

UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

UNCTAD Hearing with Civil Society

Geneva, 24 May 2018

Written contribution from Association for Proper Internet Governance (APIG)

*This written contribution is made available in the language and form in which it was received. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNCTAD

Contribution from APIG to the UNCTAD hearing with civil society, 24 May 2018

Richard Hill¹, Association for Proper Internet Governance (APIG), 10 May 2018

We comment here on the following two topics:

- 1) New ways in which the United Nations could address the crisis of multilateralism and trade, its development machinery, and what would be the contribution of UNCTAD
- 2) Industrial policies and productive capacity policies for a digital economy

1. New ways in which UNCTAD can contribute

We fully endorse the analysis and recommendations contained in the background paper TD/B/65(1)/2². With respect to the questions in paragraph 41, we propose the following:

- A. Current mechanisms for global governance are not working well: there are serious issues that need international discussion, and harmonization, in particular in the area of information and communications technologies (ICTs), including the Internet, such as security, privacy, data protection, abuse of market power by dominant platforms, etc. Concrete suggestions for how to improve the situation, including specific areas of work for UNCTAD, are provided in:

<http://www.apig.ch/Gaps%20r9%20clean.pdf>

- B. It is not appropriate to argue that such issues should be discussed in trade-related negotiating bodies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) or free trade agreements, in particular because those bodies are not transparent, not inclusive, and not multi-stakeholder.³ So there would appear to be an inconsistency here, see:

http://unctad.org/meetings/en/Contribution/WGEC_m5_contribution_inconsistencies_RHill_en.pdf

- C. The key topics that must be addressed in order to deal with the discontent with multilateralism and international trade are:
- a. Agree global norms on data privacy and data protection.
 - b. Agree global norms on remuneration of users and communities for the use of their data.⁴
 - c. Agree global norms on taxation of digital products and services.
 - d. Agree global norms, and an international enforcement mechanisms, for anti-trust and competition issues arising out of the globalization and trend to the digital economy, in particular to deal with the dominance of digital platforms.

- D. UNCTAD can be the lead organization for items b, c, and d above.

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² http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/tdb65_1_d2_en.pdf

³ <http://twn.my/title2/resurgence/2017/324-325/cover09.htm>

⁴ <http://www.apig.ch/CWG-Internet%202017-2bis.pdf>

2. Policies for a digital economy

We fully endorse the analysis and recommendations contained in the background paper TD/B/65(1)/3⁵.

With respect to paragraph 25, we propose:

- A. The recommendations made in section 1 above.
- B. The recommendations, in particular regarding bridging the digital divide, made in our submission to the ITU Council Working Group on international public policy issues relating to the Internet, see:

<http://www.apig.ch/CWG-Internet%202017.pdf>

As explained in that submission, the key developmental aspects of the Internet are to reduce the cost of connectivity and to maintain trust and security.

Reducing the cost of connectivity can be achieved by fostering competition (which may include functional separation), funding infrastructure, taking steps to reduce the cost of international connectivity, supporting the development of local content, capacity building, and a proper governance system.

Maintaining trust and security can be achieved by protecting human rights, protecting data privacy, combating spam, protecting consumers, enabling pervasive strong encryption, and curtailing unnecessary and disproportionate mass surveillance.

Further, it is time to recognize that colonialist attitudes left over from the past are not appropriate and must be banned. And the time has come to make the world a better place by using the Internet to increase social justice: the fair and just relation between the individual and society, measured in terms of the explicit and tacit terms for the distribution of wealth, opportunities for personal activity and social privileges. And the time has come to abandon neo-liberal policies that are in reality corporatist policies that favor the techno-imperialistic geopolitical and geoeconomic goals of a few countries.

- C. UNCTAD to assist developing countries to adopt appropriate digital industrialization policies as outlined in:

http://www.itforchange.net/sites/default/files/1468/digital_industrialisation_exec_summary.pdf

and

<https://tinyurl.com/digi-dev-countries>

⁵http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/tdb65_1_d3_en.pdf