Internet Mark 2 Project
Creating Tomorrow's Internet
www.internetmark2.org

8 August 2005

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Mr Markus Kummer
Secretariat, UN Working Group on Internet Governance
Palais de Nations
Geneva

Dear Markus

I am pleased to forward the attached response to the WGIG Report on behalf on the Internet Mark 2 Project. While I must point out that this does not reflect the views of all members of our Advisory Council on all recommendations, we forward our comments in the spirit of co-operation and with a desire to see Internet governance improved.

In this context, we have confined our input to areas where perhaps additional attention might be useful; much of what has been done is praiseworthy, and fully supported by us; the perspectives below, we believe, may add value to what you have achieved.

The Internet Mark 2 Project rose out of concerns that Internet protocols and governance have not evolved sufficiently to deal with the range of problems which have appeared as the Internet gets older and bigger. This led to our first activity - a comprehensive study of the state of the Internet. (Internet Analysis Report 2004). Further details can be found at our website (www.internetmark2.org).

The Internet has always been a regulatory dilemma, falling as it does somewhere between broadcasting and communications media, with characteristics of both but features not shared with any other medium. This unique form, we believe, requires unique governance structures, and we are pleased to see the attempts to come to grips with this.

Our detailed comments follow. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance as this initiative progresses.

Sincerely,

Ian Peter
Project Manager

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Working definition of Internet governance

The biggest weakness we see in the report is that it does not convey an understanding of what the Internet was, or what it will be. This is characterised by the decision not to address the history of the Internet, nor to attempt to define the Internet in a definition of "Internet governance". This to us is a substantial weakness and much of the report is constrained by this narrowing of vision to the current day perception of the Internet, the current issues, and the current view of what the Internet is. This might be appropriate for something more static – but the Internet is fast-moving, constantly changing, and far from settled in form. What the Internet is is actually far from clear.

If the report had been presented 10 years ago….

If the WGIG had been writing its report ten years ago, many governments would not have used the new but fast growing world wide web, and most countries would not have top level domains. (ccTLDs). Amazon and Yahoo were less than 12 months old and unknown; Google did not exist. There would have been a strong argument advanced that the World Wide Web was not the Internet. However, others would argue that the recent split of the Word Wide Web Consortium from IETF was a major fragmentation issue which threatened the future of the Internet. The discussion may have centred on words which have disappeared from our vocabulary such as gopher, wais, archie, and veronica. There was no "money" in the internet – instead you would have heard of interactive television as the media of the future and the centre of investment in digital convergence and the coming great technology boom. Commerce was not an issue; however, the rollout of IPV6 was.

If the report were to be presented 10 years into the future…

In ten years time, you will be talking about something entirely different. The growth in new applications such as peer to peer technologies, on line geographic mapping, advanced search data matching, instant messaging applications, and broadband capabilities will make today's Internet seem like some distinctly remote ancestor.

The Internet in ten years time may have neither tcp/ip nor domain names. ICANN may be redundant. The Internet will have sufficiently merged with both telephony and existing broadcast media to be indistinct as a separate entity. Privacy will be a much bigger issue, as people learn to cope with the permanent digital legacy of their past on line records accessed with the data matching capabilities of enhanced search engines. Cyberwarfare, trade, economic issues, and on line monopolies, which are not given great attention in the report, will have loomed as much larger problems. We are not talking 50 years hence here; a mere five years will make these different priorities apparent.

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This weakness in understanding what the Internet might be, what it was, and therefore what it is, makes addressing governance issues in detail quite difficult.

We mention this because appropriate governance structures need to begin to understand tomorrow's issues as well as today's. In the detail of structure, we urge you to look towards the issues we can expect to emerge as the Internet grows and affects more areas of our lives. An examination of these issues will assist in determining appropriate directions.

Beyond that, however, the report identifies the substantial issues of 2005 and makes some sensible recommendations to deal with them.

Technical management issues
The other issue the report does not deal with is technical management, particularly as regards the role of IETF. The assumption is that current technical management is best practice; we, however, feel that technical decision making carried out in a void without a detailed methodology for measuring the impact on groups of end users is far from best practice. Hopefully the forum function recommended in the report can give some attention to this issue.

While it might be difficult for UN or WGIG to comment on technical issues in detail, we do not believe that technical management should be assumed to be in a good state simply because it has not been assessed. Rather, we believe that a greater understanding of the weaknesses of the current technical management and the ramifications of continuing not to address these issues needs to be understood, and we urge an examination of these issues by a competent business consulting organisation. Some off the issues which stand out and are becoming increasingly problematic include;

- Ossification by incremental change
- The difficulties in deployment of DNSSEC and Ipv6
- The inadequacy of legacy messaging and web architectures in handling problems such as spam and cyber crime
- The failure to date of approaches to internationalised domain names
- The technical only co-ordination of IETF and the lack of avenues for non-technical input into decisions which have social policy ramifications.

All of these are issues which need to be understood in determining detailed governance structures.

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On specific recommendations

We strongly support the forum proposal. This can provide an ongoing means of addressing issues which will emerge as the Internet grows and changes. This is the most important structural proposal. The forum needs to have wide input from industry, governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, and needs to encompass existing governmental, commercial and institutional interests as well as otherwise under-represented segments of the internet user community whose wishes must also be respected in any workable forward plan."

We also urge consideration of the four options advanced to deal with governance structures. Each has merits. Importantly, the question of root zone policy authorisation needs to be addressed; indeed the most suitable determination here might be that no such structure or authorisation is necessary. However, disquiet with the current unilateral control of this function is significant, and a structure whereby countries clearly control policy authorisation for their top level domains needs to be formalised. We would welcome involvement in the evolution of appropriate structures, and to bring to bear on this issue both technical and policy expertise in bringing together a more appropriate solution. We suggest the need to do something here is urgent; we are seeing now the beginnings of fragmentation of the centralised root structure as various people react to their perceptions of problems with the current structure – whether they be concerns about unilateral control or perceptions of inadequacies in dealing with multilingual domain name development. These pressures are immediate and deserve attention by an expert group.

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Summary of our recommendations

As the Internet grows and affects more areas of our lives new issues will emerge. We strongly support the forum proposal. This can provide an ongoing means of addressing issues which will emerge as the Internet grows and changes. This is the most important structural proposal.

We believe that a greater understanding of the weaknesses of the current technical management is needed, and the ramifications of continuing not to address these issues need to be understood. We urge an examination of these issues by a competent business consulting organisation.

We feel that technical decision making carried out in a void without a detailed methodology for measuring the impact on groups of end users is far from best practice. Hopefully the forum function recommended in the report can give some attention to this issue.

We are now seeing the beginnings of fragmentation of the centralised root structure as various people react to their perceptions of problems with the current structure – whether they be concerns about unilateral control of root zone authorisation or perceptions of inadequacies in dealing with multilingual domain name development. These pressures are immediate. We recommend an expert group to examine these issues and to liaise with all stakeholders to evolve an appropriate structure as a matter of urgency. We would be happy to assist with this task.

For further information contact: ian.peter@internetmark2.org