

## IGF Review: ICC BASIS preliminary input

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Members of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and its BASIS initiative—Business Action to Support the Information Society, are pleased to provide input on the topic of the review of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) which is one of the agenda items for the open consultations on 23-24 February 2009 in Geneva. ICC and BASIS members include business representatives from companies and associations across sectors and geographies. Many members have been active contributors to the past three IGFs and before that to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Geneva 2003 and Tunis 2005.

When WSIS 2005 ended, approximately 1 billion people were connected to the Internet. Today, 3 years later, the Information Society has expanded to 1.5 billion Internet users. Similarly, at WSIS 2005, slightly more than 2 billion people were mobile phone subscribers. By the end of this year, 4 billion people around the world will have access to mobile services and devices, and business is proud of its role in this deployment. It has worked hard to raise capital and invest in the necessary infrastructure and facilities, as well as to foster innovative applications and content that can help improve the quality of life for many. At the same time, we recognize that much work remains to be done, in close collaboration with other stakeholders, to make this an ever more inclusive, innovative and productive environment.

Business has spurred innovations in network design and technology that are used 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and 365 days a year to support economic life across the globe, from micro-financing initiatives by individuals using mobile phones to international trading systems that rely on sophisticated software.

Business is also a major user of the Internet, along with governments, individuals and all participants in the IGF. We therefore share common interests with other users, beyond providing goods, services and applications.

ICC-BASIS members believe that the IGF provides a useful opportunity for all relevant stakeholders to discuss important Internet governance related policy issues and exchange experiences on challenges faced, solutions that work, good practices, and issues on the horizon. It also provides a place for new contacts to be made, partnerships to be formed and awareness about initiatives and resources to be raised. We believe that there is no other forum that provides the opportunities that are afforded by the IGF to all stakeholders, and support its continuity with its current format and structures including its leadership, secretariat and multistakeholder advisory group.

## **Benefits and opportunities**

- The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) has significant value as it brings together leaders from many technical groups and organizations (including governments, civil society, business) in a setting that is open to all interested parties with outreach through pre-meeting preparations, webcast, and real-time transcriptions, in a forum that is open to all topics and that has proven to be very frank and candid in its discussion of issues.
- Business supports the multistakeholder approach used in the IGF, where all stakeholders participate on an equal footing, because it is an opportunity for frank and open exchange on important policy issues.
- This is a unique forum. It offers us all a chance to speak, but also to listen. Business welcomes the chance to participate actively and comes with the experience and willingness to work with all stakeholders.
- The focus on exchanging of best practices, policy approaches and experiences is a strength of the IGF that maximizes the time spent by all relevant stakeholders on substantive exchange instead of negotiated texts.
- There is no topic that cannot be discussed at the IGF, and mechanisms like the Dynamic Coalitions, if structured in a balanced manner, can be important opportunities for stakeholders that may come from very different perspectives to listen to and share with others. This dialogue can lead to new understandings and new found common interests or opportunities.
- The IGF has brought many organizations together, raised awareness among stakeholders about who is doing what in the technical areas, and Internet related matters at national and regional levels. This is a real benefit, and has facilitated 'enhanced cooperation' among these organizations and between stakeholders for solutions that can be collective, co-ordinated and comprehensive.
- Business believes the multistakeholder approach of the IGF is valuable because it leads to more informed policy choices, and business choices.

As detailed in ICC-BASIS' reflections on IGF India, we believe that the IGF is fulfilling its mandates as outlined in paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda, and incorporate those points by reference in this input.

## **IGF review process**

With this background, we have discussed the consultation and review process regarding the 'desirability of the continuation of the IGF'. We believe that this open consultation followed by open consultations in May and September, a call for public contributions, and a session on this topic at the IGF in Sharm el Sheikh will be a comprehensive way of gathering input from stakeholders on the IGF's progress and areas for improvements.

We support an evaluative approach by all participants and stakeholders. Paragraph 76 of the Tunis Agenda does not call for an external evaluation. External evaluations risk possible re-opening of issues that were completed by the WSIS processes. We believe that the most comprehensive and useful evaluation will be done by those with direct knowledge of the IGF process, including its WSIS history, who have participated in the IGF since its beginning as well as those who are new participants. We support setting aside time for discussion, as well as substantive written contributions on the IGF and its important role. Participants should be encouraged to submit their views in writing as contributions for discussion at open consultations. Special efforts by all stakeholders can be made to ensure there is greater input in writing and in-person on this issue.

The IGF in Egypt is an important event for further discussion on the range of substantive issues. We caution that the IGF review should not dominate the discussions in Sharm el Sheikh, and at the same time recognize that this discussion needs to be afforded an appropriate space in the programme. In this regard, we recommend that a 3 hour session devoted to the IGF review in a slot where no other sessions or workshops are scheduled would ensure that the widest possible range of participants can contribute to this important discussion. This session should focus on the views of stakeholders on the desirability of the continuity of the IGF.

This session should be structured in a way that solicits input from people who are not in Sharm el Sheikh through online contributions, remote participation and other means that can be explored. This will bring a range of views and experiences to this consultation in Sharm el Sheikh.

One aspect of the review throughout this year could request contributions about how participants have learned about the IGF and the opportunity to participate. This would inform steps that can be taken to improve outreach and visibility.

We believe that this will serve as concrete input to the UN Secretary General and the development of his recommendations.

## **What is BASIS?**

The International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) created BASIS to raise awareness among the public, governments, civil society, intergovernmental organizations and technical community of what business requires to continue contributing to the development of the Information Society. It serves as the voice of business in the global dialogue on the Information Society, following two World Summits on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005).

To promote the environment in which business around the world will continue to thrive as an innovator of information and communication technologies, BASIS participates in UN-linked forums set up to continue the dialogue, such as the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and the WSIS follow-up and implementation processes, and the UN Global Alliance for ICTs and development (GAID).

To help shape the agenda and participate in these global discussions, BASIS relies on the policies developed in the ICC Commission on E-business, IT and Telecoms as the foundation for its efforts.

BASIS builds on the activities and network of the Coordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors (CCBI), which ICC formed to coordinate participation by world business in the processes leading up to and at WSIS.

BASIS members include business organizations such as the Information Technology Association of America (ITAA), World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA), Business Software Alliance (BSA), Africa Investor, e-Skills Industry Leadership Board, Global Information Infrastructure Commission (GIIC), Japan Business Federation (Nippon Keidanren), as well as several ICC national committees and companies from across sectors and geographies.

For further information regarding BASIS, the founding partners, members and activities, please consult the BASIS website at: <http://www.iccwbo.org/basis>

## **About ICC**

The International Chamber of Commerce is the largest, most representative business organization in the world. Its hundreds of thousands of member companies in over 130 countries have interests spanning every sector of private enterprise.

A world network of national committees keeps the ICC International Secretariat in Paris informed about national and regional business priorities. More than 2,000 experts drawn from ICC's member companies feed their knowledge and experience into crafting the ICC stance on specific business issues.

The United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and many other intergovernmental bodies, both international and regional, are kept in touch with the views of international business through ICC.

For more information please visit: [www.iccwbo.org](http://www.iccwbo.org)