communities to ensure our efforts yields, sustainable long-term impacts, promoting greater digital inclusion for underrepresented stakeholders. Thank you.

PARI ESFANDIARI:

Thank you very much. With that, we move to Maarten Botterman. How does ICANN currently integrate SDGs' consideration into its practice and strategies? And what is the Board's vision on this?

Goals

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: Thanks, Pari. Thanks also for organizing the earlier event. More focused on ecological impact a couple of weeks ago online, we have these meetings, both online and in person. I appreciate the opportunity to be here in person. The focus on SDGs is very much, first and foremost, that SDGs remind us that there's a lot of global challenges that we can only tackle together. And as Ambassador Gross said, only after some time that these were developed that it was also explicitly and vitally recognized that the functioning global Internet is necessary condition to make achieving this possible.

So, that Internet helps the sharing of information, facilitating communication, monitoring information collection, and that makes our mission very important. Our mission, as I said before, you already focus on the unique addressing system that actually works that serve the world, and it makes us even more aware of the importance of the work we do ensuring that. There's an ongoing process in the world in constant change. Our strategic plan recognizes that explicitly and our actions are aligned with that. We look at improving the security of protocols and operations like with DNSSEC and other means. We are looking at serving all, also those that are not online yet. We have a clear focus also on the use of Internationalized Domain Names, those character sets that we didn't use at the start of the Internet, let's put it in those words. But that make it possible. A lot was invested by ICANN in information sharing, capacity building, as we need to do it together with many other players around the world. And there are initiatives like the Coalition for Digital Africa, but there's also the worldwide

Goals

activity called KINDNS, which is really to help the industry everywhere to adopt the best possible practices and share these. And ensuring a constant evolution of the work we do and the stakeholders we work with in our building up multistakeholder way of working, reflecting the diversity of stakeholders to ensure a good understanding of the different stakes and how it comes together best in the global public interest.

Secondly, relating to this and more to our previous session, we recognize it's important that you're also a good global citizen and lead by example. And in that context, next to capacity building and growing our participation, we also seek to do so explicitly in the respect of human rights as the Bylaws reflect. And recently, we started the discussion in the community but also in Board, and the Organization is working on it now as well, to reduce the ecological burden of operations where reasonably possible. For the community, that means also finding the balance between travel and meeting effectively. And for the organization that meets like, "When can we turn the lights out?" and that's a simplification, but you know what I mean.

PARI ESFANDIARI:

Thank you very much. And with that, we move to Elizabeth. How does ICANN integrate SDGs' consideration into the broader Internet governance landscape?

ELIZABETH OLUOCH:

Pari, thank you so much for organizing this discussion. It's such a great pleasure to be here with this esteemed panel. So ICANN does factor

Goals

the SDGs through its fulfillment of its mission as well as the principles that guide how we work. So having this discussion is useful, as it gives us an opportunity to share our perspectives on this important topic.

There are 17 UN SDGs covering a wide range of social, economic, and environmental challenges, as well as promoting sustainable development. How does ICANN take this wide range of issues into consideration in Internet governance? First, ICANN has a critical mission that is vital for the Internet's operation. A top priority for ICANN is ensuring a stable, secure, and resilient Internet that can support the achievement of the SDGs. ICANN's work is guided by a Five-Year Strategic Plan from 2021 to 2025 that reflects input from the ICANN community. This plan reflects several security and governance-related strategic objectives from strengthening the security of the DNS and DNS root service system to improving the effectiveness of ICANN's multistakeholder governance model. All of these objectives have tangible effects for ICANN submission, but also the Internet.

Second, collaboration is another aspect which plays a crucial role in the distributed Internet governance model. And that's why ICANN collaborates with many other stakeholders to achieve its mission. This includes governments, businesses, civil society, technical organizations, and users, and so on. Additionally, ICANN have been participating in the IGF since its inception and engaging in discussions on technical Internet matters with other stakeholders.

