
ICANN84 | AGM – Geopolitical Forum: WSIS+20 focus
Monday, October 27, 2025 – 10:45 to 12:15 IST

JANIS KARKLINS

The session Consultations of Community with His Excellency, Mr. Ekitela Lokaale, current representative and ambassador of Kenya to the United Nations in New York, who also represents Her Excellency, Ambassador Janina of Albania, who couldn't join us today for these consultations.

The session is meant to be consultative. And after intervention of His Excellency Ambassador Lokaale, I will open the floor for community to express their views, provide comments and ask questions to ambassador about the WSIS+20 Review process and upcoming review conference, which is scheduled to take place in New York in mid-December.

Ambassador Lokaale and Ambassador Janina have been appointed by the Secretary General of the United Nations to co-facilitate the process of preparation of the outcome document. Actually, Ambassador is a key person in handling all the comments coming in from the member states and other stakeholders to this document, and will lead the final negotiations in December.

Please use this opportunity to engage with Ambassador Lokaale. Without any further delay, I would like to invite Ambassador to make his opening remarks. Ambassador, the floor is yours.

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.

EKITELA LOKAALE

Thank you, Ambassador Karklins, and good morning, everybody. Let me start again by thanking ICANN for this very, very kind invitation. It's always an honor for me to be able to join this vibrant technical community in discussions on the WSIS subject. Let me also convey the apologies of my colleague, Ambassador Janina of Albania, who would have wanted to be here with us this morning, but because of resource of travel, she wasn't able to come, but is very, very closely following these discussions.

Now, colleagues, like I said, it's been a great privilege for us to interact with yourselves since being appointed by—I had to correct Ambassador Karklins, the president of the General Assembly, not the secretary general, to be co-facilitators of this process.

We are mindful that WSIS is a process that began 20 years ago. It's one that has contributed immensely to developments in digital transformation in many parts of the world. And it's a process that has one unique legacy, and that is that of using a multistakeholder model of consultations.

When we came on board this process, we were very mindful that that is what we are getting into. Unlike many other intergovernmental processes which involve member states, mainly WSIS by design, is one that involves the technical community, private sector, civil society, governments, and the broad range of stakeholders. In embarking on our work, we sought to create

spaces where the multistakeholder community would get to participate in consultations throughout the process.

One of the first things we did was to create an informal multistakeholder sounding board which brings together representatives of your community. And that board has been very, very useful to us as co-facilitators because then they're able to receive and process and sieve and transmit some of the concerns that come from you to us. And a lot of those have found expression in the elements therefore at the beginning, but I think more profoundly in the subsequent versions of the outcome document, and I'm talking about the Zero Draft.

The other thing we tried to do was to create spaces where the multistakeholder groups are able to find themselves in the same space with member states. Last week, for example, we had a joint session where member states and members of the multistakeholder community were able to be present in the same room, although virtually. That, we think, is a way of taking forward the WSIS vision. Very quickly, because I'm more interested to hear from you and clarify if there are any questions that you might have.

A number of things have come up so far in the course of the consultations that we've had. First, a reaffirmation of the WSIS vision over people-centered, inclusive, and development-oriented information society. I think across the board, there's no contestation about the relevance or importance of the WSIS vision.

Second thing that has come across, as I mentioned in my remarks, is that everybody wants us to carry forward the multistakeholder model in the process of review, but also in expressing the concerns of the different stakeholders in the eventual document. You'll see, for instance, in the Zero Drafts—and I can promise you in subsequent drafts that there is now recognition of the technical community as one of the stakeholders in this process—this was not the case previously, and it came out of the engagements that we had with yourselves.

Third, the centrality of human rights across the board. Whether it's developing countries or developed, all agree that human rights are important. Although there are points of divergence in terms of where to place the emphasis with some saying all human rights, yes, but group of, say, [seven], for example, are quite strong on points of right to development. There are others that would like the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to be given a more prominent role and so on and so forth.

Then finally, there are points where there's a bit of divergence of opinion, although I don't think those are necessarily irreconcilable. But in early stages of any negotiation, usually you come across divergent views. And without trying to preempt the outcome of subsequent processes, for instance, how to treat the GDC and the WSIS, there is one shade of opinion that feels that we need to find a way of achieving coherence between the two, so that then we avoid duplication and creating parallel mechanisms or even processes, whereas the others who feel that the two should be left

distinct. WSIS should run its course and the GDC and its mandated processes should also be allowed to do the same. That's an area where I think as co-facilitators we'll be working hard to create better coherence.

One thing that's very close to the hearts of many from the developing countries is the need for increased focus and perhaps an investment in capacity building, technology transfer, and investment in financing mechanisms. Stakeholders from the developed countries are not necessarily averse to that, they're not opposed to it, but there are those that are of the view that perhaps it should be on a voluntary basis. If it's technology transfer, then they agree, but then it should be on the basis of voluntary arrangements and so on.

Colleagues, I'm here on behalf of myself and Ambassador Janina to listen to you. Because as I mentioned on the 7th of November, we plan to release Rev1 of the outcome document. But in the intervening period, there are going to be additional consultations with the UN agencies, and then your representatives as well. I think there'll be an opportunity for the multistakeholders to engage with the delegations in New York. That is a suggestion I got out of this meeting in the last evening or this morning, and I intend to share it with my colleague, Ambassador Janina. With those very many remarks, I look forward to listening to you and perhaps clarifying if there are any areas that would like us to clarify. Thank you.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you, Excellency, for your initial remarks. As you mentioned, you're here to listen, and I hope that community members will actively engage and use this opportunity to express their comments used maybe as questions in relation to Zero Draft of the outcome document that two co-facilitators published a while ago, as well as comments that member states and other stakeholders have submitted on the Zero Draft.

