
ICANN84 | AGM – GNSO: Bridging Perspectives on WSIS+20 from the Technical Community and Civil Society
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ANDREA GLANDON

Hello, and welcome to Bridging Perspectives on WSIS+20 from the Technical Community and Civil Society Session. Please note that this session is being recorded and is governed by the ICANN Community Participant Code of Conduct, the ICANN Expected Standards of Behavior, and the ICANN Community Anti-Harassment Policy.

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RAFIK DAMMAK

Thanks, Andrea, and thanks for everyone for joining us today in the last session of this day number four or five. I stopped counting of this ICANN meeting. And I hope you are full of energy for this session.

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Just to kind of set the scene and expand what are the objectives for this workshop that we are organizing between NCSG, Global Partners Digital, and GNI, we were aiming to highlight key topics of shared importance between the different stakeholders during this WSIS+20 Review process. And we hope that at the end, when we finish from the session is that everyone get a better sense about the opportunities and risks that's raised from this WSIS+20 Review. And the most important, that we understand all that it's how we can coordinate advocacy that can shape the language in the final outcome. I think that's important because we want to influence that final document and to understand that from a process and implementation standpoint.

For that, we invited several speakers and members from the different stakeholders and coalition to present from their side what they are hearing from their community. So that's kind of good in terms of exchange. We are trying to go more to focus on few topics of interest. So that's just to understand what we are trying to do for the next one hour.

And to present our speakers, so we have from NCSG, Farzaneh Badii, and that's also from Digital Medusa. Also we have Anriette Esterhuysen—sorry, Anriette—who is the senior advisor in Global Regional Internet Governance, and also from APC. And from the technical community, we have Ajith Francis, the policy manager from PIR. In addition to that, as I said in the beginning, we are co-organizing this with GNI and the Global Partners Digital. So we have Elonnai Hickok, the managing director of the Global Network

Initiative, who will start first to give an overview and where we are at in this process, and what's the stake for the Draft Zero. And then we have Rose Payne from Global Partners Digital, and she will be managing and do the moderation. My role will stop here. With that, I pass to and hand over to Elonnai.

ELONNAI HICKOK

Thanks so much, Rafik. Maybe first, just to say thank you to NCSG for co-organizing this with us. We're quite excited to be having this conversation. My name is Elonnai. I'm from the Global Network Initiative. GNI is a multistakeholder initiative working towards responsible business conduct in the tech sector. We're also a member of the Global Digital Rights Coalition, working on coordinating WSIS inputs. So very excited to be here. We're also collaborating with GPD to implement a project supported by the inaugural ICANN Grant Program, which is focused on enabling multistakeholder participation and global majority participation in the WSIS+20 process.

So I'll just give very quickly a little bit of a background about the process, what has happened, what's going to be happening, and then what are some of the key points that are showing up in the Zero Draft right now. In terms of the process, I think, overall, the biggest comment is that civil society has, thus far, found the WSIS+20 process to be very inclusive, and in a positive, there's been multiple consultations. The co-facs, initially these were government consultations next to civil society and other

stakeholder consultations. They have now combined that. So we're having multistakeholder consultations, which has been very nice.

Earlier in the summer, we had the Elements paper. I think the general reaction to the Elements paper was that there was a lot to be strengthened. In late summer, we got the Zero Draft, and I think the Zero Draft was a much stronger draft that came out.

There's also been the creation of something called the International Multistakeholder Sounding Board. This is comprised of, again, it's multistakeholder, and it's taking inputs and it's synthesizing those inputs and presenting it to the co-facs. It was meant to be a mechanism to help facilitate deeper multistakeholder participation in the process. I think, generally, the co-facs have been very accessible. They were at IGF, they were at the WSIS high-level event. They're here. So all that's been very positive.

We hear that Rev1 now is going to come out in November, that there's going to be consultations across November, and then in December, the final text will be negotiated.

So, in terms of where we are at with the Zero Draft, like I said, I think it's a very strong draft, and many in civil society have been taking the position that the text needs to be defended. In particular, I think the draft is strong on human rights. It could also be strengthened by embedding human rights into topic-specific areas such as artificial intelligence or digital public infrastructure. I think the multistakeholder participation and references to multistakeholder

approach to Internet governance is also a strength of the draft. Asks have been for the integration of the São Paulo principles to strengthen the draft.

The draft recognizes the importance of the interoperable free and open Internet, and particularly it rejects state control, which I think is a very important component of it. The draft recognizes the permanent mandate of the IGF. I think there's been discussion around ensuring that the scope of the IGF, though, is appropriately delineated in the draft, and it's clear how national, regional, and the global IGF will all work together.

The Zero Draft references private sector accountability and the UNGPs. I think this is an improvement from the Elements paper. But again, there are ways that this text could be made stronger. I think financing mechanisms, and where we finally land on the financing mechanisms in the draft would be an open question.

Alignment of the GDC with the WSIS, this is referenced, but what this will look like in practice is another open question, as well as metrics and indicators. And I think just an overall comment on it is that the draft is strong. There's still a lot of questions about operational guidance for some of the things referenced within the Zero Draft.