And third, ICANN supports and advocates for the multistakeholder model which is foundation to how the ICANN community works. The UN will conduct its review on the progress and implementation of the

Goals

World Summit on the Information Society at the UN next year. The multistakeholder model of Internet governance is one of the key elements in the Tunis WSIS agenda, and continuation of WSIS is important for Internet governance. ICANN's governance model ensures that policies and processes are developed and implemented without jeopardizing the Internet stability and security.

And most importantly, ICANN's model of governance ensures that all points of view are considered on their own merits. This dedication to equal representation has contributed to ICANN's success in managing the DNS to foster a stable, secure, and resilient Internet for all.

PARI ESFANDIARI:

Thank you. With that, we are moving to second round of questions which focuses on identifying opportunities and challenges. Ambassador, based on your diplomatic background, what are the key challenges and opportunities in fostering international cooperation for an SDG-aligned Internet governance framework? Over to you.

DAVID GROSS:

Thank you very much. Thank you very much for the question. You get to a certain age where you really don't need and want to learn too many new things, and I'm at that age. So I'm very pleased to report that I think that in answer to your question, what we need to focus on going forward with regard opportunities and challenges looks a lot like where we've already been. And we need to learn the lessons from that and then take it forward.

In particular, I think the major set of challenges and opportunities arise from what other speakers have already touched on, which is the multistakeholder process for decision-making. It is at the heart, of course, of ICANN, but it is also a broader concept that is still very much a question of whether or not governments and others are willing to adopt it and to use it as a process to better our common future. We're going to see this discussion very clearly, as we already are, in international discussions at the United Nations and in ITU and at other meetings that have been identified over the next year or two.

I cannot emphasize too strongly the need to be vigilant about protecting the multistakeholder process and ensuring that it is used effectively. The best way to do that is to show, as ICANN has done over many years, how effective it is for making important decisions. There are many governments around the world today that would seek to revisit that issue and seek to have top-down decision-making in which governments have the control. I think in terms of meeting the opportunities as well as the challenges in our area, it'd be critically important that it'd be a combination of governments, business, civil society, and particularly the technical community that comes together in a process that fosters meaningful decision-making.

I am very concerned I will tell you that in the discussions about multistakeholderism, it is easy for people to focus on the first three of those groups: governments, business, and civil society. The technical community, of which ICANN is an important part, is often left out, and I think it is our collective responsibility to remind people why this is very important that the technical community, that who brings the technical

Goals

expertise to solutions that we all seek, are maintained and encouraged and included. Thank you.

PARI ESFANDIARI:

Thank you very much on that critical point. And with that, I move to Ana Cristina. What emerging opportunities and challenges do you identify for leveraging digital technologies in support of SDGs?

ANA CRISTINA DES NEVES:

Thank you very much. So picking up on this very important—well, maybe it's not a component of Internet governance, but I really think it's the mind, I think, that we discuss at all levels about this multistakeholderism. We see artificial intelligence, we see Internet of Things, we see fintech, we see so many other emerging technologies, and we all perceive that we have varied concerns that we understand the opportunities and the world is full of very good opportunities. But as all the technologies and all the new knowledge is used both for bad things and for good things. So we are in an era where the multistakeholder for decision-making is really key.

There is another two things, very important, or three maybe, which are implementation, coordination, and collaboration. So all in all, it concerns digital cooperation or international cooperation. So these are fundamental elements for the future world, for the present world, with the emerging technologies and with the future challenges and opportunities.

Goals

So it's not only the main point, but what means multistakeholderism and where it can be effective is really the main point in all the discussions all over the world. So when we are discussing the Global Digital Compact, when we are discussing the WSIS+20, everybody is asking, "What will be my role in there? What will be the role of the civil society? What will be the future of the IGF?" Because in the IGF, we all have a main role. So this is the essential thing is what will happen to this multistakeholder approach that has been achieved so far? So this is really the main question of all these, the debate about the future and about the challenge and opportunities.