I also would like to say that there are some members of multistakeholder sounding board in the room. And if any of the community members would like also to make comment related or of interest of this multistakeholder sounding board, they are here and certainly will pay full attention to those comments.

With these words, I would like to open microphones for the comments and questions. I think the traditional system is set up in the room. Two microphones. Please come to the microphones and make your comments. If there are many, please, try to be succinct. Two minutes, maybe a little bit more at the beginning and less at the end of the session. With this, I see there is already a queue. The first intervention from a lady. Please, introduce yourself. It is also accustomed here at ICANN meetings, please.

SULYNA ABDULLAH

Thank you, Ambassador Karklins. Good morning, Ambassador Lokaale. My name is Sulyna Abdullah, and I am the Chief of Strategy from the ITU. First of all, we'd like to thank ICANN for organizing this session. And we also thank Ambassador Lokaale and

Ambassador Janina for presenting the Zero Draft and leading an inclusive and very open process. Well, as the UN Specialized Agencies for Digital Technologies, the ITU has been deeply engaged in the WSIS+20 Review, responding to the co-facilitators' calls and organizing multistakeholder consultations at both the 2024 and 2025 WSIS high-level events which was rebranded from the WSIS Forum.

Now, we have contributed to the Zero Draft by highlighting the existing activities and processes, ensuring that there's no duplication of resources. Many may not be aware, but WSIS was born out of the 1998 ITU Plenipotentiary Conference. And for both phases, 2003 and 2005, we served as the secretariat and we remained fully committed to the process. Over the past 20 years, we've led implementation of all WSIS action lines, facilitating ICT infrastructure, capacity building, cybersecurity, and the enabling environment, among others. We work with more than 50 UN partners, particularly with UNESCO, UNDP and UNCTAD, and we have advanced system-wide alignment through annual action line meetings and the WSIS Forum. We remain committed to expanding the forum's role for even broader engagement and enhanced policy coherence.

We have a community, the WSIS Forum, which numbers more than 2.5 million people who engage with us through the stock-taking database, the prices, and there is UNGIS, which we are the

permanent secretariat for. UNGIS was the one who delivered the GDC implementation map recently.

The WSIS framework has proved forward-looking, resilient, adaptable, and inclusive across two decades of profound technology, political, and economic change. I will take another 60 seconds. Launching the early Internet era, WSIS still provides a coherent reference point today. It endures because it was built on principles broad enough to accommodate evolution, people-centered, development-oriented multistakeholder. And over the past two decades, the global community has moved from building the information society to expanding broadband and access, to enabling digital transformation, and now, to confronting the challenges of managing and governing digital and emerging technologies.

Each phase of the digital age has found room within WSIS. Throughout, it has served as a stable convening and accountability mechanism. Its action lines remain relevant, and the forum continues to connect communities. WSIS has indeed stood the test of time, as Ambassador Lokaale was saying, because it built a living vision.

The 20-year review is the pivotal moment for the global community to reaffirm these principles and unfold the GDC, for WSIS to continue being the anchor framework for managing technology changes beyond 2025. As the WSIS+20 Review progresses, ITU remains committed to working closely with all partners and turning

shared commitments into real lasting impact for communities all over the world. Thank you.

JANIS KARKLINS

I thank Representative ITU for comments. I call on the next speaker on the microphone on my left, please.

ROSALIA MORALES

Good morning, Ambassador Lokaale and Mr. Karklins. I'm Rosalia Morales, Executive Director of NIC Costa Rica, .CR ccTLD. My organization is part of the Secretariat of the Technical Community Coalition for Multistakeholderism, TCCM. TCCM recognizes there are a broad range of views in the international community on the issues of the Zero Draft and considers that the Zero Draft is a promising start. Our coalition and secretariat includes members from all regions to assure this global perspective. We commend the co-facilitators on their proactive engagement with the broader multistakeholder community and encourage them to continue this engagement over the course of this process.

Yesterday, the TCCM secretariat had the opportunity to meet with the co-facilitators. The TCCM pointed to the need for a multistakeholder approach for any further work looking at IGF funding and sustainability, which was well noted. The meeting provided a better understanding of how the process is going, the next steps and opportunities for the TCCM to engage. Overall, we

noted the openness of the co-facilitators and the receptiveness to our input and observations.

As representatives of the companies, organizations, and groups that operate the critical infrastructure and services at the heart of the Internet, we strongly support reaffirming the value and principles of the multistakeholder cooperation and engagement and welcome the recognition of the technical community as a distinct stakeholder group. We have submitted some ideas for further improvement of the Zero Draft, which are available on our website at tccm.global. We look forward to the following opportunities to provide feedback in November and continue to work to support the multistakeholder model and the technical community participation in Internet governance. Thank you.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you, ma'am, for your comments. Next, microphone on my right. And if there will be something from online community, we will get them in between. Please.

KURTIS LINDQVIST

Thank you, Your Excellency. I'm Kurtis Lindqvist, the CEO of ICANN. I just want to reiterate publicly something that we have said in private. We thank you for the work in the Zero Draft. We think this is a very good Zero Draft. We have shared some additional thoughts and comments on this, as you know.