And maybe just to conclude, yesterday, G9, GPD, we held a workshop. It was cross-stakeholder to try to find areas of, let's say, synergy and alignment between stakeholder groups. And that conversation focused on human rights, multistakeholder approach

to Internet governance, AI and data connectivity and access as potential points where bridges can be built between stakeholder groups. So maybe with that framing, I can pass it to either back to Rafik or to Rose. To Rose? Go ahead.

ROSE PAYNE

Perfect, great. Thank you so much, Elonnai. That was very comprehensive. I think I don't want to take too much time because we've only got an hour, and I'm hoping that we can actually have a discussion and a chat about some of these things. So I might turn straight to you, Farzaneh.

As we've kind of just had the multistakeholder approach is one of the key topics under WSIS+20, as a key member of the NCSG, you've worked in multistakeholder spaces for many years. So, I'd love to ask you specifically about this topic. What does the Zero Draft actually say about the multistakeholder approach, and perhaps how can all stakeholders work together to ensure that WSIS+20 really does reinforce the multistakeholder approach to Internet governance?

FARZANEH BADI

Thank you. Thank you very much, Rose. At NCSG, we have these long-standing values. We care about multistakeholder model. We actually practice multistakeholder model. Non-Commercial Stakeholder Group is a civil society group inside of a very important policy development organization called the GNSO. We have

representatives on the Council, and we actively get involved with companies and other stakeholders to come up with policies about the allocation of domain. So it is very important for us to keep. Because it is the multistakeholder model that has allowed us to attend ICANN meeting on equal footing—well, almost an equal footing—we don’t have an advisory role. We have a real, effective policymaking role, so they have to take us seriously. And because of that, because of the equal footing that it provides, it’s not through our national representatives that we bring our viewpoints, it’s through NCSG and the multistakeholder model. So it is very important for us to protect that structure and work with others.

So, at the moment, I looked at the Zero Draft, and I believe that it’s very strong on protecting the multistakeholder model. There might be several phrasing, like they mentioned like countries, they don’t mention stakeholders. They mentioned stakeholders but in some of the phrasing, they say that countries should participate. It would be good to have stakeholders and countries and stuff like that, but these are very minor. The draft is very strong in protecting and advocating for the multistakeholder model. I don’t know, you mentioned, how operationally that’s going to be successful, but what I fear is—and I don’t have an idea of what other comments say about the Zero Draft because not everybody agrees with us, right? So I’m hoping that we actually support the Zero Draft.

So, in order to do that, I just want to raise a few of the issues that we really care about and it should be reinstated. One is that when we talk about like abuse and handling abuse, we do this at ICANN

as well, mitigating abuse always has to have human rights safeguards. And it might be better to actually have also like phrasing on human rights standards as well as human rights law, because human rights standards could be, in a sense, more stakeholders can participate in human rights standard making. As well as we don't like the state-centric governance emphasis. It's not that the current draft is not state-centric, but the wording the draft has improved. But we want to reinforce that the state-centric governance mechanism, because it is the UN at the end of the day, right? It should be multistakeholder and it should advocate for the multistakeholder model.

The other factor that we've been discussing, we don't want internal fragmentation to happen because we want global access to domain names. And one of the misconception is that whenever this word sovereignty comes around, like people have different interpretations, fortunately, the Zero Draft, there is only once that sovereign nation, the language, is mentioned, but we still want to emphasize that we shouldn't interpret data sovereignty as a tool for data localization. That could lead to national filtering. Also, we want to avoid careless advocacy for infrastructure level control that can undermine a single interoperable Internet.

We have members of NCSG that are actually here. At NCSG, we didn't have the time to do a full consultation with NCSG. Our members, Article 19, has commented on WSIS+20, also APC, I saw that there was a comment. I hope that nothing I said here goes in conflict with that, but if it does, we should just reopen the issue. All

I'm saying here is that the Zero Draft looks great at the moment, but they are in the comments and feedback, and I don't think that every commenter is going to think like us. They are going to want to change it because it's so nice. We have been very effective in bringing civil society perspective to the process. And to be honest, I have never been impressed in process this much, and I'm not impressed easily. Not by the UN process. I actually like the fact that civil society works so hard on this. But also I think that the leaders of the WSIS+20, they are very much on the side of multistakeholder governance, and I just feel the trust and wanting to work with us.

Now, implementation, all that, that's just a whole other issue, and that's about it. From our members, we are going to have questions about the process and how, if we can make a public comment, if we get the time, or we might be able to endorse a position. Thank you.

ROSE PAYNE

Great. Thank you so much. Yes. I mean, it sounds like this is one area where you feel that it really is about defending what's there in a good Zero Draft. Of course, we have already seen some draft submissions from some countries which do undermine the language that we like to see already, and there have been some indications that this will be a key topic of discussion. So, hopefully, when we come to the discussion session, this is something that we can reflect on together, how we actually defend.