Today, in the morning, I attended UNESCO Conference, again, on Internet Governance in the Future. All the questions were about, what will be the future of the IGF? So they weren't really listening what the speakers were saying. It was really what will be the future of the WSIS+20? Is there already a mandate from the United Nations General Assembly on the high-level meeting that will be held next year? So these are really the important things that people are discussing. And governments should be more aware, some are, others not so much, and others, they really don't want to discuss it. So it's the most important challenge. Thank you.

PARI ESFANDIARI:

Thank you very much. Jorge, what opportunities and challenges do you foresee for the WSIS+20 process in strengthening the synergy between Internet governance and the SDGs?

Goals

JORGE CANCIO:

Thank you. Thank you, Pari. Jorge Cancio for the record, because we are online also. Yeah, I was just thinking on what Ambassador Gross and Ana were mentioning. In the end, at least our view is that the best way of protecting the multistakeholder model is to evolve constantly and to improve it constantly, continuously. And because the world is moving, the goals of advancement of humanity are also evolving, we don't have the same. Of course, there's baseline, but we don't have the same as the objectives that we had in 2003, 2005. We have the SDGs. Now, we will have the revision in 2030. And really, the beauty of the multistakeholder model is its capacity to constantly adapt, to be agile, and adapt to different challenges being posed.

Of course, we talked about the challenges also at the geopolitical level. And this has an implication for what standing the multistakeholder model has. It is being not only attacked frontally but it's being questioned by using the brand, by saying this is a multistakeholder process, but in fact, not really matching what we understand as multistakeholder model. So I think there's really an opportunity with the GDC, with NETmundial+10, and with WSIS+20 to continue evolving the multistakeholder model to make it even more effective, to also develop a sort of guidelines of what is really a multistakeholder approach so that we can measure up processes that are presented to us as being multistakeholder and assess whether that's really the case. So that's something—and without wanting to steal Chengetai's thunder—I think the IGF is a really great example, not only the global IGF but also the NRIs, the national and regional Internet governance initiatives, for this capacity, this ability of adapting to the needs of the corresponding communities. So it's not

Goals

really something static, it's something that evolves and has to continue evolving.

PARI ESFANDIARI:

Thank you very much. With that, we go to Nigel. How does the UK plan to navigate the challenges and leverage opportunities in aligning digital policies with the SDGs on an international scale?

NIGEL HICKSON:

Well, I don't think I'll answer that question because I haven't got a clue. How will the UK do anything? Yeah. It's not just for individual governments. So, collectively, what are our responsibilities here? A few people have already touched on what we need to do. First of all, we have to engage, we must involve stakeholders. There's no point in us saying the technical community must be involved, civil society must be involved, governments must be involved. We can all say this rhetoric. But we have to do something about it. We have to show we're serious. We have to be there on the ground. We have to talk with people. We have to inspire people. We have to give people the tools in which they can engage in these processes. And that's why if the IGF wasn't invented, perhaps we'd be inventing it today, round this table, ahead of the WSIS negotiations. If we didn't have something like the IGF, we would need it. But we do. And therefore, we must leverage it. The opportunity gives us not just in Saudi Arabia in December, but regionally and nationally. And the national and regional IGFs also have a responsibility to stand up and say to their governments—and this, I appreciate, is not easy. But when you get to New York, when you're

Goals

around that negotiating table, take our views into account. Speak up for what we want in this WSIS+20 Review. Ensure that we still have the opportunity to come back round this table and to discuss policy issues in this IGF format. That's what we need to do. We have to lead by example as well as governments, and this is where we do have individual responsibility. It's no good that we go along to the ITU and we tolerate the multilateral process. The Secretary General calls it a multistakeholder process. It's not. Much of it is a multilateral process where only governments get a vote. We can't tolerate this anymore. We can't tolerate these Internet governance discussions in multilateral fora that don't involve stakeholders, that don't take people's views into account. This is a travesty of what we stand for. So we have a lot of challenges ahead. We have a lot of work to do. But we do have the tools. We do have people like Ana, that chair of the UN CSTD. We have people like Chengetai that do so much to inspire the UN IGF and give us opportunities there, and we must leverage those.

