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| **Council Working Group on International Internet-related Public Policy IssuesSixteenth meeting – Virtual meeting, 23 September 2021** |  |
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|  | **Document CWG-Internet-16/8-E** |
|  | **23 September 2021** |
|  | **English only** |

**Report by the Chairman**

REPORT OF THE SIXTEENTH MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL WORKING GROUP ON INTERNATIONAL INTERNET-RELATED
PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES (CWG-INTERNET)

1. **Introduction**

**1.1.** The sixteenth meeting of the CWG-Internet was held on 23 September 2021 under the Chairmanship of H.E. Majed Al-Mazyed.

**1.2.** ITU Deputy Secretary-General Mr Malcolm Johnson welcomed participants to the meeting. He congratulated the Chairman, H.E. Majed Al-Mazyed on his appointment as the Governor of the National Cybersecurity Authority of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the rank of Minister, and thanked the Chairman for his continuous commitment to the group over 12 years. He commended the successful outcome of the ninth open consultation on “*The role of the Internet and international Internet-related public policy in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 and possible future pandemics”* and the substantive inputs received, noting that the policy issues highlighted in the consultation are critical to address current challenges as well as to advance sustainable development.

**1.3** The Chairman thanked the ITU Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Malcolm Johnson, for his continuous presence and support to the CWG-Internet. He also thanked Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin, Director of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau, for opening the Virtual Meeting – Physical Open Consultation on 20 September.

**2.** [**CWG-Internet-16/1-E(Rev.1)**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-RCLINTPOL16-C-0001/en)**: Agenda of the meeting**

The Chairman presented the agenda (CWG-Internet-16/1-E(Rev.1)) which was adopted.

**3. Secretariat documents:**

**3.1** [**CWG-Internet 16/2-E**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-RCLINTPOL15-C-0002/en)**: Secretariat report on ITU Internet Activities: Resolutions 101, 102, 133, 180 and 206**

3.1.1 This report summarizes ITU’s activities related to Plenipotentiary Conference (PP) Resolution 101 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), “Internet Protocol-based networks”; Resolution 102 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), “ITU’s role with regard to international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet and the management of Internet resources, including domain names and addresses”; Resolution 133 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), “Roles of administrations of Member States in the management of Internationalized (multilingual) domain names”; Resolution 180 (Rev. Dubai, 2018), “Facilitating the transition from IPv4 to IPv6” and Resolution 206 (Dubai, 2018), “OTTs”.

**Discussions**

3.1.2 The Group noted the Internet Activities Report.

**3.2** [**CWG-SFP-1/7**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CWGSFP1-C-0007/en)**: UN Developments on Digital Technologies and Cooperation**

3.2.1 This document presents United Nations developments on digital technologies and cooperation to be considered for the development of the ITU strategic and financial plans for 2021-2027.

**Discussions**

3.2.2 The Group noted the document. Some members specifically highlighted the various references to digital governance in the Secretariat document and correspondingly in the UN SG’s “Our Common Agenda”. They suggested that the ITU, and particularly the CWG-Internet, should consider playing a key role on related topics in the different processes and initiatives within the UN system.

**4. Discussion on the Open Consultation**

4.1 [**Summary of the online open consultation and physical open consultation meeting**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-OPCWGINT9-C-0003/en)
**(OPCWGINT9/3-E)**

4.1.1 The CWG examined the summary of the online open consultation and virtual meeting - physical open consultation held on 20 September 2021.

**Discussions**

4.1.2 The Group thanked all stakeholders for their active participation in the online and virtual meeting - physical open consultation on “*The role of the Internet and international Internet-related public policy in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 and possible future pandemics”.*

4.1.3 Noting the substantive output from the open consultation, members expressed support for the contributions received from stakeholders for the open consultation.

4.1.4 At the consultation, some stakeholders also invited the CWG-Internet to consider any possible action for opening its participation to Sector Members and other stakeholders.