I just want to pick out three things that we feel very strongly about and I was very happy to be highlighted it's here, which is the permanent IGF, as you mentioned in your opening remarks. The role of the technical community, to have this recognized is very, very important. It is a very positive step in the Zero Draft. And last, the reaffirmation of the multistakeholder model as the model for the governance of the Internet.

I wanted to add one thing there that we also think is very important in the Zero Draft and that we like to call out, and that is the risk of fragmentation. I think this is a very good paragraph that we want to prevent this fragmentation, preserving the Internet as a unity as it is today. It's very, very important and we're very pleased to have that as well. Thank you.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you, Kurtis. Next, microphone on my left.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE

Very quickly, may we ask all the speakers to please speak a little bit slowly for interpretation. Thank you.

ANNA OOSTERLINCK

Thank you so much. My name is Anna Oosterlinck and I speak on behalf of Article 19, a local to global human rights organization focusing on freedom of expression and related rights. We are also a member of the Global Digital Rights Coalition for WSIS.

Ambassador Lokaale, it's really wonderful to see you again. And I want to start by saying a big thank you to you and your colleague for having engaged so openly so far with all stakeholders. We really, really appreciate that.

We feel this is a strong Zero Draft. We welcome establishing the IGF as a permanent body, seeking to integrate the GDC into the WSIS framework and strengthening the multistakeholder approach. But the thing that we really applaud above all is that the Zero Draft explicitly anchors the WSIS framework in international human rights law. The world needs human rights-based digital governance today more than ever.

That section is completely comprised of existing human rights language at the UN, so we would like to call on all member states and all parties that are engaging with this process to defend that language. It's really important that we maintain the balanced approach that was taken in the Zero Draft. And we really call upon the co-facilitators to try and facilitate that process to the extent possible.

I would like to also make a procedural proposal. Our Global Digital Rights Coalition for WSIS has issued a number of letters with proposals on how we can ensure the engagement of multistakeholders. I appreciate that as the negotiations move to New York, the dynamics might change. But to the extent possible, we really would like to call on very warmly the co-facilitators and the member states that can hear me today to ensure that

multistakeholders can participate in the negotiations. If not actively participate, at the very minimum, observe. This is a really important moment for the whole community and we should all be there and be able to be part of it. Thank you so much.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you very much. Since there haven't been any questions, we will continue with the comments and see if questions will come at the later stage. Please, Anriette.

ANRIETTE ESTERHUYSEN

Thanks very much, Janis. And congratulations, Janis. And thanks also to Ambassador Lokaale and the team at UN DESA for running such an exceptionally inclusive process. My name is Anriette Esterhuysen, and I am from the Association for Progressive Communications, a global network of civil society working for development and human rights, and also a member of the Global Digital Rights Coalition for WSIS, and so we agree with those comments.

I wanted to refer specifically to paragraph 21, Ambassador. It's an excellent Zero Draft but I'm concerned with a paragraph that I'll quote more or less from it. That says that 90% of the population of the world now has the possibility of Internet access and 94% lives within 4G coverage. That might be true and I did fact check it. But it's also true that in Africa, Internet penetration is below 40%. In fact, it has reduced from 40% a few years ago to about 38% at

present. I feel that that strong emphasis on the growth of the Internet so early on in the document could unintentionally result in us deprioritizing the massive project of still create an inclusive Internet where everyone in the world is connected to it. I feel that maybe some tweaking of the text or linking that text to the reality of digital inequality would be useful.

Also in that light, that's why APC has proposed financing as being a priority and particularly the creation of a working group that can take the issue of financing WSIS implementation forward in the lead up, we feel that if we do not actually create the mechanisms to finance inclusive infrastructure, we'll end up again in 20 years with the kind of inequality that we have now. It might be of a different shape but it will still be unequal. But maybe if you can respond to that and possibilities to deal with that. Thanks.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you very much. We will take a few more interventions before, Ambassador, I will give you the floor to respond to this intervention. Please.

ELLIE MCDONALD

Thank you very much for convening this opportunity for meaningful dialogue. My name is Ellie McDonald, and I'm speaking on behalf of Global Partners Digital, a human rights organization focused on digital governance. And we are also a member of the

Global Digital Rights Coalition for WSIS, and so I support the previous two statements you heard.

Thank you very much, Ambassador Lokaale, for once again joining to our perspectives. We really appreciate your dedication to ensuring an inclusive process and real commitment taking on board the feedback you've heard. We would also like to applaud you on a well-crafted Zero Draft. There are many positive elements that we would like to see retained. Most of all, we would like to see the draft's careful balance preserved. This is why it's so critical in our view that the strong anchoring in international human rights law and multistakeholder cooperation is retained as the basis for effective Internet governance. Human rights-based Internet governance is central to achieving the objectives of the WSIS and to delivering equitable digital transformation. Paragraphs 1, 9, and 10 of the introduction and operative paragraph 77 to 93 offer many important references, stipulating the obligations of states and informing non-state actors of their responsibilities.

And if I may, Your Excellency, I'd like to ask some questions and also offer some suggestions on the process. I would like to ask three questions in particular. The first is will non-governmental stakeholders be able to observe the inter-governmental negotiations at a minimum? The second is will Revision 1 and all subsequent revisions be made public with annotations to indicate the changes between drafts and proposals by member states? And the third is to ask if, as you have done so far in the process, will

written input be invited on Revision 1 and on all subsequent revisions alongside parallel consultations?