PARI ESFANDIARI:

Thank you very much, Nigel. And on that note, we go to Chengetai. How can the IGF UN Secretariat catalyze international efforts to overcome obstacles and seize opportunities for SDGs' integration into Internet governance? Over to you.

CHENGETAI MASANGO:

Thank you very much for the question, Peri. I'll just go a little bit deeper in what the previous speakers have said. So we already have mechanisms in place to address these challenges. Rather than starting

Goals

from scratch, we can benefit from the robust network and ecosystem of stakeholders established over more than two decades through the WSIS and IGF processes. This ecosystem continues to expand with an increasing number of stakeholders engaging in the IGF processes. For example, in the IGF 2023 in Kyoto, we had participants coming from over 175 countries. This is a significant increase if we look at the situation 5 or even 10 years ago. For example, in 2013, we had 111 countries, and in 2017, we had 142 countries represented. The IGF Secretariat can reach the weak or missing voices to build capacity and ensure their digital conclusion. Our 168 national, regional, and youth IGFs, numerous schools on Internet Governance, allied organizations such as ICANN itself, the UN family, and the larger community are our key partners in this drive. We firmly believe in the bottom-up and multistakeholder approach. Dare I say the true multistakeholder approach which has proven successful over two decades.

Different communities across countries and regions face distinct Internet governance issues and opportunities. Therefore, we must adapt tailored approaches at the individual level, addressing local certain circumstances and demands to ensure that no one is left behind addressing the SDGs through Internet governance domain. Leveraging our work of the national and regional IGF initiatives, we can play a pivotal role in raising awareness and sharing best practices related to individual Sustainable Development Goals and with people worldwide. Thank you, Peri.

Goals

PARI ESFANDIARI: Thank you very much. We now go to Maarten. What opportunities and challenges ICANN might face? And what is strategic priorities should ICANN focus on to ensure that its Internet governance framework contributes effectively to the SDGs?

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN: Thank you, Pari. Thanks to all previous speakers who made some very important points. It's the recognition that the world is in motion in so many ways—volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous. Inflation has risen to higher levels for the past decade than ever before. And travel becomes even higher costs and ecological pressure has been more recognized than a decade before, too. If you look to the world that is changing so much, as the Internet does become more important in everyday life, we do see government step in heavier in this space at UN level but also in national level, and sometimes there's legislation that leads to challenges for the way we can continue to fulfill our mission of providing this Internet to the people in the world. It's very important to realize indeed the fact that it's the multistakeholder system that got us where we are today. It's a necessity because the Internet isn't owned by anybody. It isn't owned by a single stakeholder group. Nobody can do it by himself; we need to do it together. And that is the basis. Yes, we need to evolve the multistakeholder system to make sure that we remain a good body together to address the global needs and global addresses in that way.

A special note for the challenges that ICANN and the world is facing is I would like to call attention for the digital divide. The more people get on this Internet, the bigger divide becomes for those who are not, and

Goals

let's keep that in mind. So while progressing, enabling the Internet for more and more people around the world, it's important to keep this in mind. One step is ensuring the ability to communicate in your own languages, multilingual, and use of Internationalized Domain Names, other character sets than Latin in short.

PARI ESFANDIARI:

Thank you very much. Thank you. With that, we go to Elizabeth. Goal 17 focuses on partnerships for the goals. How is ICANN fostering collaborations to advance SDGs and other opportunities for collaboration in the three mentioned UN events?

