



International Chamber of Commerce

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An ICC initiative

BASIS

Business Action to Support
the Information Society

ICC/BASIS feedback on first Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Athens, Greece [30 October-2 November 2006]

This contribution provides feedback from the global business community of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), and its initiative, Business Action to Support the Information Society (BASIS) on the first Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Athens [30 October-2 November 2006] in response to the IGF secretariat's call for input. ICC and BASIS include members from companies and business associations from around the world, across sectors and of all sizes.

General Comments

ICC/BASIS members believe that the aim of creating an open and informative forum for discussion on Internet governance (IG) issues among all stakeholders was fulfilled in Athens. This feedback provides reactions and experiences of ICC/BASIS members on the successful first event, and proposes improvements to ensure that the IGF continues to evolve as a productive space for discussion on these issues.

It is essential that preparations for the next IGF in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (12-15 November 2007) build on the successful format and multistakeholder approach in Athens, and that logistical and substantive arrangements for the IGF in Rio de Janeiro begin in earnest immediately. Reflecting on the first IGF and integrating this experience in all aspects of the preparations for the next IGF will be critical to its success.

Summary of key points

- ❖ Build on the successful format and multistakeholder approach of the first IGF in Athens
- ❖ Finalize topics, speakers, and overall programme well in advance
- ❖ Ensure moderators and panellists can be substantively prepared much earlier
- ❖ Focus on issues that can create an enabling environment and thereby help spread the benefits of the Internet to more people
- ❖ Stress human and institutional capacity building to increase meaningful participation in Internet-related issues at all levels---national, regional, and international.

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IGF Advisory Group

- The general sense is that the advisory group should continue its work, that time should not be wasted trying to re-recommend members for it, and that the few members who may leave the group can be replaced by other members of their stakeholder group.
- The priority should be to take stock in February 2007 and begin planning for the IGF in November 2007 with more lead time to improve preparation, selection and confirmation of speakers.
- The balance of stakeholders in the advisory group must remain the same with all stakeholders participating on an equal footing.
- It should be specified more clearly that the advisory group members act in their personal capacities to encourage more advisory group members from all stakeholder groups to contribute actively in the discussions and work.
- Business fully supports Mr. Nitin Desai as the chair of the IGF advisory group, and recognizes his expertise and professionalism as a major factor in the advisory group's successful completion of its tasks.

IGF Format

The IGF in Athens was a productive opportunity for discussions among all stakeholders on an equal footing and allowed for the airing of and exchange of many perspectives, experiences and important information about the issues.

It demonstrated the fundamental fact that these Internet governance issues are in many cases quite complicated and understanding them can lead to more informed and better decision-making. It also demonstrated that these issues can only be addressed with the involvement of all stakeholders and that they require greater awareness. Human and institutional capacity building is the cornerstone to ensuring more effective participation by all stakeholders in these issues, from around the world and particularly from developing countries, at the national, regional and international levels.

- The format of the Athens meeting worked remarkably well measured against its objective of fostering multistakeholder discussion.
- The host country provides essential non-substantive assistance, namely logistical, practical, and organizational support. Greece provided the appropriate support in its role as host country and this example should be used in the future.
- The continued engagement of business, governments, civil society and the technical community in the preparations for the IGF sessions and at the sessions is essential.



- All stakeholders must continue to participate on an equal footing in the IGF.
- Focusing on fewer themes and using different formats for panels to create variety will increase the quality of the main sessions and interactions.
- Panels should be shorter in length and have fewer speakers, while still ensuring the range of different viewpoints and experiences are represented. Some panels could be 3 hours but have a break in the middle.
- Selection of moderators is critical to the success of the discussions.
- Much more lead time is needed to secure speakers. Invitations to desired speakers, particularly senior-level ones, should be extended far in advance of the meeting. Experience teaches that six months (even a year) is not at all too far-advanced a time to secure such busy and “over-scheduled” people.

Main meeting sessions - recommendations and substantive comments

Recommendations

We would encourage the next IGF to recognize the multiplicity of views and seek to build upon the useful observations made by Mr. Desai in the closing session urging reflection by all stakeholders on how to engage with other constituencies more effectively in the IGF discussions. This will ensure a more meaningful exchange and debate and lead to greater understanding of the issues from all actors involved.

