

# Summary by the CSTD Vice Chair<sup>1</sup> of the preliminary Consultations on the CSTD Working Group on IGF

Vilnius, Lithuania, 16 September 2010

## Background

On 19 July 2010, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted by consensus resolution 2010/2 on the “Assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society”. By this resolution, ECOSOC “invites the Chair of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) to establish, in an open and inclusive manner, a working group which would seek, compile and review inputs from all Member States and all other stakeholders on improvements to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), in line with the mandate set out in the Tunis Agenda, and which would report to the Commission at its fourteenth session in 2011 with recommendation, as appropriate. This report is to constitute an input from the Commission to the General Assembly, through ECOSOC, should the mandate of the IGF be extended.

The Hon. Sherry Ayittey, Minister of Environment, Science and Technology of Ghana, the current Chair of the CSTD, delegated the task of establishing the CSTD Working Group on IGF to Mr. Frederic Riehl, vice Chair of the CSTD. Mr. Riehl used the opportunity of the presence of so many stakeholders at the fifth annual IGF meeting, which took place in Vilnius, Lithuania from 14 to 17 September 2010, to organize on 16 September a preliminary consultations session with all interested parties to share views and exchange ideas on the composition, modalities and working methods of the Working Group.

## Preliminary consultations

The preliminary consultations on the establishment of the CSTD Working Group on Internet Governance were attended by more than 100 participants. Participants included representatives from governments, international organizations, the business and technical communities, civil society and the media. The meeting was chaired and opened by Mr. Frederic Riehl, Vice Chair of the CSTD.

Mr. Riehl made a concise presentation on the CSTD plans to establish the Working Group in response to and in line with ECOSOC resolution 2010/2, its purpose, and the time line for its preparation. Ideally, the Working Group should be established by the end of October. Its preparatory process as well as its report to the CSTD will take into account the Note by the Secretary-General on the continuation of the Internet Governance Forum (document A/65/78 – E/2010/68), as well as the outcomes of an open and inclusive consultations and questionnaire on improvements to the IGF that will be posted on the CSTD Web site in October 2010. The two first meetings related to the Working Group will take place on 24 November 2010 (in conjunction with the IGF consultation meeting, scheduled to take place in Geneva) and on February 2011

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<sup>1</sup> The views expressed in this summary do not necessarily reflect those of the UNCTAD secretariat.

in Geneva. The report of the Working Group on the improvement to the IGF will – should the mandate of the IGF be extended - be presented at the 14<sup>th</sup> annual session of the CSTD, scheduled to take place in Geneva in May 2011.

Following his presentation, Mr. Riehl invited participants to share their views on the composition, modalities and working methods of the CSTD working group on IGF improvements.

Most interventions from government representatives as well as from representatives of civil society and the private sector strongly supported the IGF and its continuity and welcomed the consultations called for by the Vice Chair of the CSTD. It was stressed by many participants that the multi-stakeholder character and inclusive spirit and principles of the IGF have been successful and should continue to guide the composition, modalities and working methods of the CSTD Working Group on the IGF.

### **Composition**

Since its inception in the aftermath of the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the IGF has contributed significantly to a better understanding of Internet governance policy issues and has benefited from the involvement of all stakeholders. Thus, it was emphasised by a large number of interventions that it was essential that the working Group be composed of a balanced number of representatives from all stakeholders - governments, civil society and the private sector. It was also emphasized that the working group include stakeholders from diverse regions and particularly from developing countries. Many interventions indicated that the working group should be of a limited size that will allow work to be done effectively and consensus reached more easily. A majority of stakeholders welcomed the Mr Riehl's suggestion to use the model of the UN Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG), which was set up in the aftermath of the 2003 Geneva phase of WSIS "in an open and inclusive manner" to elaborate a report on Internet Governance for the Tunis phase. The experience of WGIG, whose work had been widely appreciated by the international community, had shown that a multistakeholder group made up of 40 or so representatives can work more effectively and reach consensus more easily. A few participants indicated during the consultation that the Working Group should not be of a limited size but rather inclusive and open to all stakeholders, while one participant indicated that the group should operate under the rules of procedures of ECOSOC and the General Assembly (i.e., only representatives of governments and accredited intergovernmental organizations and civil society can participate).

### **Modalities**

The modalities of the working group should ensure inclusivity and take into account views and experiences from all relevant stakeholders. This would be achieved through online consultations as well as face-to-face open and inclusive consultations and meetings. The outcome of such open consultations and meetings would be used as inputs to the discussion and the report of the Working Group. The open consultations and meetings ideally should take place in conjunction with the regular IGF preparatory and annual meetings.

Mr Riehl suggested conducting a first round of informal on-line open consultations during the month of October in order to get the views of all interested stakeholders on the issue of IGF improvements before the group starts its work. He suggested using a questionnaire, which could focus on the following aspects of the IGF: format of the IGF meetings, format of the outcome of IGF meetings, working methods of the IGF, including its Multistakeholder Advisory Group, and the IGF's outreach to other organisations and fora that deal with IG issues. Participants reacted positively to this suggestion and requested that the questionnaire also ask for comments on how to improve the participation of stakeholders from developing countries in the IGF process.

### **Working methods**

Receiving inputs from all stakeholders expressing their view points and ideas is critical to the work of the group and allow a better understanding of the various concerns and wishes to improve the operations and functions of the IGF in the future. Such open and frank exchange of ideas will help alley concerns and lead to improved and more widely acceptable solutions to the various contentious issues.