Great. Anriette, I'm going to turn to you next. It would be great if you could share a little bit particularly on the kind of civil society

and global majority perspectives on connectivity and access as a kind of foundational piece of the WSIS as the foundational thing that needs to be in place to achieve a people-centered information society. And specifically tell us what does the Zero Draft say so far about connectivity and access? What's the good, what's missing? And then potentially a little bit about the actual concrete ideas on the table to address digital divides and inequalities, particularly through financing.

ANRIETTE ESTERHUYSEN

Thanks very much, Rose. Just to tell you a bit about myself, I've been in NCSG, APC. The organization I represent is a network of civil society organizations around the world, and I think some of the members are also here. Just a very overarching comment, I think, and you'll see this reflected in the submissions from civil society organizations from the Global South in particular, is that WSIS is not just about Internet governance. When you listen to the discussions about WSIS here at ICANN and in many of the IG spaces, you'd think that all we need is permanent renewal or permanent mandate for the IGF and the multistakeholder approach, and that's it. But in fact, WSIS emerged and has been a process of creating more digital inclusion globally, and it's primarily about ICT for development.

The Tunis Agenda did talk about Internet governance, and we have the broad definition and all the interesting issues we've talked about. And I think what you see reflected in many of the

submissions from civil society is that ultimately digital inequality remains our major issue, and that unless there is more digital equality, as in meaningful access, any future investment, be it digital public infrastructure or AI or any other form of digitalization, is not actually going to close the divide. It will just create new and deeper divides.

The Zero Draft, Rose, you asked, what does it say? It talks a lot about divide. It has a section on digital divide. It has a heading on digital economy, and it has a heading on social and economic development as well, I think. And to some extent, I think what the result of all this is that it ends up highlighting it, but it ends up not prioritizing it. And I think what we would like to see in the next draft is just more recognition, firstly, that what we've done in the last 20 years has not worked. As I said in the session here on Monday, yesterday morning, if we have 37% Internet penetration in Africa, is that a success? It can't be. And there's not sufficient recognition that the model, the assumptions that were made about how digitalization and access would grow have failed. So we would like to see some recognition of that, and then we'd like to see some prioritization at the level of the enabling policy environment that we need, and at the level of the kind of financing and market-driven models that are needed.

And to put it in maybe too much detail, but what is in some of the submissions is that the assumption that big telco is going to create meaningful access has just failed. And giving more spectrum to big telecommunications companies will not necessarily deal with

those gaps and access at the level of affordability or also at the level of coverage in rural areas. So we don't expect that much detail but we want recognition that this is an underpinning issue, and that everything else that's in the WSIS's action lines, such as e-education, e-agriculture, e-government, is not going to deliver if there isn't more basic inclusion. Never mind new areas such as those in the GDC, particularly digital public infrastructure.

What are the ideas on the table? Financing, obviously, is a big issue, and I think our strategy, APC and several others in civil society have supported this, and they're different views so you would have the Global Digital Justice Forum, for example, which is a Global South coalition led by IT for Change in India has a very radical proposal on financing, looking at taxation of big tech, for example. Now, we think that we'll never get anything further on financing if we put such quite radical positions on the table at this point. So our strategy is to ask for a working group or a task force on financing. We feel they're different issues of financing. They're different ways, different models of approaching financing. We can look at what has worked and what has not worked.

So that's been our strategy at this point, Rose, is to try and get the idea of a task force or a working group. Quite open at this point, multistakeholder. It has to be a multistakeholder group to look at the issue of financing. But we do think that it has to be addressed. For those of you that were involved in WSIS at the time, financing was a serious issue. The reason that financing was not in the final

document in any significant way other than the Voluntary Digital Solidarity Fund is because there wasn't consensus on it.

And there were two working groups. There was the working group on Internet Governance, which has succeeded, and in fact, if it didn't succeed, we probably wouldn't be sitting here. But there was also a working group on financing, which failed. It didn't actually achieve what it set out to achieve because financing is so contentious. And also, I think at that time, it was a question of more bilateral aid from rich countries to poor countries. There wasn't really an open and creative approach. And of course, the donor countries were not willing to commit any financing. So I do think the time now is ripe to look at financing in different ways and look at different and creative mechanisms. So that's our strategy at this point.

I want to make a remark on Farzaneh, but I'll do it later. I mean, maybe just quickly. It relates to a global self-perspective on the WSIS as well. For us, it's very important to have the multistakeholder approach, particularly around the governance of the Internet, but it's also very important that the document stresses the responsibilities and duties of states, particularly with regard to protection of human rights, but also with regard to implementation of WSIS, and creating that enabling environment for us to achieve that WSIS vision. So, we feel that it's important not to come so diffuse on how we refer to the multistakeholder approach that we de-emphasize the fact that states have fundamental responsibilities which they're not delivering on at the

moment, and we want a framework that we can use to hold them accountable.

ROSE PAYNE

Great. Thank you. Just a very minor point of clarification. When you're talking about financing, could you explain a little bit more about financing for what? It's not just IGF, is it?

