UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation

Contribution to the guiding questions agreed during first meeting of the WGEC

Submitted by

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The Internet Society (ISOC) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation organized by the Chair of the Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation, ahead of the next meeting by the Working Group on 26-27 January 2017 in Geneva. ISOC has been involved in the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process since its very beginning, and we hope our input will prove to be useful in the multistakeholder discussions to be held next year.

- **What are the high-level characteristics of enhanced cooperation?**

The Internet was designed to foster innovation as an unprecedented tool for collaboration and human empowerment. As a result of its fundamental properties, the Internet is a dynamic technology, enabling new connected devices, services, users and applications. While the Internet is a continuous source of opportunities, the same fundamental properties spawn new challenges. Access to the Internet is increasingly seen as integral for social and economic development, but real threats are also undermining the trust so critical to its success.

Given the Internet's interdependent nature, collaboration is key to solve these challenges. **The Internet Society sees enhanced cooperation among all stakeholders as a foundation on which to build the trusted relationships necessary to develop common and successful solutions**. This approach, which was endorsed by the ten-year Review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+10), demonstrated again its efficacy in the recent success of the IANA transition.

Indeed, the Internet is a complex but robust ecosystem in which actors, institutions, and infrastructures must act independently while maintaining interoperability. The nature of the ecosystem favors a similarly structured governance system, in which power is widely distributed, all actors must work together, and independence and interoperability are of paramount importance.

Enhanced cooperation reinforces collaboration between the various communities of the Internet ecosystem, including governments, business, civil society and the technical and academic communities. For policy makers, enhanced cooperation ensures interoperability with governance mechanisms developed through the various processes and regimes of the decentralized system.

In a recent publication entitled *"[Why the Multistakeholder Approach Works](#)*, the Internet Society highlights key principles to enhance cooperation among stakeholders*:

- **Inclusiveness and transparency**

Inclusiveness is the source of legitimacy in collaborative decision-making. Those significantly affected by a decision should have the chance to be involved in making it. Inclusiveness is not just an admirable goal, but an essential part of an effective decision-making process. The less inclusive a process is, the less likely it is to engender the trust and support of stakeholders. Transparency is an essential condition for inclusiveness, as it brings expert and affected groups into the process.

Transparent inputs, process and decision-making are fundamental to the Internet. The global technical community has long practiced a publicly archived process for developing technical standards. Secrecy, while sometimes necessary, is far less useful for effective decision-making than the wider range and quality of inputs gained through a transparent process. Transparency is also essential to legitimacy as it can document that stakeholders had the opportunity to engage.

- **Collective responsibility**

All stakeholders share a collective responsibility for the continued vitality of the Internet and the benefits it brings to our societies and the global economy. The technical community shares a sense of collective stewardship of the Internet and of the open standards its technologies are based on.

The Internet is a common global resource and a highly interdependent system where each node is not only connected *to* the Internet, but is also a *part of* the Internet.

Collective responsibility extends to the system as a whole. Stakeholders are not just responsible for their part of the ecosystem. Instead, they must have a common understanding of the problem, shared solutions, common benefits, and maintain open communication channels.

- **Effective decision-making and implementation**

The most effective decisions are those based on an open and deliberative process. These processes should consider a broad range of information sources and perspectives. This holds for both the quality and implementation of the decision.

As the Internet is operated by a variety of public sector, private sector and civil society stakeholders, for decisions to be successfully implemented, imaginative and collaborative solutions are needed. Simply passing a national law will not be sufficient. Stakeholders who have been part of the process work harder to make its implementation a success.

- **Collaboration through distributed and interoperable governance**

Collaboration is the process of two or more people or institutions coming together to achieve a common goal. The Internet is the outcome of the collaborative efforts of many different actors. It benefits from an increasing amount of actors teaming up and working together.

To effectively harness the efforts of many actors, the technical community has evolved autonomous governance systems based on collaboration and mutual respect. Organisations that coordinate the Internet can collaborate where needed and otherwise focus on successfully carrying out their respective jobs. The organisations involved in Internet governance have complementary roles to play. Recognising this autonomy and keeping dialogue and mutual participation in areas of overlap between organisations, is how the distributed global governance system will remain fully interoperable.

- **Taking into consideration the work of the previous WGEC and the Tunis Agenda, particularly paragraphs 69-71, what kind of recommendations should we consider?**

As stated above, enhanced cooperation can only be effective if it involves all stakeholders. In this spirit, the Internet Society would like to recommend the following:

1) **Collaboration and collective responsibility to strengthen security**
The Internet's openness has been the driver of its success, and the determining factor of the innovations that spur its continued evolution. There will always be risks and challenges to an open network system, where malicious actors will find ways to exploit vulnerabilities. However, the Internet's openness also provides the means to protect itself through facilitating robust, flexible and agile solutions. But these solutions demand a collaborative approach to security that recognizes the system's global interdependent nature, in which no single stakeholder can solve the issues on its own.

This interdependency also demands a collective responsibility towards the Internet system as a whole. Unilateral solutions, but also negligence, can create residual damage to other stakeholders. The increase of data breaches, highlighted in ISOC's 2016 **Global Internet Report**, is one example of where the inactions of many organizations is putting users' data at risk, and in turn undermines the trust in the Internet as a whole.

2) **Increased collaboration to expand access**
The efforts to bridge the digital divide and to expand access to those currently offline will require increased efforts of collaboration among stakeholders.
As highlighted in ISOC's paper on "*A policy Framework for Enabling Internet Access*", we see three priority areas to create an enabling environment for access:
- Expanding Infrastructure
- Fostering Skills and Entrepreneurship
- Supportive Governance.

All stakeholders have a role in shaping this environment, and facilitating multistakeholder dialogues and mechanisms at the national and regional levels is essential to ensure that the right policies are adopted. As one successful illustration of this framework, there has been extensive progress on the development of Internet Exchange Points (IXPs), allowing Internet service providers to peer Internet traffic locally. Many of these IXPs are being developed in partnership with different stakeholders (government, content owners, service providers,

research and education networks), and demonstrate the value of enhanced cooperation at the level of local and regional Internet communities.

3) Strengthen participation of underrepresented stakeholders

There is a continued need to facilitate the active participation of governments, in particular from developing countries, into the existing processes and forums that shape Internet policies and the network's technical developments. The Internet Society is actively working to strengthen the connection between different communities. As an example, it has been offering fellowships for policy makers to participate to the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) meetings since 2012. To date, more than 170 policy makers from 53 different countries have participated in the program.

4) Continued implementation of the improvements to the Internet Governance Forum

The Internet Governance Forum has proven to be an important forum for strengthening the ties between the different stakeholder communities. Its open, inclusive and multistakeholder nature has been of practical value to share information and develop best practices, where the IGF is providing a global platform for cooperation among all stakeholders. Similarly, National and Regional IGFs are also valuable platforms for local stakeholders to address key local Internet governance issues in a multistakeholder framework, which have proved useful networking platforms to facilitate cooperation between local actors to address local priorities. Strengthening the IGF model, at both the global and regional and national level, would therefore also enhance cooperation.

To this end, ISOC welcomed the UN Secretariat's initiative of a two-day working retreat, and the open call for input on improving the IGF process. Through this process, ISOC has contributed its views on the needed improvements to the IGF, including the need to implement the recommendations from "Working Group on improvements to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)", and emphasizing the need to strengthen participation from developing countries.