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

the United Kingdom

Contribution from the UK Government

Introduction

1.   The UK Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to the two questions that were set by the Working Group at its first meeting. We look forward to discussing these questions with other stakeholders in order to share understanding and build consensus. Although there are differences of perspective and differences of view, we believe that the Working Group now has an opportunity to identify where there is common ground and develop consensus-based recommendations.

2.   The Internet is a global network of networks, with difuse ownership and management of its infrastructure and products. It works and it has developed successfully due to cooperation by a wide range of different stakeholders. As the Internet has become more global and as we work together to bridge the digital divide, it has been important to continue to develop and enhance cooperation between stakeholders. In our view, the Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation is a chance to reinforce that cooperation and to consider how it can promote sustainable development, in particular by encouraging inclusive participation by stakeholders from developing countries.

Q1 - What are the high level characteristics of enhanced cooperation?

3.   The last WGEC ran into difficulty when it tried to engage with many individual specific policy issues in great detail without first developing broader consensus on the concept of "enhanced cooperation". It may not be possible to produce a single definition of "enhanced cooperation" that all stakeholders sign up to, but agreement on the characteristics of enhanced cooperation, at a high level, could allow us to make significant progress in identifying shared objectives and finding agreement.

4.   We believe that identifying and agreeing a set of high level characteristics of enhanced cooperation will enable us build greater common understanding. It will increase confidence in the work of the WGEC, which will allow us to make more progress. We hope that consensus on the characteristics of enhanced cooperation will be a guide to us when we consider more difficult or complex recommendations and it will be a basis on which we can measure our progress.

5.   We recognise that there are many possible characteristics of enhanced cooperation and many ways of expressing them. We look forward to hearing the views of other colleagues. The UK would suggest the following characteristics for consideration:

- **Participatory and inclusive** - Enhanced cooperation should be open to participation by stakeholders with all views taken into account. Participation should be inclusive of all who have an interest in the international Internet-related public policy issue, paying particular attention to the needs of stakeholders from developing countries.

- **Responsive** - Enhanced cooperation should develop continuously in response to innovation and with foresight towards new developments that may have international Internet-related public policy implications. It should also be responsive to sustainable development priorities.

- **Flexible** - Enhanced cooperation should be flexible, recognising that different kinds of international Internet related public policy issues require different kinds of stakeholder cooperation in different circumstances.

- **Effective and sustainable** - Enhanced cooperation should be focused on achieving mutually agreed objectives aimed at long-term sustainability.

- **Respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms** - Enhanced cooperation should support and foster respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, recognising they are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated.

- **Evidence-based** - Enhanced cooperation should be based on a broad and robust evidence base that is accessible and to which all stakeholders are able to contribute.

- **Transparent** - Enhanced cooperation should be transparent to all stakeholders. Participating stakeholders should take responsibility for their actions and should be prepared to explain them.

In addition, running through all these high level characteristics, we believe that enhanced cooperation should contribute to the **2030**

Sustainable Development Agenda and pay particular attention to the needs of stakeholders from developing countries.

6. These characteristics are equally weighted and mutually reinforcing. In our view it is important to avoid a "shopping list" of specific policy issues: we are proposing instead a set of generic, high level characteristics which can be applied to the broad range of policy issues.

Q2 - Taking into consideration the work of the previous WGEC and the Tunis Agenda, particularly paragraphs 69-71, what kind of recommendations should we consider?

7. We will do our job most effectively if we develop recommendations which as far as possible can be useful to different stakeholders, in different circumstances, facing different issues at different times. Developing a recommendation for one specific issue or one limited group of stakeholders at a particular time would not be so useful.

8. Paragraph 71 of the Tunis Agenda says that the process towards enhanced cooperation should involve all stakeholders in their respective roles. The Internet governance framework is a distributed ecosystem involving different organisations and forums and stakeholders. Enhanced cooperation can only succeed if all stakeholders are included. The WGEC should develop recommendations that as far as possible can be generally applied by all stakeholders, including governments, the private sector, civil society, the technical community and the academic community.

9. Our recommendations should be flexible and recognise that different stakeholders will have different roles in different issues and situations. The Internet and Internet-enabled new technology is having an impact on almost every aspect of modern life and almost every aspect of public policy. The range of issues and the range of stakeholders affected are now extremely broad. This means that we need to develop recommendations that can be applied to different kinds of issues and stakeholders in different kinds of circumstances.

10. Our recommendations should as much as possible be "future-proof". Paragraph 71 also says that the process towards enhanced cooperation will be responsive to innovation. We need to recognise that technology has developed incredibly quickly since the Tunis Agenda was agreed in 2005. We believe that the pace of change will continue to accelerate and the new opportunities and challenges for public policy will also increase

in pace. The WGEC should develop recommendations that are future proof - recommendations which will still be useful and applicable in ten years' time and beyond.

11. With this in mind, we believe that the WGEC can produce a set of recommendations across a range of different areas, which will further the process of enhanced cooperation. Our recommendations should:

- Promote best practice in **consultation and engagement**, including how stakeholders can reach out proactively to one another in an informative and easily understandable way.

- Consider how stakeholders can **make information and evidence available** in an open, accessible and timely way in order to support meaningful participation and engagement.

- Develop principles on how stakeholders can **open up their policy-making processes** to input and scrutiny from other stakeholders.

- Make practical suggestions for enabling **participation of stakeholders from developing countries**, taking into account cultural and linguistic diversity and the capacity constraints faced by least developed countries.

- Consider how stakeholder representatives are chosen, including best practice in ensuring a **balance of stakeholder representatives** in multi-stakeholder forums.

- Support **sustainable development**, particularly in terms of capacity-building, education and skills, in order to help bridge the digital divide.

- Promote an **enabling environment for investment**, in particular promoting cooperation and partnership between governments, the private sector and other stakeholders which promotes investment in infrastructure and increases affordable connectivity in developing countries.

- Promote an **enabling environment for innovation**, in particular ensuring that the Internet remains an open environment which facilitates innovation and encouraging cooperation between stakeholders to this end.

- Avoid **duplicating existing work** but instead seek to develop existing forums, including building understanding of multi-stakeholder enhanced cooperation processes in the full range of existing international organisations.

- Consider how best to **build cooperation on emerging topics**, particularly new issues presented by newly emerging technology, in a way which allows all stakeholders to participate.

We believe that these kinds of issues represent a hugely valuable opportunity for the WGEC to make significant progress in developing enhanced cooperation.

12. Our recommendations will be most effective if they are agreed by consensus, as recommended by ECOSOC Resolution 2016/22. Although that resolution says that we can reflect different options and opinions if necessary, it would be a wasted opportunity to do so. Recommendations that are agreed by consensus have the authority and support to make an effective impact.

13. In our view, although we may not be able to reach agreement on every issue, there is a very broad and important agenda here where we should be able to find significant areas of agreement. The WGEC now has an opportunity to identify that common ground a make real progress on this issue.