ANRIETTE ESTERHUYSEN

Absolutely, it's not the IGF. In fact, the IGF doesn't really need nearly as much money as you might think, if you listen to what everyone says. I think the IGF actually needs a vision and a strategy far more than it needs money. And once it has that vision and strategy, I suspect it will get the money. I think we tend to talk so much about the financing needs of the IGF, and of course, it's important, we have to address that. But if you put the financing needs of the IGF against what is needed for digital inclusion, how does the scale perform? Where's the need greatest?

ROSE PAYNE

Great. Thank you so much. Ajith, I'm going to turn to you next. I just wanted to ask, you're a member of the Technical Community Coalition For Multistakeholderism, which is a coalition of technical organizations advocating for a strengthened multistakeholder approach to Internet governance in the WSIS+20 and beyond, I would love it if you could talk to us a little bit more about how WSIS+20 discusses and potentially might impact the integrity of the

technical layer? And what actions are needed underneath the WSIS's framework to address fragmentation and how stakeholders can work together to support these?

AJITH FRANCIS

Thank you very much, Rose, for the introduction. I'm also glad to speak after Anriette because I'm one of those people who just comes at it from the IG lens. So it's good to have that refreshing perspective from Anriette.

I think this session is also very aptly titled on bridging perspectives because I think we're at a point where it is in the business process where we do need to bridge perspectives, and we need to start building coalitions of coalitions to sort of ensure that we're all aligned on some of the key messages. And kudos to GPD, GNI. You guys have done a great job at sort of corralling some of the other coalitions, and I think that's really useful, because, I think, fundamentally, there is a large overlap in some of the things that we all agree fundamentally on when it comes to Internet governance and broader issues.

So I am here. My day job is with Public Interest Registry which is the operator of the .org family of domains. But I'm here today speaking from the perspective of the Technical Community Coalition on Multistakeholderism. TCCM because it's a mouthful. TCCM, as the name implies, it's a coalition that brings together technical operators from around the world and technical operators in the form of Internet registries, DNS registries, DNS registrars, registry

service providers, and the likes, that have come together over about a year and a half ago with the intention of trying to sort of collaborate and coordinate on what is the technical community perspective on these multilateral processes and how do we represent that within the multilateral processes. We're about 40 members from around the world and we're all essentially just technical community in that sense.

The reason we've been focusing on the WSIS process, particularly, is because one of the biggest risks that we see is the risk of Internet fragmentation resulting from policy fragmentation. And policy fragmentation is something that the IGF's Policy Network on Internet Fragmentation is also called out as one of the key sort of risks for the technical architecture of the Internet, the policy landscape sort of resulting in fragmented, vulcanized, sort of splinter net perspectives.

From a technical community, why we consider this particularly problematic is because the technical nature of the Internet, I mean, the Internet is federated network of networks that operates based on code and not necessarily on national boundaries. To give you a concrete example, a DNS query from my hometown in Trivandrum, India may be resolved from a DNS server in Singapore rather than a DNS server in Delhi or Mumbai, because it's based on latency, it's faster to connect through a server in Singapore. So the national rules don't necessarily translate, the national boundaries don't

necessarily translate onto the Internet and to the technical architecture.

So this is particularly why we've been focusing on this issue. And this is what the people who were part of WSIS in 2005 and before really identified that the only way that you could sort of govern a transnational, cross border public good was not through state-led approaches, but through another form of governance. And the multistakeholder approach came from prominently that as a mechanism to govern a global good in a collective fashion with all stakeholders around the table, particularly because you need stakeholder input in trying to govern something that is that technical, because the smallest regulation governance issues may actually result in significant issues for the infrastructure. And that infrastructure underpins everything that we sort of do on the application layer. So, this is the key concern that we have identified and we're sort of addressing.

Focusing in from there, the three key things in the Zero Draft and in the subsequent revisions that we're sort of identifying and we're strongly looking out for is, really, how do we strengthen the multistakeholder approach, particularly because we, in the current submissions to the Zero Draft, have already seen language that sort of reasserting the fact that states—and I'm paraphrasing here, and I'm also getting to the sentiment and not necessarily actual paraphrasing—but there's this sentiment that states feel that they do not have enough power, and the multistakeholder model does not provide them with the amount of leverage that that they might

have. We've also seen language that essentially was in the Zero Draft with regards to sort of calling out Internet fragmentation, and that it's bad being struck out by member states. So really, this is where there's subtle sort of undermining of the multistakeholder approach, and we're really consciously trying to work against that because there is no other governance framework that would work for the technical architecture of the Internet that is not one that is based on all stakeholders sitting around the table.

