Submission

From: A Technical Community Coalition for Multistakeholderism

To: The Council Working Group on International Internet-Related Public Policy Issues (CWG-Internet)

On: The developmental aspects to strengthen the Internet

3 September 2024

Introduction

We thank the Council Working Group on International Internet-Related Public Policy Issues (CWG-Internet) for the opportunity to comment on such important issues relating to how the Internet can be foundational to sustainable development. We are members of the Internet's technical community: the companies, organisations, groups and actors whose day-to-day responsibility is to operate the critical infrastructure and services at the heart of the Internet.

A driver of innovation, progress and development, the Internet touches all aspects of human life, and is a critical tool in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This transformative technology is governed through collaboration across varied overlapping stakeholders and processes—and involves the participation of distinct stakeholder groups: governments, civil society, academia, the private sector and the technical community. This form of collaborative governance or dialogue is called multistakeholderism.

The technological success of the Internet—the reason it works seamlessly across the globe—is the direct result of the multistakeholder approach to Internet governance and its use in various fora and initiatives. This approach enables stakeholders to come together on an equal footing to discuss or make decisions about the Internet and to foster its ongoing evolution and expansion.

The multi-stakeholder approach fosters diversity, accountability and transparency that cannot be replicated in intergovernmental environments alone. It also ensures that decision-making about the Internet and its governance isn't led by individual nation-based political interests. The multistakeholder approach is the appropriate model to govern the Internet as it allows for all key stakeholders—governments, the private sector, the technical community, academia, and civil society—to offer their expertise. The multistakeholder approach also allows the flexibility to address

ever-evolving technologies.

1. ***How relevant multilateral and multi-stakeholder processes, including but not limited to UN-based processes such as Summit of the Future, WSIS+20 and the IGF, could address aspects related to Internet development?***

We consider these processes, particularly UN-based ones like the Summit of the Future and the Global Digital Compact (GDC), the twenty year review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20 Review), and the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), as essential to upholding the strong mandate of the IGF and the multistakeholder frameworks that have shaped the Internet into a reliable tool for development.

Internet development cannot properly be addressed in silos; solving complex, interlinked challenges requires a holistic approach. This is recognised in the WSIS Action Lines, which bring together stakeholders from across the digital landscape to contribute towards the SDGs.

Effective, practical and fit for purpose solutions must be developed via multi-stakeholder processes, drawing on the expertise of a range of relevant stakeholders. These processes should provide for open and inclusive bottom-up participation, and transparent, consensus-based decision-making. Multi-stakeholder processes allow ideas and proposals to be debated on their merits and to consider a diverse range of perspectives. This increases the legitimacy and credibility of outcomes, generating greater support and commitment to implementation, and reduces the risk of unintended consequences.

The IGF provides an ideal forum for the exchange of ideas, best practices, and innovative solutions among all stakeholders: governments, the private sector, the technical community, civil society and academia. This was recognised in the NETmundial+10 Multistakeholder Statement, developed and adopted by the multistakeholder community in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in April 2024. This Statement identified the IGF as a space to facilitate implementation, monitoring and follow up of the GDC, working in collaboration with UN agencies, making use of the WSIS Forum and with the UN CSTD providing a platform for intergovernmental engagement in the monitoring and follow up processes.

Continued support of the multi-stakeholder approach ensures all stakeholders can contribute their expertise to robust decision making. Policy- and decision-making that excludes key stakeholders would lead to a less resilient, less robust and less interoperable Internet, weakening it as a tool for sustainable global development. It is

imperative that the people who manage the Internet's operations are involved—on equal footing—in discussions, deliberations and decisions about the Internet's future and its governance.

An evolved and strengthened multi-stakeholder approach is the best path forward to ensure that the Internet remains open, free, global, secure, resilient and interoperable—available to all. This will allow it to make the strongest possible contribution to development goals, including the SDGs.

We note the need for ongoing openness, transparency and multi-stakeholder engagement in all fora, including UN-based processes. The WSIS+20 Review provides an opportunity to take stock of progress so far, and accelerate efforts across all stakeholders. We call on the UN to ensure the WSIS+20 Review process is multi-stakeholder and inclusive, and encourage the ITU to make representations to this effect in its engagement with WSIS+20.

2. ***What are the challenges and opportunities, good practices and favourable policy environments to strengthen the Internet, including in areas such as: • promoting a secure and resilient Internet • the deployment of IPv6 • fostering multi-stakeholder participation?***

Promoting a secure and resilient Internet/fostering multi-stakeholder participation

Realising the full social and economic benefits of the Internet is dependent on balancing a diverse range of government, technical and civil society interests. In all areas, including those examples identified in the questionnaire, a multistakeholder approach will best reflect the needs of all stakeholders. It is the most effective model of decision making to maintain the Internet as a robust and secure platform for innovation and sustainable development. Policy- and decision- making must reflect the structure and makeup of the Internet itself. The technological success of the Internet is a direct result of this multi-stakeholder approach—and of open, accessible standards-making and voluntary adoption of standards—and this approach enables a level of diversity, accountability and transparency that cannot be replicated in intergovernmental environments alone.

Multi-stakeholder organisations like the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) are, and should remain, key stakeholders to address aspects of Internet development. For example, ICANN's work on Internationalised Domain Names and Universal Acceptance supports the development of a multilingual Internet, which uses non-Latin scripts and is more accessible to speakers of languages other than English. ICANN has also launched initiatives such as the Coalition for Digital Africa to

accelerate the expansion of the Internet and improve digital inclusion.