In asking these, I'd also like to applaud all the efforts you've already made to integrate some of the recommendations offered by the cross-stakeholder community in a five-point plan and eight practical recommendations, and also to alert you to a new recently published statements offering 10 steps to ensure inclusive participation in the inter-governmental phase. We think it's really critical that non-governmental stakeholders being able to continue to follow the process so that we can respond in real time and offer practical advice and suggestions related to proposals being made. Thank you very much for your attention.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you very much. I will take one further comment before giving the floor to Ambassador to respond. Please.

VITTORIO BERTOLA

Thank you. I'm Vittorio Bertola from Open-Xchange, a private sector within the technical community, and also a former member of the working group on Internet Governance that came up with the IGF 20 years ago. First of all, thank you for confirming the mandate of the IGF and strengthening it. I think it's a really good thing.

I just wanted to make a general comment and point out one thing. If you go out and ask the people what's not working with the Internet, usually they will refer to the social economic impact of

technologies like social media, AI, so they will refer to something that happens at the application level, the way the companies and people use the Internet, not at the technical infrastructure level or at the architecture of the Internet.

Of course we have to find a way to bring more multistakeholderism to decisions that are currently taken only by very few, very big companies from one or two countries at the most. I think that's a political problem. This can possibly only happen through the coercive power of states or through national sovereignty. Even if it will bring a bit of fragmentation, it will still be better than not having anything to govern on this mechanism. But please, do not use this as a way to change what is working. Do not fix stuff that is not broken. I think that the way we have successfully in the last 30 years organized the technical governance of the Internet, of the technical resources, is basically working. So, please don't break anything that is already working. Let us continue working like we have been doing. Thank you.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you very much. Now I will invite Ambassador to answer questions that was about the statistics and access to Internet, bridging digital gap, and procedural questions on participation in negotiations of observers and comments, and whether Rev1 will be public.

EKITELA LOKAALE

First, let me acknowledge the immense support that we received from UN DESA, who have been the secretariat. They are doing a fantastic job. And perhaps, Deniz, if you don't mind, feel free to join us here so that you help clarify some of the points that might fall on the laps of the secretariat. Now colleagues, first let me thank you for the very kind remarks about the Zero Draft. It goes to where it is, thanks to your feedback, which we have taken very seriously. We intend to do that until the end of this process.

Now, we've taken a lot of the positive comments about sustainability on IGF funding mechanisms and so on. That's the permanent role of the technical community, multistakeholder engagement and so on. Straight to the questions, I agree with Anriette that there is some concern about the way statistics have been presented or represented in the draft. These have been raised by a number of delegations also in New York. We are actually looking at the draft now to see how to either present them better, or even in the interest of brevity, perhaps leave out those that might not serve a useful purpose. That's being looked into. Without, of course, taking away from the reality that there persists digital agenda divide. A divide that leaves out persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups.

The role of financing mechanisms, we are also playing our minds to that. It's been expressed as one of the important priorities for a considerable number of stakeholders. We are looking at how to do it because we might not conclusively address the issue of financing mechanisms in the outcome document. One of the options we are

looking at is the suggestion by a number of groups to leave room for a working group to work out the details of how financing for the WSIS action lines and work will be done. Same goes for measurement and targets and some of the other concrete work that needs to go into ensuring that we're able to measure this.

On the procedural question, colleagues, I'm sure you will sympathize with Ambassador Janina and I, that we've really tried to push the bounds of stakeholder participation. But at the same time, we do not want to be the two ambassadors that came and broke all the rules of the United Nations. So, we do this creatively but also carefully not to violate rules of intergovernmental negotiations. I'm sure you will very kindly agree with me that negotiations on texts, at least at this point until the rules are changed, are in many ways between member states or among member states.

We've tried to create spaces for stakeholders to give their input. In 2015, for example, there was an improvement. Because stakeholders were actually allowed in the General Assembly and even addressed, we are very actively looking out for opportunities to stretch the space a bit further, but I cannot here and now promise that we are going to ensure that that happens because of the real present risk of certain member states stolen the process and saying that this is no longer being conducted according to the rules and regulations of intergovernmental negotiations.

So, I ask for your patience. This is something that we are exercising our minds to. Consulting, of course, with the UN secretariat to see what is possible. But I cannot give you a straight answer that I will open the doors for everybody to walk through. I wish I could because that's really where my heart is, but there are the four corners of the rules and regulations, if you get what I mean.

Deniz is here. Would you like to—on the versions and whether we were to make them public? We've been having some logistical challenges. It still remains our intention to make this as open and transparent as possible. However, even out of the negotiations with member states last week, the possibility of reflecting all the proposals and track changes in the text from member states alone took the draft, I think, from 10 pages to 30 or 90 pages already, from about 10,000 words to 35,000 words. For reasons of being practical, sometimes we've had to think around how to do it efficiently, making sure that we get the views without overburdening the process with too much detail or text. But Deniz from UN DESA will clarify that. Thank you.

DENIZ SUZAR

Thank you. I can start with the last point that Ambassador made. All the submissions on the Zero Draft from government and non-government stakeholders are circulated to all member states through an indicative spreadsheet. If you go to WSIS+20 website, you would see there are now two spreadsheets that member states also received to inform their negotiations. There is one

spreadsheet by member states and another one with non-governments. It's not fully complete. All the written submissions are online.

After the launch of Rev1, we will be guided by the co-facilitators. But it is practice that we would publish the Rev1 online. The consultations, again, we would be guided by the co-facilitators what kind of consultations written inputs or maybe an online consultation to get all the feedbacks on the Rev1. But for us and for the co-facilitators, it would be much appreciated if all the inputs to Rev1 are directly onto the paragraphs or missing paragraphs so that it's easy for every stakeholder to understand the inputs.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you very much. I would like also to say that there are about 100 remote participants following our session. I see about seven or eight people lining at the microphone. Please, without further ado, your comment or question, sir.