The operationalization of this multistakeholder approach has been the IGF, and the IGF has been really great, in that sense, in terms of really creating this platform where all stakeholders can come together to identify key issues of governance, conduct deliberations, and develop outcomes. So we really want to sort of see the IGF strengthened, not just financially. Financially is, of course, an important metric, but also in terms of the purpose of the IGF. Because the IGF has a very key role in the fact that it is doing preliminary consultations on key governance issues within the Internet governance space, but there is no particular place to input that. So, really, can the IGF actually be an agenda setting body and agenda setting function that does these consultations at a global level, but also through its NRIs, and is able to bubble up an agenda that the multilateral processes can then sort of work on. But that also is sort of providing legitimacy to the multilateral processes by actually basing it on the issues that matter the most to the community and have been addressed within the community.

The third key pillar that we sort of are following, is also a legacy item called enhanced cooperation, which a lot of people have had PTSD about from the past. I wasn't there so I don't really know, but we've really been focusing on this because we also see that enhanced cooperation may potentially be a way for states to exert more control, which is why TCCM from the very beginning had one of its core objectives was to sort of redefine or put forward another perspective of enhanced cooperation. That would mean that all stakeholders are part of enhanced cooperation. That's not just the purview of states but also that enhanced cooperation, given particularly the baggage that it has in the IG space, that enhanced cooperation, along with all stakeholders, should also be something that is broadened out to other issue items as well, including artificial intelligence, data governance, and things of that sorts.

So those are the key focus areas that we're really addressing and looking out for in the Zero Draft and the upcoming revisions as well. And we're very happy to work with all partners, particularly to NCSG, GNI, GPD, and civil society in general, because there is a large overlap. We all are part of the multistakeholder approach. We're all here to defend the multistakeholder approach. And the sooner that we can start speaking the same language, I think the better the coalition is. So, thank you.

ROSE PAYNE

Great. Thank you so much. I actually just wanted to ask a quick follow-up. So when you were saying that enhanced cooperation

should be broadened out to all stakeholders and to other areas like AI, could you tell us a little bit more about what you mean by that?

AJITH FRANCIS

No, because there isn't much more to that, beyond that. We've also taken a very defensive approach. In the Zero Draft, we did not touch enhanced cooperation. We actually had a long conversation on whether we should actually recommend striking this out or not. We left that as it is, but we've seen that there is significant comments in the submissions on the Zero Draft on enhanced cooperation. So now we are in the process of trying to say, "How do we articulate this broader vision?" Because it's a much more of a defensive tactic than anything else.

ROSE PAYNE

Great. Thank you. I won't try and summarize because a lot has been said, but just to very briefly touch on it, we've talked about a couple of things that we want to defend, the multistakeholder approach and the language that's in there already on this. We also talked a little bit about trying to think about ways of not reopening or relitigating some of the contentious issues, which I also wasn't there, but it seems like people have PTSD from, including enhanced cooperation. And then we've also heard about some potential changes that we might want to see to better reflect the reality when it comes to digital divides, and some potential concrete ideas on the table.

I'm now going to open it up for questions, but perhaps to give everyone a couple of minutes to think. I'll start by saying it sounds like, so far, we've found many areas of agreement to be provocative. Is there anything that anyone in the room would like to highlight during the questions that we don't think that we found alignment on? And perhaps, I think it would be really interesting. I know we've got some of the people in the room who are part of coalitions that we're a member of. It'll be really interesting to hear, particularly some perspectives which we haven't heard so much about. I was thinking around data governance here. If anyone has any comments they'd like to bring in on this. And the Global Digital Compact. Is that Anriette? Sorry. Great. So does anyone have a question? Adam, please.

ADAM PEAKE

Sort of for Anriette. Hello. So you mentioned the focus on IGF financing. I'm a bit concerned, as an old person who was there whenever it was, that it may happen again, that the Internet governance side of the discussion takes the air out of the room on the more important issue, development and accessibility. Do you feel that that may happen? Is it a concern? You sort of sparked off that thought with the IGF needs what? Five million? Orders and orders and orders of magnitude greater for any sort of connectivity, but may be lost in the discussion of the IG.

ROSE PAYNE

Yeah, perhaps just before, the gentleman at the back.

ANDREA

I think it's the old timer time now. Because you raised a really good point. I remember the first phase of the 2002-2003, there was this working group on Digital Solidarity Fund. Remember that? Okay. And there was the president of Senegal who opened up, and then Nigeria signed up, and they had a really brilliant idea. It was 1% of every ICT contract that company signed, we give 1% to Digital Solidarity Fund, and we have the logo there. And then nobody put money there. I think only Switzerland and Finland. And you're right. I mean looking in retrospect, the Internet governance and that layer of the Internet governance and the creation of ICANN and all of that kind of seized the WSIS process. And I remember that then secretary-general of ITU, Utsumi, hated that. He saw that everything went into the IGF. I think we should really—and I'm not speaking as ICANN—avoid to fall into the same trap.

This space is not perfect, but it is working. We proved that is working. It has been taken that it's working. We heard yesterday from—it was the other day. I remember, I think it was yesterday, from the UN. But in the meantime, the digital divide really skyrocketed. And I remember there was an article back then from the economist that said—they're speaking about digital divide, but mobiles will fix everything. We saw how it ended, actually not fixing everything.