We believe the ITU can play an important role, alongside other stakeholders, in disseminating information and in connecting stakeholders to experts. We therefore encourage the ITU to continue close collaboration with ICANN as well as entities such as the Internet Society (ISOC), Regional Internet Registries, standards development organisations such as the Internet Engineering Task Force, and the broader technical community.

We further encourage the ITU to promote the use of tools to facilitate best-practice policymaking, such as ISOC's Internet Impact Assessment Toolkit and the Netmundial+10 guidelines and process steps for multi-stakeholder collaboration, consensus-building and decision-making.

The deployment of IPv6

Advancing core protocols in the Internet-such as IPv6-involves complex relationships between Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and consumers as well as vendors, operators, enterprises, middleware developers, and users. Due to the Internet having a large installed base, changes need to be incremental with the caveat of a "first mover disadvantage", with network effects taking time to realise.

Since 2016, global IPv6 deployment has steadily improved. Between 2018-2020, capability rates rose sharply from 17% to 30% with China and India as growth leaders. Coordinated efforts led by the technical community have demonstrated significant progress and some inertia (to move to IPv6) in the past have been successfully mitigated by, e.g., "World IPv6 Day".

Despite various efforts to push for IPv6 deployment, implementation continues to advance slowly. While ISPs are aware of the need to provide IPv6 to their clients, connected edge networks and their hosts, such as cloud services and platforms, as well as content distributors platforms and streamers, also need to support IPv6. For this to work, careful cooperation in an otherwise competitive environment by those with a joint responsibility for the infrastructure is key to advancing the network.

Further progress is needed with awareness, education, and training being key to success. In this regard, the Regional Internet Registries (RIRs) have consistently provided technical capacity building in IPv6 deployment in their respective regions. For instance, the Asia Pacific Network Information Centre (APNIC) has successfully hosted multiple IPv6 deployment trainings in partnership with the ITU Asia Pacific Regional

Office over the years.

3. ***How can we promote international multi-stakeholder cooperation on public policy issues that are focused on promoting the development aspects of the Internet?***

Promoting the development aspects of the Internet requires mechanisms to better enable the participation of all stakeholders in multi-stakeholder public policy processes – particularly those from developing countries (including LDCs, SIDs and LLDCs). Further financial support for multi-stakeholder mechanisms is one way to achieve this, including from governments and the private sector.

In particular, we suggest further strengthening the role of the IGF. As a core process arising from WSIS, the IGF and its diverse community can be central to this work. The WSIS+20 Review provides an opportunity for this role to be developed. Recognizing and confirming ongoing commitment and support for multistakeholder Internet governance will go a long way to maintaining the IGF and bolstering participation of Member States as well as other stakeholders. Renewed support and a long-term commitment to multi-stakeholder processes encourages all stakeholders to commit to participating in these processes and evolving and improving them. Success requires *all* the stakeholders involved in Internet governance, on an equal footing, to fulfil their roles and responsibilities *together.*

We the undersigned are committed to defending, evolving and strengthening multistakeholderism in decision-making and dialogues about the Internet. It is imperative that the people who manage the Internet's operations are involved—on equal terms as governments and other stakeholders—in discussions, deliberations and decisions about the Internet's future and its governance.

We call on ITU to continue to work together with other stakeholders to find consensus and cultivate a shared vision for the future of the Internet where its social and economic benefits are realised, and to do so through its continued support of transparent, accountable, and multi-stakeholder mechanisms.

Signatories as of 3 September 2024 (in alphabetical order)

Asia Pacific Network Information Centre (APNIC)
au Domain Administration Ltd (auDA)
Blacknight

CIRA (.ca)
DENIC eG
DNS Africa Ltd
IE Domain Registry CLG (.ie)
InternetNZ (.nz)
Japan Network Information Center (JPNIC)
Japan Registry Services Co., Ltd. (JPRS)
Network Information Center (NIC Costa Rica)
NiRA (.ng)
Nominet UK (.uk)
Norid (.no)
Public Interest Registry (PIR)
Taiwan Network Information Center (TWNIC)

SUMMARY

1. Realising the full social and economic benefits of the Internet is dependent on balancing a diverse range of interests. A multistakeholder approach will best reflect the needs of all stakeholders, and is the most effective model of decision making to maintain the Internet as a robust and secure platform for innovation and sustainable development. This approach enables a level of diversity, accountability and transparency that cannot be replicated in intergovernmental environments alone.

2. Internet development cannot properly be addressed in silos; solving complex, interlinked challenges requires a holistic approach. Effective, practical and credible solutions must be developed via multi-stakeholder processes, drawing on the expertise of a range of relevant stakeholders. The WSIS+20 Review is essential to upholding the strong mandate of the IGF and the multistakeholder frameworks that have shaped the Internet into a reliable tool for development. We encourage ITU to make representations in support of the WSIS+20 Review process being open, transparent and inclusive.

3. Promoting the development aspects of the Internet requires mechanisms to better enable the participation of all stakeholders in multi-stakeholder Internet governance and public policy processes – particularly those from developing countries. Further financial support for multi-stakeholder mechanisms is one way to achieve this, including from governments and the private sector. In particular, we suggest further strengthening the role of the IGF.