ELIZABETH OLUOCH:

Thank you so much, Peri. I will focus my comments primarily on the second part of the question about partnerships and collaboration. However, the only thing that I would like to add about the three mentioned UN events by those, it is the Global Digital Compact, the WSIS+20 Review, and the high-level WSIS+20 Forum taking place at the ITU later this year. I believe Nigel had mentioned that a number of these processes, particularly those in the UN in New York, those are multilateral processes. Just based on the UN General Assembly rules, it is very difficult for nongovernmental stakeholders to really engage in some of those processes. However, their high-level WSIS+20 Review Forum that's taking place, just by its very nature, the WSIS Tunis Agenda which really is based on—well, its multistakeholder model and collaboration are really fundamental to that. It is a space where civil society, the technical community, and others are able to come and

Goals

really share and exchange sort of their experiences and also their contributions to the implementation of the WSIS action lines. So that is an area where ICANN, for example, participates and intends to do so this year.

On the question about partnerships, as a nonprofit public benefit organization, ICANN demonstrates the viability of the multistakeholder model of Internet governance by effectively coordinating the Internet's unique identifiers, particularly the domain name system that enable Internet users to identify and connect to each other. ICANN have a technical mission and our focus is on technical governance of the Internet. Within that remit, there is the technical coordination with other Internet organizations responsible for the Internet's operations. The Internet is a vital resource that underpins much of the digital economy that can provide tremendous socio-economic benefits, particularly creating opportunities for individuals to participate. ICANN's mission aligned to the goal of ensuring universal and meaningful access to the Internet, our priorities and digital inclusivity led by the community-driven projects such as the Internationalized Domain Names and Universal Acceptance, projects or initiatives, as well as the Coalition for Digital Africa, demonstrate ICANN's commitment to creating an Internet that is accessible and inclusive for everyone. Partnerships and collaboration are essential for these initiatives. I know Maarten had mentioned a little bit earlier about the Coalition for Digital Africa so I won't go into that as one example of a partnership that ICANN has, but ICANN also collaborates with regional international organizations, particularly around capacity building and digital inclusion initiatives.

Goals

ICANN, for example, has a positive and collaborative relationship with the ITU, notably with the regional offices in Asia Pacific, the Middle East and Africa, and New York with which we have collaborated on a various number of activities. ICANN also continues to share its experiences and perspectives in the multistakeholder model and digital inclusivity, emphasizing our strong support for the multistakeholder model, given its importance for Internet governance and the Internet's continued success.

PARI ESFANDIARI:

Thank you very much. We now move to third round. Since we are limited in time, maybe speakers could bring the reflection within this. We're focusing on envisioning the future but appreciate also that the reflection about the whole event also included in this comments. So with that, I move to Ambassador. Looking beyond 2030, how do you envision the future of the Internet and digital technologies in supporting not just the current set of SDGs but in fostering sustainable, inclusive digital world? Over to you.

DAVID GROSS:

Thank you very much. It's an enormous topic, of course. One of the things that I have learned over the years is that in getting a question like this, you immediately think about what those technologies will be after 2030. And I have found watching technological revolution happen that it is impossible to predict with any degree of accuracy what the technology will be in a short couple of years unless something further out. Having said that, what we can say, though, is

that it's allowed to. Technology, including Internet-related technologies, will continue to solve the world's problems. It won't solve all problems but it will solve many of the pressing ones and many of the ones that are expressed in the 17 SDGs.

I am tremendously optimistic about how the technology is going to continue to affect positively our world. When we had WSIS in 2005, we thought that it was extraordinary that we had about one billion of the world's people online. Virtually all of those billion were from Europe, the United States, China to a good degree, Japan, Korea. Today, we have well more than five billion in a short period of time. What that means, of course, is not just that more of the world is connected, recognizing that there's still much work to be done, but that we can reap the benefits of that connectivity, the piece that Maarten referred to earlier about having the network effects that we all benefit from by having more people connected.