ISRAEL ROSAS

Thank you. I'm Israel Rosas with the Internet Society. Excellency, I want to thank you and UN DESA for the openness that you have shown as the process is progressing. As mentioned on previous occasions, we have commended the Zero Draft as a good start for the negotiations as it reflects much of what you heard from the community. But we'd also like to note that it needs sharpening to achieve an impactful outcome. With only a few weeks away from

the high-level meeting, we recognize the complexity of reaching positions at this stage. Although our proposals aim to lighten that board and they can only be effective if the process is state of transference as possible so that we are thankful for your efforts. Regular public updates on the text will let us mobilize expertise and offer ideas to reach differences at the speed that you need.

We respectfully present four priorities to keep in mind as it progresses. One, keep the WSIS vision as a compass. Reaffirm the WSIS vision and the Geneva and Tunis outcomes as the backbone for the WSIS+10 Review, following the WSIS+10 approach. That continuity anchors the review in consensus principles on solid grounds that already work.

Two, build on what works, scale and impact. The WSIS action lines remain the right map. Prioritize open multistakeholder and interoperable implementation methods across the UN tracks. Including the global digital compact. Ambition comes from a scaling impact, not multiplying processes.

Three, strengthen the IEF ecosystem the best way possible. For a permanent mandate to be meaningful, the WSIS+10 Review needs to set a clear pathway for sustainable long-term refinancing rather than differing the question for later consideration.

And four, name the enabling conditions. Leads [deliver] that all stakeholders can pull now to support meaningful connectivity and an open globally connected secure and trustworthy Internet.

Across all of these four priorities, please keep the multistakeholder model front and center. Keep consulting closely with non-governmental stakeholders as the text evolves. No stakeholder can deliver this agenda alone and without meaningful collaboration, we will miss opportunities to succeed. With timely visibility, we can bring targeted language and evidence that could narrow gaps faster. Thank you.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you for your comments. Next, gentleman over there.

SÉBASTIEN BACHOLLET

I will talk French. I'll let you grab your headsets if you need any in order to benefit from the interpreting. I'm Sébastien Bachollet. Up until Thursday, I was the chairman of EURALO and co-organizer of the IGF in France.

First and foremost, I believe we should use the different languages available today. And I would like to call upon the colleagues here in the room to speak their mother tongue. And I'd like to thank the interpreters. Obviously, I'm speaking in my own name and I have no written speech. We support the continuance of the IGF and we want to support the IGF. We also want to support all the sub-regional structures of the IGF. They also deserve all our attention and we should still preserve the bottom-up approach.

ICANN is indeed an organization that deals with unique identifiers, and it is therefore part of the technical community, but it's also a

multistakeholder structure. And each of these stakeholders can address issues in other fields. I try to be a voice of final users in the architecture of the WSIS+20 and the IGF. And I try to bring voice to the civil society in these forums.

I don't have the two minutes because I don't know when to stop so I'll just keep on going. We also talk a lot about the multistakeholder model. I believe there's more than one multistakeholder model, and the one at ICANN is one of them. It works well for ICANN. It could work well in other domains but I believe that other types of multistakeholder models could be deployed.

Finally, I'd like to invite His Excellency at the IGF in Paris on November 13th. Thank you for organizing this session.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you, Sébastien, for these comments. I'd like to give the floor to the next speaker. You have the floor.

PALOMA LARA CASTRO

I'm Paloma Lara Castro. I'm representing Derechos Digitales. We're a Latin American organization working on human rights. We're also part of the WSIS Coalition, the Gender Coalition and the Global Digital Justice Forum.

First of all, we would like to thank Ambassador for your ongoing efforts to ensure human rights perspective and also your commitment to a multistakeholder approach. My intervention focuses on one thematic and two cross-cutting priorities that we

believe are essential to strengthen the Zero Draft and ensure that the WSIS+20 provides our operational accountable framework to deliver a rights-based and inclusive digital future, AI, gender equality and corporate accountability.

First, on AI. We welcome the attention given in the Zero Draft but call for a stronger rights-based language. AI governance must ensure that human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected and protected throughout the entire life cycle of the technology and that no system incompatible with international human rights law is deployed. The text should also affirm digital sovereignty and the right to development, allowing all countries to shape their own regulatory frameworks while upholding public value and inclusion. We urge the inclusion on provisions for mandatory impact assessments, transparency and reporting on serious AI incidents.

Second, on gender. While we believe that the ideal approach will be to establish a dedicated action line on gender equality, if action lines are not reopened, we believe it's crucial to ensure effective gender mainstreaming across all of them, going further than what is now first seen in paragraph 131. This means integrated gender perspective in areas such as data governance, AI, capacity building, and digital inclusion, and not treating gender just as an add-on issue, nor as a matter that is restricted to women and girls. Gender equality must be incorporated from an intersectional approach, including gender diverse groups and operationalized through measurable indicators, reporting mechanisms, mandatory gender

impact assessments for ICT and AI policies, and participation of gender diverse stakeholders in implementation and review processes. We also call on the recognition of DFGBV, on the need to address DFGBV. However, we do need to uphold the way to approach it from a balanced perspective that actually respects all balance of rights.