I wish to kind of resee and regain a push of the WSIS on this part, because I think this is the one that is risking to factor the Internet, really, leaving people behind and letting few players. Now it's crazy. During the WSIS, there was no Facebook, there was no iPhone, so it was even difficult to foresee what will become the Internet. But then you fast forward 20 years, you have seven companies that basically controls everything. I think that should be the focus on the next phase of the WSIS. You don't want WSIS+30 and still discuss the IGF.

ROSE PAYNE

Do you want to comment on that, Anrietta?

ANRIETTE ESTERHUYSEN

Thank you, Andrea. For those of you who don't know, during the WSIS, Adam was in civil society. In fact, he was one of the leaders in civil society, which just shows you about how ICANN has captured some of our best and brightest minds. When ICANN cut your salaries, come back to civil society if that happens. I rely on the community to give budget input to that effect.

Adam, I think that what you're talking about has already happened. I think one of the weaknesses in the Zero Draft—and it mirrors what was in the WSIS+10 outcome document in 2015—is that the action lines don't really feature. They are referenced. But if you look at on a day-to-day basis, a government is working on with WSIS, an NRI or IG is a small part of what they do. What they are doing is planning

how to implement the action lines, and they are implementing the action lines, and they're implementing them very much in what's convenient to them.

For example, I think one of the weaknesses in the Zero Draft, it doesn't reference human rights as having to be implemented in the application of the action lines. So the action line on e-education, for example, should be looking at child rights. It should be very specifically part of how you develop and design e-education programs. Similarly, the action line on media independence and diversity. So I think what's happening is that a lot of the granularity and the practical stuff that governments are actually doing with WSIS is getting lost. So I do think that's an issue.

In terms of financing, Adam—and, Andre, this goes to you as well—the story with the Digital Solidarity Fund is that there was a proposal to create a fund. That proposal was blocked, and then in the end, there was just a voluntary fund, which no one took seriously, and which was then run as a kind of private fund. And some money got misappropriated or lost, and it was generally a disaster.

But I think the issue of financing is not just an issue of donating. It's about how do governments plan? How does debt impact? Are there links between debt restructuring and investing in ICT infrastructure? Could there be degrees of debt forgiveness in return for investment in ICT infrastructure? Why are governments not budgeting sufficiently? Even developing country budgets are

putting money aside for small business development, but they're not putting money into ICT infrastructure development because they do not make the link between the necessity of digital equality and small business development. They treat them as separate issues. Even digital economy, planning and development is taking place in isolation from making sure that there's digital inclusion and digital skills and capacity. So, I don't think it's just a question of finding money from rich people to give to poor people or rich countries to give to so-called poor countries. It's about planning and creating mechanisms and partnerships that recognizes that unless you talk about money and deal with the money issue, you're not actually going to get the implementation done.

So, that's why we think a working group might be a good outcome, so that it can be discussed not as a political football between haves and have-nots, but as a strategic development imperative that everyone and all stakeholder groups need to take some responsibility for.

ROSE PAYNE

Great. Thank you.

ANDREA GLANDON

Bruna has her hand up in Zoom.

ROSE PAYNE

I see lots of hands.

ANDREA GLANDON

Bruna has her hand up in this in Zoom. She's had it up for a while.

BRUNA MARTINS DOS SANTOS

Just a misunderstanding, Rose. It's an ICANN difference. ICANN folks raise their hand on the Zoom chat and less on the physical room. So that's maybe the difference. But I'll be as brief as I can.

I just raised my hand to make a comment on the coordination point, because together with Sheetal in GPD, I have been chairing the Policy Network on Internet Fragmentation for the past, I don't know, four years almost. And when we started the work, I think the main point of diagnosis for us was the lack of coordination for many of the stakeholders. We knew that civil society was always in the same forums, like discussing similar things, trying to coordinate points of conversation. But the technical community at that moment, four to five years ago, were still kind of like had a little bit of a crackling coordination here and there. And it's really nice to see initiatives like TCCM rising in the past years, because you can also see how much more coherence the technical community has adopted over the years. And for the WSIS process, also seeing that it was able to deliver a position on that and on the role of the technical community was highly important. So I want to try that.

The second point was also about the role of governments, and I say this not as NCSG, I say this as merely Bruna or anyone. It's also relevant to understand this, the tension that we experience

nowadays, at the same time that we have governments that do take the spaces to re-dispute some of the questions and re-dispute some of the wins of civil society, we also have governments trying to fight back on private sector. Not just private sector, but specifically big tech takeover the online conversation and takeover of democracy that we have in many spaces. And as much as I know many people have maybe some restrictions with the claims for government, it's also important to acknowledge that in this broader conversation, each of us stakeholder groups, we have a role and we have a different hat. And as much as the technical community has its hats, it's also important to acknowledge governments' hats in member state process that could be a bit stronger on multistakeholderism, but hopefully we'll get there. But just saying that, it's important to place this conversation in the tension between big tech, the long-term effect of big tech on democracy and social media platforms as well, because it's one of the main motivators. Thanks.