So we looked at the history, and we think about the impact that the technology has had on people's lives, healthcare, and how it has improved so dramatically in the past few years. It's easy to forget how bad healthcare is still in much of the world but how bad it was, as from today's standards, even in the developed world just a few short years ago. Food creation. The use of technology for effective farming is extraordinarily important and has made great progress. And the one that I think is most important, because it really helps us reflect on the future, is the use of technology in education. We're only clearly just beginning to see some of the benefits of that.

Goals

When we were at the World Summit in 2003 in Geneva, it was clear then that so little of the world was connected and that children in most of the world were learning in the ways that their fathers and their grandfathers and their great grandmothers and others had done, which is to say not at all or virtually not at all. Only those at the time of recent history, if you were living in rural parts of anywhere in the world, you did not have access to the world's information. You had to live and be lucky enough to live in a city and have parents who are wealthy for you to have access to information, to libraries and the like. Today, thanks to you all and colleagues, that is no longer the case. Today a child in rural Kenya or in Bangladesh or in Brazil born of poor parents in rural parts of those countries can, if that person can get and likely can get Internet access, that person has access to all of the world's knowledge. I cannot really emphasize enough how that is something unique in human history. And it is because of the Internet, it is because of what you all have been working on for years, that allows us to have tomorrow's leaders who are children today be able to have the education in the background in order to solve these extraordinarily important and fundamental world problems. So when I look beyond 2030 at what the potential SDGs are, I don't know what they will be. But I feel highly confident that whatever they are, they will be able to be handled in ways that we can only barely imagine today, and it is because of the connectivity and the opportunities that the Internet give us. Thank you.

Goals

PARI ESFANDIARI: Thank you very much. Ana Cristina, considering future technological advancements, how should Internet governance evolve to better support the SDGs?

ANA CRISTINA DES NEVES: Thank you very much for the question. I'd like to emphasize one thing first, which is that both in the Geneva principles and action lines and then in Tunis Agenda, there is a lot of humanism there, and that we cannot afford to lose in the discussions of the Global Digital Compact and in the upcoming discussion on the WSIS+20. So this kind of harmonies that is embedded in these two phases of WSIS are tremendously important to achieve and to perceive this optimism that Ambassador Gross just presented. I'd like to be very optimistic as well, but we really have crucial years now, this year and the next year, to continue this humanistic agenda for the Internet and for Internet governance. We need all this multistakeholder approach. Why? Because for the implementation, we need everyone to act. And to act, they have to agree on basic principles. These principles, they should be full of humanism, because without that, it will be very difficult to proceed and to have a people-centered approach Internet, a human-centric approach Internet where I, Ana, I am a person and not only another individual person.

So I think that the times are very interesting. We really need, again, being in ALAC, I have to say something about the civil society because you have to influence your own governments to explain, to make them understand the importance of you in all these landscapes, because without you it will be very difficult to make any change. Of course,

Goals

people, they vote for the governments in democracies, but we don't all live in a democratic world. So the civil society plays a major role here, even for more democratic governments, the less democratic governments. So we have to continue this work and Internet governance will continue to be a major concept towards a more humanistic world. Thank you.

PARI ESFANDIARI:

Thank you very much. Jorge, as we look towards the WSIS+20 Review 2025, what future direction do you envision for integrating SDGs more deeply into Internet governance? Please keep it short.

JORGE CANCIO:

Thank you, Pari, for the question. I'll try and I'll try also to link it to prior interventions. Basically, we have to update the WSIS agreements because many things that are relevant today were not on the table then. So what is today meaningful connectivity? What do we need to do about data governance? How do we govern AI? Those are issues that we couldn't address 20 years ago, but we need to address them to make sure that this framework really fosters human advancement, so the SDGs in the end. We will never know, we will never have a crystal ball and know what technology will bring. So the best thing we can do is to have the right governance settings so that we can treat emerging topics the most inclusive way possible. And this means that we have a multistakeholder model that is capable of evolving, of adapting, which is inclusive, which continues to be great in identifying emerging topics, discussing those topics, shaping cooperation on those topics, and

Goals

influencing and shaping also the policy. We have to stay agile, flexible, adaptable, and that's the best way we can make a contribution to human advancement.