- Many developing country representatives [from all stakeholder groups] felt that the focus was too much on "North-North" issues. They wanted more focus on how to create an enabling environment to increase use of the Internet in their countries as well as the necessary competencies and skills, and much less on the mechanics of "Internet governance" alone. Business supports such a focus.
- The emphasis on discussions without negotiated conclusions is an essential principle for the Forum. It avoids the pressure to reach consensus, establish strict criteria for representation, or spend time on what could be protracted political negotiations and wordsmithing. The organizers should convey more strongly and clearly the purpose of the Forum, as determined at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis, so that participants will attend with common expectations about the purpose and format of the Forum, and can thus fully benefit from the unique opportunity that is the IGF.



Practical recommendations

- Finalize the topics for the next IGF promptly.
- Develop and distribute clear descriptions of the sessions, with a session structure and scenario of how the discussion will flow.
- There should be three briefings with the moderator of any session, (i) a meeting or teleconference well in advance, (ii) a meeting on the day before – with the core advisory group members volunteering for this job, and (iii) a briefing with the session panellists (and the advisory group volunteers) at least 2 hours before the session starts, to get the moderator acquainted with the panellists, and to discuss the direction the moderator and discussion will take. The sessions would benefit from a well-defined outline of the issues, combined with a description of the panellists and their particular perspectives that are connected to a more coherent overall picture.
 - The moderators should be prepared adequately to ensure that they can guide the discussion through the issues and ensure that the range of sub-issues and perspectives are illuminated in the discussion.
 - The role of the volunteers from the advisory group should be clearly spelled out for moderators to facilitate the most effective use of their input and simplify this aspect for the moderators. An outline of instructions for the moderator that also defines the role of the advisory group volunteers will be useful and ensure better preparations for the sessions.
 - Adequate facilities, briefing rooms, and a clear schedule defined ahead of time for the moderators and support volunteers, as well as the panellists will be helpful.

Specific comments on Emerging Issues session

- Having a moderator who was young and from an emerging economy country was effective, along with the bi-lingual facilitation of the discussion that she was able to perform.
- The panellists were not young enough to present new issues, nor even emerging issues from a youth perspective, as many were already in their advanced 20s or 30s. For emerging issues, either new technologies or new social trends should be the focus in the future to ensure that the session highlights new issues instead of known issues, and panellists should either be from across the age ranges or truly ‘youth’.
- The panellists were all from similar backgrounds working as ‘social entrepreneurs’, which is an important perspective. However, the session could benefit from a more diverse group of panellists that reflect emerging issues from business, governmental, technical and users’ perspectives.



- More in-depth thought needs to be given to the new uses of the Internet and the emerging issues from around the world. It could be useful to gather input on the emerging issues well in advance of the IGF in Rio.

Specific comments on Summing-up sessions

- The report of the secretariat and chair in the mornings, and at the end of the IGF provided a balanced description of the panel discussions and were helpful. This approach should be continued at future IGFs. The host country should have a ceremonial role, not a substantive one.

Preparations and logistics

- The IGF secretariat did a laudable job with very few resources.
- Having the ability to stay in the venue of the IGF was essential, which means the hotel conference facilities need to be appropriate for the IGF events, and affordable.
- The Wireless network (WiFi) needs to be improved. The fact that it was free was important for participants, and ensuring that WiFi is free in the hotel rooms in the venue would be an improvement at the next IGF.
- The hotel conference venue staff was responsive, pleasant, willing to help and solve problems. This is essential.
- The encounter plaza was located in a part of the building with very little flow-through traffic, which was unfortunate in terms of the potential loss of exposure and interaction. An improvement for next time would be to ensure that the tables are in a high-traffic area, such as was the case for the Greek host sponsors tables just outside the main meeting room.
- The encounter plaza should be organized by the IGF secretariat with host country support for the facilities, as it is probably not the best use of advisory group members' time or expertise.
- IGF advisory group teams of multistakeholder experts should prepare the moderators, work with them in advance and support the sessions as was done in Athens---see section above.
- The organizers should provide for 'food to go' to allow participants to pick up lunch or food items throughout the day, and create more options for those with time and budget constraints besides 'sit down' restaurants.