Third, on corporate accountability. This is my final point. We strongly support paragraph 83 of the Zero Draft, but urge this expansion to include accountability for non-compliance with the UN guiding principles on business and human rights. Private sector actors hold immense power on Internet dynamics. In some cases, even larger than Global South states, so they must be held responsible for algorithm discrimination, online harms, and failures to provide access to remedies. State should commit to mandatory human rights due diligence for technology companies and to ensuring independent oversight and effective redress for rights violations perpetuated by them. Thank you.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you very much for these passionate comments. Is there anything online, apart from the following? No? Please then, the microphone from my right.

TORSTEN KRAUSE

Thanks. Good morning. Hello, my name is Torsten Krause. I'm working with the Digital Opportunities Foundation in Germany. I'm

engaged with the Dynamic Coalition on Child Rights, on Internet Governance Forum, and also with EURALO here at ICANN. I'm speaking on my own behalf. And as a political scientist and child rights researcher, I would touch on another group.

As you may know, in 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a convention on child rights to ensure that the rights of children are respected and that they are recognized as a vulnerable group and their rights are fulfilled. From a child rights perspective, we consider the reference in paragraph 6 of the paper to the rule of law being essential for building a human-centered information society. In this regard, we want to underline the need to uphold the UNCRC as a cornerstone of a human rights-based approach.

I would like to suggest two amendments to the paper. First, to paragraph 46 as follows, "To ensure children's best interests and their personal integrity in the digital environment, their rights to protection, provision and participation must be respected and fulfilled in a balanced approach, not prioritizing one right over another."

The second suggestion as an amendment to paragraph 59, "Children's perspectives shall be presented either by themselves or by child rights advocates to ensure their views are given to weight in Internet governance in accordance with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child." Thanks for your patience and engagement.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you very much also for textual proposals. We will share with Ambassador the transcript of this session, so it will be captured. Please, microphone on my left now.

JACQUELINE PIGATTO

Thank you so much. Thank you, Ambassador, for this opportunity. My name is Jacqueline Pigatto. I speak on behalf of Data Privacy Brazil, and I'm also part of the Global Digital Rights Coalition for WSIS, so I support the previous statements of my colleagues.

I would like to highlight the several mentions on previous consultations, including by governments, to the Sao Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines agreed upon last year in the NETmundial+10 to strengthen and advance the multistakeholder model. And I would also like to express our concern with the risks of narrowing the mandate of the IGF and the risks of misinterpretation of Internet governance that is different from the Tunis Agenda which isolate the IGF from a broader digital technology policy and governance.

That would be my main points. Thank you, again, for this opportunity.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you very much. Please, Ana.

ANA AMOROSO DAS NEVES

Thank you. I'm going to speak in Portuguese. I'm waiting. I'm still waiting. I think it's number 7, isn't it?

Good morning, Mr. Ambassador Lokaale, Mr. Karklins, dear participants, Deniz. I'd like to mention several matters about the IGF. I'm Ana Neves. Sorry, I didn't introduce myself. I'm from Portugal, a member of the GAC. I'm worried about the way the IGF is being treated or was treated in the Zero Draft. Because there were many technical aspects dealt more than necessary. This is about the digital transformation. So, I take into account the different organizations of the UN and other organizations. I think that there should be a way of working together so that the IGF would be the real space that was conceived in the Tunis Agenda with all the subjects that are going to be discussed over in the future and the competition end with the competitions between different fora. Governments battle between themselves and get into disputes with different disputes in different fora. So the WSIS+20 should be used to improve the method of accuracy also and consistency in these fora. There should be very valuable instruments between all the parties and they should be recognized.

The importance of all these as a response to the multistakeholder movement and the Commission for Technology should think over what should be its mandate. It's a space where we could discuss and analyze all the different reports but it should be more than that. It should not only deal or be among governments, there

should be other stakeholders involved. This should be rethought and redone. Thank you.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you, Ana, for these comments. Next one, please, on my left.

ASHUTOSH
MAHARAJ

AKHILESH Thank you, Your Excellency. I'm Ashutosh. I'm an ICANN84 Fellow from Fiji.

My comment is mostly from the perspective of the small islands and developing states. If the draft could highlight both the process and the unique challenges faced by these Small Island Developing States in achieving the WSIS outcomes, particularly in areas such as connectivity, affordability, and resilience, the countries have made meaningful strides, yet they face structural barriers like geographic scale and resource limitations.

My question is how does the WSIS+20 Review ensure that the voice of these small island development state remote communities are adequately represented in shaping the post 2025 Digital Agenda, and also if the draft could include a stronger recognition of climate vulnerability as a key factor influencing ICT development in island nations for the Small Island Developing States, digital resilience, and climate resilience go hand in hand, and this connection could be clearly reflected in the outcome of the document. Thank you.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you very much. I will take maybe a few more comments and questions before asking the Ambassador to answer them. Please.

ELONNAI HICKOK

Thank you so much. My name is Elonnai Hickok, and I'm from the Global Network Initiative. We are a multistakeholder network working towards responsible business conduct. We are also a member of the Global Digital Rights Coalition, and I support what my colleagues have said today. We welcome the Zero Draft, and believe it is a strong draft, the several elements that should be defended throughout the negotiations, including sections on human rights, the IGF, Internet governance multistakeholder participation.

My intervention today focuses on private sector accountability. We welcome the text on private sector accountability in paragraph 83, but we believe that it can be strengthened by referencing the responsibility of companies to conduct human rights due diligence and human rights impact assessments throughout the product lifecycle when developing and implementing policies and when moving into new markets by emphasizing the need for transparency, independent oversight, and remedy, especially in relation to content moderation, algorithmic systems and surveillance. Strong language on private sector accountability and recognition of the UNGPs is essential for establishing a clear standard and shared understanding of the commitments and responsibilities expected from the private sector. Such clarity

allows for the protection of user rights and helps protect against government overreach in the form of overly broad regulations and actions such as Internet shutdowns. Thank you very much.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you very much for your comments. Now, I invite the speaker on my left.

DHRUV DHODY

Thank you. I'm Dhruv Dhody from the Internet Architecture Board of the Internet Engineering Task Force, the IETF, the leading standard development organization for the global Internet.

First of all, we thank the co-facilitators for their leadership in guiding the whole process. We especially appreciate you coming to the ICANN and experience the multistakeholder approach in practice, where IETF also does multistakeholder in our own unique flavor. As the process advances towards intergovernmental negotiation, we hope that the strong language that we have currently for multistakeholder model remains.

With meaningful participation from all stakeholders, including us, the technical community, and from the IAB, we reaffirm our commitment to the process and we will contribute our expertise as needed. We welcome the strong language on Zero Draft, on single global interoperable Internet and avoiding fragmentation, as already pointed out by Kurtis, the CEO of ICANN, and on promoting sustainability for all digital technologies. These are central for our

continued stability and growth of the Internet. And as negotiation moves forward, we hope that they are not weakened and lost as the process moves on. Furthermore, explicitly rejecting practices like censorship, surveillance, Internet shutdowns, and commitment to sustainability is essential to maintaining trust in all our digital environments and ensuring that the Internet continues to be a driver for both innovation and development for all.

Thank you. We thank the co-facilitators, the UN DESA. We stand ready to continue with our engagement to ensure that the outcome reflects the shared principles of Internet that we all have here. Thank you.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you very much. Ambassador, would you like to answer briefly on the question and reflection of climate issues in the draft that was asked?

EKITELA LOKAALE

Thank you very much. Let me repeat that we are taking all these comments. Deniz is doing that. Then we also have two colleagues, Tony and [inaudible], who are here with us. We are taking all your comments, trust us. If I don't have to comment on them, it's not because we are ignoring them. We'll take them into consideration.

Now, on the issue of Small Island States, we've tried in the draft to identify them as among the countries that require measures to help them bridge the digital divide. I don't have the specific reference on

top of my head, but there's a paragraph that lists Developing Countries, Small Island States, and so on. But I think we get your point that perhaps we need a more prominent and consistent reference to the concerns of the Small Island States, so the point is taken.

Similarly, there's a section on environmental and ethical dimensions in the draft. The whole idea of that section was to reflect the environmental concerns within digital governance, and also noting that some of the emerging technologies are going to require a lot of energy, AI, for example, and the data centers. And that might lead to, perhaps, if not handled well, further degradation of the environment. I think we're going to look at that section again. We received very good feedback from member states, as well as other stakeholders, on how to strengthen that section. And we take note of that point. Thank you.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you very much, Ambassador. Do we have something from online? Questions? Comments? No, nothing. We have remaining 10 minutes. Please bear that in mind when you make your comments. Try to be succinct. Please, I have microphone on my right.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE

Please, gentle reminder to please speak slowly.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE

[Foreign language] ...IGF and also, I think, some points that have been reflected by also reflection from this informal signing board as well, on the regional, sub-regional, and youth IGF. And here, would like to strengthen upon, again, the point of equitable access and accountability for a human-centric digital future, and also, strong representation for youth as respected co-creators of the process. Since here in ICANN, we also have NextGen and Fellows. I'm a Fellow now. I think it's a very good platform here to reiterate how to make youth as a strong contributor of the process as well. It's very important, since that we also have a joint effort that we previously submitted from nearly 70 youth leaders from 18 APAC economies.

With those submissions, we want to emphasize that the accountability and inclusivity part needs to recognize that we, as youth, are not beneficiary of this digital age but we are also co-creators for this future. To call for us, the youth to be recognized as the sustained stakeholder groups and we need to structure inclusions. That's something that we've already been included in the written submission and the verbal one. Here, again, we want to call for key actions to prioritize equitable access and digital inclusions, strengthening accountability, and human-centric governance, as well as recognizing youth as a sustained stakeholder group. Here, I just want to share my gratitude for giving space for us to foster a more inclusive and also kind of a future. Thank you very much.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you. Now, next comment on the microphone on my left.

SUKRITI JAIN

Thank you. I'm Sukriti, and I represent the Center for Communication Governance, Delhi, India. We are an academic research organization working on technology governance and digital rights. We will be basing our recommendations from a consultation with stakeholders in India on WSIS+20. I'd like to start by commending the Zero Drafts rights-based approach with recognition of inclusivity, accessibility, and equity. We also congratulate the efforts of the co-facilitators in seeking inputs through multiple consultations.

We want to highlight that while the Zero Draft recognizes the global disparities in achieving the WSIS vision, it falls short of acknowledging the structural inequalities that hinder development and participation from much of the Global South. While it is commendable to see Zero Draft recommend technology transfers and financing mechanisms to support development and inclusion, it should include specific obligations on governments, private sector, and other stakeholders to ensure such implementation. We think it is important that the Zero Draft emphasize on accountability and liabilities for the private sector for violations of human rights.