One thing we should take out of these processes this year and next year would probably be to have a sort of a protocol of protocols of how we do multistakeholder collaboration in all levels at the global level, the regional level, the national level, because many times we don't have this kind of golden standard way to measure up whether an initiative is really multistakeholder. And to finalize, the reflection would be something like, if you are not interested in these processes, that's a problem for you because these processes are interested in you and will change your reality, it will change the framework where organizations like ICANN operate. So what can we do? We only can engage, engage, engage. Thank you.

PARI ESFANDIARI:

Thank you very much. We now go to Nigel. What vision does the UK hold for the future role of Internet governance in supporting a universal and open Internet that aligns with the SDGs?

NIGEL HICKSON:

Thank you very much, Pari. I think a lot has been said by previous speakers so I'll try and say something slightly different. I could just say I'll hand over to... I mean, I think the ambassador put his finger on it. But let me say three things. First of all, we must be bold in our approach. We mustn't get bogged down in previous arguments as we approach the WSIS+20 discussions and as we move on from those into

Goals

the new era, if you like, of Internet governance. We have to recognize that we still have a lot to do. Yes, we have come an awful long way as the ambassador said, and that is worth reflecting on it. It's worth reflecting on that 20 years ago, we couldn't have done many of the things we do today. It's worth reflecting on this because we need to be able to show that technology does really have a role in our future approaches to Internet governance.

But as Jorge said, we also have to recognize that our governance arrangements need to evolve as well. We have to take account of the discussions of new technologies. It's no good telling people that artificial intelligence doesn't have a role to play in the Internet. It is difficult for many of us that have been around for perhaps too long. We think artificial intelligence is one of those things that is here today and gone tomorrow perhaps. But when you look at people's concerns, when you look at people's aspirations, it often comes down to the governance of Artificial Intelligence, it comes down to data governance as well, and we have to be able to respond to those challenges.

So as we go forward, as we go forward in the next regime, we must evolve our governance institutions, and we must be bold. And the institutions we have have to be bold as well. ICANN has to be bold. It has to be bold in terms of IDNs. It has to be bold in terms of Universal Acceptance, which it is leading on. And I'm so proud that ICANN is doing this, but we also have to be involved on the Applicant Support. And we're not going to get into that, but two million? Come on, that is

Goals

a joke. That is a joke. We will be laughed out of court. Come on, ICANN. Come on.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Have you really thought about that?

NIGEL HICKSON: No. Well, I don't get passionate about this at all. But let's get realistic. The Board has to get realistic about this. We need to encourage those people to make applications. We need global application round. We need to be able to show people that the domain name system really has meaning to them in their own language and their own scripts. Sorry.

PARI ESFANDIARI: Thank you very much, Nigel. So we need also to be realistic about our time. So now I go to Chengetai. Please keep it quiet. Keep it short. Sorry.

CHENGETAI MASANGO: No, that's fine, Pari. Thank you.

PARI ESFANDIARI: What strategic initiatives does the IGF UN Secretariat plan to implement for advancing SDGs' incorporation into Internet governance in the coming years? Over to you.

Goals

CHENGETAI MASANGO: Thank you, Pari. The fact that we are officially behind in achieving the SDGs adds to everyone's responsibility to indeed do more. The SDGs already integrated into the IGF processes, our sessions, but also our intersessional work reflects on the SDGs' realization from all aspects. When people apply for sessions, they have to select which SDGs that that session aligns with.

We plan to continue emphasizing the intersections between the Internet governance and SDGs and the ways that both domains can support each other. Good practices can then be communicated to the UN system, as well as to the broad community, in the hope that this will help to inform needed actions. We plan to cooperate as much as possible with the UN system and other valuable initiatives focused on the 2030 Agenda and to contribute from our domain. We believe that there is a strong need to work more on developing digital capacity with and for legislators, judges, but also small- and medium-sized enterprises and other drivers of social progress. Our commitment is to ensure that the IGF's long term continues to build on so far a good result and create even more space for these target groups to cooperate and to advance their work.