Workshops

- Reduce the number of workshops to achieve a clearer agenda, ensure the schedule is less packed so that workshops have sufficient attendance.
- Some workshops were very useful in drilling down on particular issues and others were not focused enough.
- In some instances, it was questionable whether the information provided or discussed was really of value to the IGF discussions and topics.
- Workshops should be solicited to provide well-defined opportunities for participants to explore in greater detail particular aspects of main meeting topics.
- There should be more detailed criteria for workshop proposals than those developed for Athens, and complementary or topic-overlapping workshop proposals should be compelled to combine. This could be improved by calling for proposals and grouping them under one topic area, and building multistakeholder cooperation by encouraging sponsors to combine their ideas into one (or two) workshops which are co-organized by different stakeholders.
- Some of the speakers were not adequately prepared, and their input could be more focused if the workshops were finalized with more lead time, and perhaps had presentations or outlines of remarks posted in advance to be vetted for quality and contribution.
- Workshops should not be scheduled while main meetings are going on or other closely related workshops are in progress.
- Consider distinguishing between “information presentations” and “interactive workshops” to highlight the difference. Both formats can provide different benefits. Interactive workshops would require much more detailed planning,
- Consider running in-depth practical workshops for a full day or half day, instead of trying to have many workshops on many issues for 90 minutes each.
- Continue to enable the organizer(s) to prepare a brief written summary following the workshop for posting on the IGF website and to be made available at the Forum, and allow the organizer(s) to make brief summary remarks about their workshop following the day’s general session.



Building multistakeholder cooperation and communication

- Adding a coffee break into the main sessions' schedule could also be useful for closing topics and opening a different topic.
- A coffee break could give the moderator of the session time to talk with the panellists and refocus the discussion.
- The social receptions were important for the exchange of ideas. Many informal discussions and contacts in the main meetings and workshops and at the receptions were part of the success of the IGF in Athens.
- A buffet-style lunch break in a large common area, with the open space 'encounter' plaza near by would be a useful addition.

IGF Secretariat

- Business applauds the efforts of Mr Markus Kummer as executive coordinator of the IGF secretariat. Mr Kummer and his small team did an outstanding job with very limited resources.
- The IGF secretariat needs more resources and additional staff to prepare for the next IGF.
- Advisory group members can support preparations, but to properly prepare logistics, sessions, moderators/speakers information well in advance, manage the encounter plaza, meeting rooms, and facilities along with host country organizers is critical and requires additional staff at the IGF secretariat.
- Providing all stakeholders with an outline of costs and needs for the secretariat could help all stakeholders to contribute financially to the already established trust fund or provide in-kind support.



Ideas for the substantive themes in Rio de Janeiro, IGF II, 12-15 November 2007

- There were many calls for greater consideration of the true needs of developing countries. The second IGF could consider a major emphasis on such a set of issues, which would focus on human and institutional capacity building at the local level (such as Internet-enabled distance learning and associated skills training, and internship programmes), providing information and case studies about economies that have created successful enabling environments, and emphasize the importance of having the appropriate legal, policy and regulatory environments to create competition, increase Internet penetration and ensure the ongoing and future stability and security of the Internet.
- Human and institutional capacity building remains a critical component of Internet governance and addressing all key Internet-related issues at the national, regional and international levels. The second IGF should continue to focus on this area, and build on the useful experiences of the IGF in Athens. Such an emphasis would promote human skills capacity, which would improve the employability of more people in the Information Society.
- A suggestion was made that the next IGF main meetings be more practical and structured.



What is Business Action to Support the Information Society (BASIS)?

ICC created BASIS to serve as the voice of business in the global dialogue on the Information Society, following the two World Summits on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005). BASIS participates in UN-linked forums set up to continue the dialogue, such as the Global Alliance for ICT and Development, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and the WSIS follow-up and implementation processes.

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 the Summits in Geneva and Tunis.

To promote the environment in which global business will continue to thrive as an innovator of these technologies, BASIS mobilizes business to help shape the agenda and participate in these global discussions. The initiative aims to unite the business community, to raise awareness among the public, governments, civil society, intergovernmental organizations and technical authorities of what business requires for continued contributions to the development of the Information Society. BASIS relies on substantive policies developed in ICC's Commission on E-business, IT and Telecoms (EBITT) as the foundation for its efforts.

For further information regarding BASIS, the founding partners, members and activities, please consult the BASIS website at:
<http://www.iccwbo.org/id7655/index.html>

About the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)

ICC is the world business organization, the only representative body that speaks with authority on behalf of enterprises from all sectors in every part of the world. ICC promotes an open international trade and investment system and the market economy. Business leaders and experts drawn from the ICC membership establish the business stance on broad issues of trade and investment, e-business, IT and telecoms policy as well as on vital technical and sectoral subjects. ICC was founded in 1919 and today it groups thousands of member companies and associations from over 130 countries.

For further information about ICC please consult our website: www.iccwbo.org