ROSE PAYNE

Great. Thank you. I think it was Anna next.

ANNA

Thank you. I'm Anna from Article 19, and I'm a member of several coalitions and groupings around this table. I kind of have a question, maybe also a call to action, if that makes sense. I want to bring it back to the negotiations, because obviously we're going towards the final bits of the negotiations in New York on a certain

document, and that document is going to have a lot of meaning once it's passed. There's a couple of issues with that. One, the negotiations are happening in New York. Diplomats in New York often don't really know much about Internet governance or even human rights, so we're dealing with that audience. Secondly, we're dealing with a situation where a lot of people would normally show up in New York to advocate behind the scenes are not able to do so.

I suppose my question is—a call is to think about, as we're going into those last few weeks of negotiation, what are the absolute minimum requirements that you all see from your specific perspective, whether it's technical community, or it's our human rights civil society, or it's private sector, what are the minimum requirements that we should push for and make sure that we get in this specific document? What are some of the member states? Because I appreciate also what Bruna was saying is that—again, these are diplomats sitting in New York. They're not always fully in line with the different parts of their government back home, or even the people that sit in Geneva. So what governments can we maybe nudge a little bit that are saying certain things back home and then maybe not in New York, or beyond the sort of usual suspects that we know? Any thoughts on that would be helpful.

Then I wanted to ask a slightly different question, also with regard to this text, we haven't really touched on AI governance, what do we really want to see? Do we want to just leave it to the Global Digital Compact, or do we have strong feelings about what this

particular outcome document should say on AI governance? Thank you.

ROSE PAYNE

Great. Thobekile, do you want to ask? And then we'll funnel both questions to all the speakers.

THOBEKILE MATIMBE

Thanks. Thanks a lot, Rose. My name is Thobekile Matimbe, and I work for Paradigm Initiative. I think my question is for Anriette. Reflecting on the Zero Draft, do you think that it gives good emphasis on digital inclusion? I know you did mention some views earlier and in some other sessions where you're talking about the fact that there's a lot of emphasis on the statistics around Internet penetration. What do you think would be able to strengthen the Zero Draft in terms of, I think, particularizing digital inclusion as a major sort of priority of WSIS? And how can we also ensure that through the financing mechanisms that is not falling on the wayside? I know that there's a lot of emphasis on some of the approaches that have been used and how lovely they have been, but 20 years later, we still have a huge gap with regards to digital divides, especially in the Global South. So how can we ensure that there's that strengthening? And I know you also referenced as well some mechanisms as far back as 2002, I think, in the room as well, and you've also made a recommendation as well for a working group that is sort of more diverse, and also mentioned that there's been a lot of contentions around financing mechanisms. So how do

you see this playing out with the new proposed mechanism, and how can also, even within the Zero Draft itself, they be sort of strengthening of the existence of whatever mechanism would be brought about today, so that it's something that we can say it's going to be a mechanism that is going to stand the test of time, just like the other working group on Internet Governance?

ROSE PAYNE

Great. Just as a reminder, the first question was a few questions, but it's basically to all panelists. What are the minimum requirements you want to see, given that we're about to move into the intergovernmental negotiation phase? Which governments do you think that we should be nudging that maybe are saying different things in the international negotiations to what they're saying to stakeholders at home? And then finally, if we have time for it, but I might suggest that we leave this a little bit to the end, is we haven't really touched on AI governance, but perhaps we could leave that for a bit later. And then, Anriette, there was a question to you, but also if anyone else wants to pick up on it, which is about how we can particularize digital inclusion as a priority in the Zero Draft, and how we can make sure that there is a strengthening of mechanisms for closing digital divides.

Great. I'm going to nominate you first, Farzaneh.

FARZANEH BADI

At NCSG, we have not been active on these issues, so I can't give you a collective action response. But having been involved with these communities and talking to—can I name these governments that are on our side? Yeah? For example, especially when we work with GAC, there are governments that really have it in their agenda to advance the open global Internet and interoperable Internet that we can rely on in order to talk to them and reach out to them. Sometimes those governments, their position changes, which is a little bit concerning.

But what I have actually seen in other spaces is that smaller countries, but with a lot of political capital can do a lot, and we shouldn't lose sight of that. Like, for example, New Zealand became a leader in leading the Christchurch call. I'm not talking about the value of the initiative itself, but that was one thing. Another one is Canada. Canada really cares about open global Internet. They come up with bad laws sometimes, but in general, they're very much advocating for that. Generally, ICANN is a good space to understand because they come from the departments that actually work on these issues to keep the Internet open and global on DNS. Sorry. I hope I answered your question.

ROSE PAYNE

That was great. Thank you, Ajith, I'm going to come to you next on the minimum requirements.