Sustainability involves the continuous progression from the present to the future. It is imperative to engage with young people continually, ensuring that the next generation of experts and leaders are well-equipped with knowledge and skills necessary to navigate towards a better tomorrow. The idea of youth track remains dedicated to bolstering these efforts to involve more young individuals and

Goals

empower them to cultivate their digital skills through this platform and also engage with the elders as well.

Lastly, it's crucial that to ensure that people actively participate in discussions concerning their well-being. Engaging stakeholders in regional and global dialogues is essential to empower them with skills and the knowledge needed to implement best practices in their respective countries. The IGF along with its annual host country remains committed to this goal by investing in initiatives such as providing travel support to stakeholders in need with a specific focus on those from underrepresented countries. I'll stop there since it's the time. Yes. Thank you, Pari.

PARI ESFANDIARI:

Thank you very much. We now move to Maarten. Looking forward, how does ICANN plan to adapt these Internet governance strategies to further the goals of SDGs? One minute, please.

MAARTEN BOTTERMAN:

Well, for the sake of time, I want to expand beyond your question like from an IOT perspective, you would think of governing local, building local capacity, making sure that it reaches the people, not for ICANN very much. As I said before, emphasis is in continuing to deliver on the mission—one, two, and three. A secure and sustainable unique identifier system for the world is what the world needs. It's here and we need to keep it. The second one is recognition that we cannot do this alone. It's an increasing complex world and we will need to work with the people who need it. The experts of the strategic

Goals

collaborations that we need to seek awareness raising, capacity building, continuing to evolve our community are key in that. Thirdly, mounting on the explicit focus on reducing our ecological footprint where possible and lead by example.

PARI ESFANDIARI: Thank you very much. Elizabeth, what long term strategies do you envision for ICANN to navigate future challenges in Internet governance landscape to support the SDGs?

ELIZABETH OLUOCH: I'll keep this very brief as well. It's difficult to predict all the emerging trends, innovations, and technologies, along with the opportunities and challenges they may bring, especially those that will depend on the Internet. It's important that the critical properties of the Internet remain so that the Internet is globally connected, secure, interoperable, and resilient in order for it to continue to enable innovation. This is particularly true for ICANN, given our important role and the Internet. Also important is continued support for the multistakeholder model and multistakeholder model of Internet governance. There are important SDG targets still to be met with the Internet, and the multistakeholder model of Internet governance can be of tremendous benefit.

PARI ESFANDIARI: Thank you very much. I believe that we had a truly illuminating discussion. Now we can take some questions from the floor. I know

Goals

time is very limited. But maybe we can answer one question. We have two minutes. Any questions?

HADIA EL MINIAWI: Thank you. This is really a quick one. So, we were talking about envisioning the future, and I was wondering about the envisioning the near future. So how do you envision the Internet governance landscape in the upcoming couple of years? Thank you.

PARI ESFANDIARI: Who wants to take this question?

DAVID GROSS: I don't think there's going to be a material change in the Internet governance landscape over the next couple of years, except as everyone has been talking about, the decisions are going to be made over the next 12 months or so about what that future landscape is going to look like. So if you look in the short term, probably not much of a material change, but it could be a radical change if we're not careful down the road.

PARI ESFANDIARI: Thank you very much. And since we don't have time, so my apologies, we are not going to take any more questions. And on that note, I want to thank you, everybody. Thank you for the participants and panelists.

I also want to mention that the clear message coming out is that we need to be proactive. And given the complexity of the issues at hand,

EN

Goals

it's clear that success lies in the united front. So, thank you, everybody. Thank you, participants, panelists, support team, and last but not least, ALAC, Jonathan, and EURALO, and Sebastien, and interpreters. Thank you all. This session is closed.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]