We also submit that the Zero Draft should further require tech corporations and businesses developing AI technologies to incorporate measures for algorithmic accountability and transparency towards development of responsible AI. We highlight the need to democratizing access to AI and infrastructure to ensure we have AI ecosystems around the world rather than concentration of this industry in the Global North. We also emphasize on the need for embedding human rights conceptions and a broader definition of AI safety for AI governments. Thank you so much.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you for your comments. We have remaining five minutes for this session. Please.

ANTOINE BARBRY

I will speak French. Speak slowly because English language interpreters are not having a lot of practice this morning. I am Antoine Barbry. I represent the International Organization of Francophonie.

We have taken part in this process and I would like to take a moment to stress the fact that this process gives importance to digital inclusion. But I would like to also highlight one element that is often not addressed. Beyond the cost of access to digital infrastructure, there is one item that is not sufficiently taken into account. It's cultural and linguistic diversity of content.

How can one say that Internet is inclusive if people do not have access to local content in their own language? This is a factor of exclusion. If the language of your country is not a dominant language, you might only have access to content that you cannot understand. Thus, I would like to stress the importance to go beyond cultural diversity and really achieve content diversity. And this is all the more important given the current developments of AI. AIs are being trained in a restricted amount of languages and we know this will further strengthen AI biases. Therefore, we must ensure transparency of algorithms. Algorithms must be trained on diverse data and diverse languages. We must also facilitate the development of local content, and I would like to thank ICANN for the efforts they've done in that regard.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you, Antoine, for your comment. I believe we will be taking a final comment. You have the floor on the left.

MIRACLE ONYEBUCHIM

My name is Miracle, I'm an ICANN84 Fellow. I want to say a special welcome, [inaudible], to Your Excellency. I'm Nigerian, but I live and work in the U.S. As a result, I have the privilege of having been born and raised in a developing economy like Nigeria, and also living and working in a developed economy like the U.S. I work with the Cyber Secure Lab in the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

Your Excellency, my concern is not really for now, it's for the future. The work that I do is about making sure that the Internet of the future is one that is inclusive. I want to lend credence to the concerns raised in paragraph 14 and 44 of the Zero Draft that talks about the future generation and digital divide.

Throughout the work that I've done, one major misconception we have when we talk about digital divide is to think that this is only a concern for developing economies. But I want to please suggest that we deepen the concern. Because even in the U.S. where I work, we are seeing that there's a huge digital divide in how we prepare students and youth for the Internet of the future. We are seeing that people with well-to-do parents that can afford extra classes, afford tools for their kids, they are already having a long advantage ahead of students or people that live in not so well-to-do households or in poorer districts. And there's really no concern or considered efforts to make sure that we are preparing the future generation for equitable access to the Internet. I think that it's something that the Zero Drafts should pay attention to. We want a future where everyone has equal access and everyone has the same opportunities and the opportunities for the Internet of tomorrow is not dependent on where you live or how much money your parents have.

I would plead that as we do this, we should not just concern ourselves with the Global South, sub-Saharan Africa and developing economies, established economies like the U.S. In the U.S., according to the work that CSTA has done, just about 12% of

the 50 states actually have very conscious efforts to us making sure that K-12 education has an inclusive and equitable curriculum for students. Please, I want to ensure that the WSIS also pays attention to developed economies so that this is very broadly inclusive. Thank you very much.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you. It is exactly 12:00. Session should end now. But since we started two minutes late, I will invite another to take one minute before giving Ambassador a chance to say concluding remarks. Please.

SADICHCHHA SILWAL

Thank you so much for this opportunity. I am Sadichchha Silwal from Nepal with NextGen Program of ICANN.

As we are in the process of WSIS+20 Review, I want to echo all the comments and questions of previous speakers. Along with that, I want to highlight a critical issue. Over 60% of global population faces several Internet restrictions, including Internet shutdown, DNS blocking and surveillance. While the draft emphasized on Internet penetration, but this restriction widened the digital divide, denying the millions access to information, freedom, and digital rights. We must prioritize addressing this politically motivated Internet shutdown, DNS abuse, and surveillance to ensure that the Internet does not become the tool for shrinking civic space, but remain a platform for empowerment and inclusion. Thank you.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you very much. Ambassador, you have 35 seconds for the concluding remarks.

EKITELA LOKAALE

All I can say in the 35 seconds is thank you for very openly sharing your concerns. We always appreciate that and we will make every effort to reflect that in the outcome document.

Second thing, we are committed to the multistakeholder model and we intend to keep it that way.

Third is we are here for, I think, a couple more days. Deniz, [inaudible], if you can please just stand up so that colleagues can come and see you. [Inaudible] is from the Albanian mission and works very closely with Ambassador Janina and I. And then Tony from the Kenyan mission, I think, has stepped out. We are available. If you can stop us on the corridors or walk in some room which ICANN has very generously avail to us, we are here to listen to you. If there are any concerns, feel free to let us know.

Finally, I know many of you come from countries... Actually, all of you. I don't think anyone is from space yet. Reach out to your governments, reach out to your delegations in New York. If there are those concerns which you'd like to channel to us through your delegations, your embassies in New York, please, I would encourage you to do that, because then that way, they get reflected in the course of intergovernmental negotiations. Mine is to thank

you again for generously sharing your time with me and my delegation. Thank you.

JANIS KARKLINS

Thank you very much. Now I will use my 25 seconds to thank you for your presence here. Deniz, Representative of UN DESA, for your availability and willingness to listen. Everyone in the room for participation as well as those 100 online participants for listening these consultations. Thank you very much. With this, this session is adjourned.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]