4.1.5 The Chairman invited the Group to consider the output from the consultation in its deliberations.

4.2 **Related contributions from Member States (CWG-Internet-16/6-E)**

4.2.1 The CWG also examined the contribution submitted by the Government of Australia to the online open consultation, which was noted by the Group. The summary of the contribution (as submitted) and the corresponding discussions are provided below:

4.2.2 [**CWG-Internet-16/6-E**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-RCLINTPOL16-C-0006/en)**: Contribution from Australia - Response to the consultation on the role of the Internet and international Internet-related public policy in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 and possible future pandemics**

**Summary**

The Australian Government recognises that the Internet plays an important role in connecting our populations, stimulating the economy through digital business, and providing opportunities for social inclusion and advancement.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of connecting our populations, as the pandemic has further increased our reliance on digital connectivity for vital services, economic activity, and information.

It is vital that work related to Internet-related public policy issues focuses on expanding Internet accessibility, so people can stay connected to their family, friends, colleagues and the broader community, and may participate in and benefit from the associated social and economic benefits.

Promoting the multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance and public policies that ensure citizens can engage safely and confidently with online services, such as video conferencing and social media apps, are crucial to facilitating this connection. This will play an important role in mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 and any future pandemics.

**Discussion**

The contribution was noted by the Group.

**5. Introduction and Discussion of Contributions from Member States**

The CWG examined the various contributions (in the order listed in the agenda), which were noted by the Group. The summaries of the contributions (as submitted by the authors of the documents) and the corresponding discussions are provided below:

**5.1** [**CWG-Internet-16/3-E**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-RCLINTPOL16-C-0003/en)**: Contribution by the Russian Federation: Proposal on the topic for the next Council Working Group open consultation**

**Summary**

Digitalization of daily processes has raised new challenges related to integrity, stability and resilience of the Internet's public core, i.e. global connectivity. Unfortunately, there is not a single international legal act that would guarantee the integrity and security of the Internet's public core, but without such fundamental instruments, it is impossible to ensure the long-term development of the Internet. In the context of geopolitics threats, uncontrolled and significant increase of Internet use by cybercriminals for attacking the global infrastructure in different countries, it is the states that must act as guarantors of the stability and integrity of the Internet's public core. Russian Federation proposes to hold the next open consultations with all interested parties on the topic: “The role of states in ensuring the integrity, resilience and stability of the public core of the Internet and the need for international legal acts to guarantee the integrity, resilience and stability of the public core of the Internet"

**Discussion**

The contribution was noted by the Group. Some members expressed support for this topic indicating that the topic is timely and related to the mandate of the Group, while some members suggested that the matters set out in this contribution are already being considered in other multi-stakeholder fora and intergovernmental organizations as well as within the UN system.

**5.2** [**CWG-Internet-16/4-E**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-RCLINTPOL16-C-0004/en)**: Contribution by the Russian Federation – Risk analysis of the existing Internet governance and operational model**

**Summary**

Russian Federation highlighted threats and risks to the security and stability of the existing Internet` governance and operational model. Key threats are the lack of international status of organization-operators of critical infrastructure and lack of international legal acts guaranteeing immunity of its operational activity, as well as the lack of effective international regulation of digital services, global digital monopolies. Contribution includes prepared by Russian experts “Risk Analysis of the Existing Internet Governance Model".

Within the framework of the theme “The security, safety, continuity, sustainability, and robustness of the Internet” defined by ITU Council Resolution 1305 Russian Federation propose organize within the Working Group discussion related to global threats and risks and ways to overcome the existing challenges. Recommendations for ITU Council related to mentioned issued can be prepared if necessary.

**Discussion**

The contribution was noted by the Group. Some members expressed support to invite members of the CWG-Internet to further consider the matters set out in this contribution, while some members suggested that the CWG-Internet is not the appropriate forum for discussing such matters.

**5.3** [**CWG-Internet-16/5-E**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-RCLINTPOL16-C-0005/en)**: Contribution by United Kingdom- Topics for the next Council Working Group open consultation**

**Summary**

The United Kingdom would like to invite the Council Working Group to consider the following two topics for its next open consultation: the first on “the environmental impacts and benefits of the Internet” and the second on “digital skills and capacity building”.

From facilitating climate change action to providing an alternative to overseas travel, the Internet has a range of positive effects on the climate. Yet, at the same time, it is also a key contributor to greenhouse gas emissions. Ahead of COP26, an Open Consultation would be an excellent opportunity to explore the role of the Internet in environmental issues and to develop strategies for harnessing its potential going forward.

As for digital skills, the Covid-19 pandemic has transformed the role the Internet plays in our everyday lives, exposing the dangers of digital exclusion. It is therefore urgent that everyone has the skills they need to access the vital services that the Internet offers. An Open Consultation would enable stakeholders to exchange valuable insights on how to tackle the digital skills gap in these challenging times.

**Discussion**

The contribution was noted by the Group. The first proposal on **“The Environmental Impacts and Benefits of the Internet**” was appreciated as being timely, and considering that COP26 is fast approaching, it was selected as the topic for the next open consultation with the following questions:

* What effects does the Internet have on the environment and vice-versa?
* How can we improve the impact the Internet has on the environment and take advantage of its potential to help address climate-related issues?
* What role should stakeholders play in shaping the environmental impacts and benefits of the Internet?
* What are the policy, regulatory and other relevant matters associated with the environmental impacts and benefits of the Internet?

**5.4** [**CWG-Internet-16/7-E**](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-RCLINTPOL15-C-0007/en)**: Contribution by the United States of America -**

**Summary**

The United States introduced document 7 which highlighted the great value of internet connectivity during COVID-19. The pandemic demonstrated the scalability and resiliency of networks to meet this increased surge in global demand for traffic, yet the pandemic also exposed that we still have more work to do to reach universal connectivity. In that regard the United States highlighted several national initiatives and programs aimed at connecting unserved and underserved communities. In this regard the U.S. proposed that the next topic for the Open Consultation to identify and implement innovative technologies, approaches, and policy tools that will support meaningful, universal connectivity. The objective of the consultation is to focus on mobilizing partnerships and stakeholder engagement to connect those that remain unconnected.

**Discussion**

The contribution was noted by the Group. Members recognized the importance of this topic as a timely and relevant one. Some members suggested that it has been covered by previous consultations.

**6.** **Actions**

6.1 ITU Secretariat will launch the next round of Open Consultations in October 2021 on the following topic as agreed by the sixteenth meeting of the CWG-Internet*:*

**The Environmental Impacts and Benefits of the Internet**

* What effects does the Internet have on the environment and vice-versa?
* How can we improve the impact the Internet has on the environment and take advantage of its potential to help address climate-related issues?
* What role should stakeholders play in shaping the environmental impacts and benefits of the Internet?
* What are the policy, regulatory and other relevant matters associated with the environmental impacts and benefits of the Internet?

6.2 The summary of the ninth online consultation and the virtual meeting - physical consultation on “*The role of the Internet and international Internet-related public policy in mitigating the impact of COVID-19 and possible future pandemics*” will be submitted as part of the Chairman’s report to Council.

6.3 Directors of all the ITU bureaux are invited to consider the consultation responses in their work, as appropriate.

**7.**  **Closing of the Meeting**

7.1 The report of the sixteenth meeting of the CWG-Internet was approved by the CWG-Internet and was posted on the CWG-Internet website (<http://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-internet>).

7.2 In closing, the Chairman thanked all the ITU Member States who made contributions and participated in the work of the Group, the Vice-Chairmen, the ITU Elected Officials and the Secretariat for their efficient assistance during the meeting.

7.3 The Group thanked the Chairman and Secretariat for their effective organization and management of the Group. The Group also thanked the remote moderator.

H.E. Majed Al-Mazyed(Saudi Arabia)

**Chairman, CWG-Internet**