AJITH FRANCIS

What I think is 1A of your question is on the funding, particularly on key items, I think, particularly listening to Anriette also, I think there are two distinctions on what we want. The first is when it comes to the Internet governance space, particularly, is a commitment to a process, to the sustainability of the IGF. And there's not enough time to get into numbers in this negotiation. So it's a commitment for a process to fund the IGF. But I think on the same time for everything that Anriette has been talking about, I think there's a difference. There's a commitment to funding that. And we've seen that also in the climate space, with the Green Climate Fund, a voluntary fund never works. So I think we need to disentangle the two. Whereas in the IGF, I think that is a purpose to a commitment to a process.

I think on states, this is also where it's difficult with the multilateral process, because we've seen submissions and also states taking the floor for things like not being okay with a permanent mandate for the IGF, and I think their position is probably somewhere in the middle where they're talking about a review mechanism, or like some sort of an evaluation, or some sort of a review, but in the submission and in the comments, because of the way the multilateral processes, it's an absolute position. So really finding those countries and trying to also find that middle ground, particularly G77, because a lot of their submissions probably can be tweaked to be in favor of a lot of the positions that we are in favor of as well.

There are a lot of other countries that also made similar statements in the process last meeting that happened in New York as well, who I think can be brought to the fold. I don't think there's that much contention, but I think the intent behind those submissions is sort of perceived as being contentious. But I think there's a middle ground to work there, and it's a question of who would find that middle ground. And as you were saying, the people who usually show up to advocate in New York are not there at the moment, and I completely get that.

ROSE PAYNE

Great. Thank you. Anriette, I'm going to ask you to combine the two questions because we've only got a few minutes left.

ANRIETTE ESTERHUYSEN

Thanks. I'll start with Thobekile's question. I think that what we need, if you take the current headings like the digital divide, ICT for development, social and economic development, they're all at the same level. If you look at the WSIS+10 draft, some of them would be sub-headings. But why I'm talking about structures, I think what we need is the document to be structured in such a way that it deals with the digital inclusion, the connectivity gap, but also the human and institutional capacity gap as an underpinning priority, so that there's an overarching concern without which these other topics—digital economy, social and economic development—are going to fail or not flourish sufficiently. So that's one suggestion. I think all the necessary text is there. It's really just how it's organized. And I

would remove stats because they change so quickly. It's very dangerous. Internet access stats, they peaked during COVID. They've dropped. It changes. Spectrum access changes. So I think avoid actually quoting specific statistics, but make sure it's seen as a priority.

I think on AI governance, it links to actually, I think, very important issue. So thanks for asking about that, because there has been at least one input, which is the input from the Office on Digital and Emerging Technologies suggesting that AI governance and data governance are not WSIS issues. I think that is very dangerous. Developing countries do not like that. There actually are some Global North countries who like that. They don't want to see AI or data in the WSIS documents. But I think from a sort of practical, real-life perspective, how can you say that AI is not an ICT for D issue or in today's world, that data governance does not overlap with Internet governance? So I think it's quite political, but I think it's in our interest, particularly also those of us who are concerned about human rights to make sure that those issues are still in WSIS, even if WSIS is not the only place that deals with them.

Minimum requirements. Firstly, we need the process to continue. I think people underestimate how important WSIS is for us. It creates something we can work with governments on, challenge governments on, and it creates a framework for multistakeholder participation at national level. We think NRIs create that framework. But go to any country in Africa where there's an NRI, and their entry point is actually WSIS, rather than Internet

governance. At the NRI, they're talking about WSIS issues, even more than they are talking about Internet governance issues. So that relationship is different in different parts of the world.

I think other minimum requirements is the link to SDGs and integration with the Global Digital Compact. I think the US's efforts, I don't think they'll succeed, but they are going to try and take the environmental impact stuff out and the link to the Sustainable Development Goals. I think it's very important to maintain those links. I think the human rights framing is another minimum requirement. Continuation of the IGF is important. But I think along with that recognition that the scope of the IGF is not just Internet governance in a narrow way, that it is our primary public participation multistakeholder platform for talking about digital policies. So I think narrowing it, as the text does now, to just Internet governance creates the space a new fora to be created, and that will fragment the process. I think that's another minimum requirement, the integration of GDC processes to the extent it's still possible, so that we don't lose that. And I think financing a working group of some kind. I won't say more, but we want something.

Then I think the other really important thing, which I think civil society, particularly in the Global North and the technical community, tends to overlook, and that is relevance for developing countries. If this process does not come out with an outcome document that's actually relevant for countries that are still building digital capacity and infrastructure, it will become

meaningless. And that touches on enhanced cooperation. But I'll talk to you about that separate, Ajith.

ROSE PAYNE

Great. Thank you so much. I know that we're a couple of minutes over, so I'm not going to say much more other than a plea to all of you. I know that you're involved in so many different networks and coalitions. As Ajith said earlier, the time has come to make coalitions of coalitions and work on common positions together. So we hope that we can do that. Please do reach out. Rafik?

RAFIK DAMMAK

Okay. Thanks, Rose, and thanks for everyone to make it until the end. And with that, I think we can close the meeting for today. Thanks all. See you soon.

ANDREA GLANDON

Thank you. You can stop the recording.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION]