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**Briefing on the open consultation on enhanced cooperation on public policy issues related
to the Internet**

18 May 2012

Summary report of the Chair

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In its resolution (A/RES/66/184) on *Information and communications technologies for development*, the General Assembly asked the Chair of the CSTD to convene a one-day open, inclusive and interactive meeting, involving all Member States and other stakeholders, particularly those from developing countries, including the private sector, civil society and international organisations, with a view to identifying a shared understanding about enhanced cooperation on public policy issues pertaining to the Internet, in accordance with paragraphs 34 and 35 of the Tunis Agenda.

The Chair of the CSTD convened this one-day meeting at the office of the International Labour Organisation in Geneva on 18 May 2012. It was attended by 60 governments and 80 other participants, who are listed in an Annex.

In opening the meeting, the Chair reminded delegates and participants that paragraphs 29-82 of the *Tunis Agenda for the Information Society*, which was agreed at the World Summit on the Information Society in 2005, established guidelines for future policy-oriented discussion of Internet governance, including the establishment of an Internet Governance Forum (IGF), and the implementation of ‘enhanced cooperation ... to enable governments, on an equal footing, to carry out their roles and responsibilities, in international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet, but not in the day-to-day technical and operational matters, that do not impact on international public policy issues.’

The meeting began with seven short presentations from experts representing diverse stakeholder communities concerned with Internet governance and enhanced cooperation. The presenters were:

- Mr Alexander Ntoko, speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, Dr Hamadou Touré;
- Ms Anriette Esterhuysen, Executive Director of the Association for Progressive Communications;
- Mr Parminder Singh, Executive Director of IT for Change;
- Mr Nigel Hickson, Vice-President for Europe of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN);
- Mr Markus Kummer, Vice-President of Public Policy for the Internet Society (ISOC);
- Ms Marilia Maciel, from the Center for Technology and Society – Getulio Vargas Foundation, Brazil;
- Ms Marilyn Cade, Chief Executive Officer of mCADE LLC.

Contributions to the debate were made by 21 governments and by 12 participants from other stakeholder communities.

Governments and other participants emphasised the growing importance of the Internet in economic and social development, at both national and international levels. They recognised that the Internet is a distributed system, and that it requires participation of diverse stakeholder groups, including governments, the private sector, civil society, technical and academic communities, and

intergovernmental organisations, in their respective roles. Delegates felt it to be important that decisions concerning Internet governance and enhanced cooperation should address both public and private interests, that they should foster the innovative development of Internet access, services and usage, and that they should contribute to the achievement of international development goals.

Governments and other participants recognised that the *Tunis Agenda on the Information Society* has established the framework within which enhanced cooperation on international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet should take place. They also acknowledged that the Internet and Internet governance have changed substantially since the adoption of the *Tunis Agenda*, and that the steps now required to achieve enhanced cooperation must take recent developments into account.

Governments and other participants acknowledged and welcomed the inclusion of diverse stakeholder groups in discussion and development concerning the Internet. Delegates emphasised that a multistakeholder approach was essential for Internet governance and enhanced cooperation on international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet. Some delegates emphasised the importance of defining the roles of different stakeholders, of establishing an appropriate balance between different interests in Internet governance, and of ensuring transparency and accountability.

Delegates noted that the *Tunis Agenda* identified two mechanisms required for the development of Internet governance – the Internet Governance Forum; and enhanced cooperation on international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet. Some governments and other participants felt that the *Tunis Agenda* established these as two distinct processes requiring different implementation mechanisms. Other governments and participants felt that the *Tunis Agenda* envisaged closer integration between them, and that the IGF itself could be one appropriate vehicle for enhanced cooperation.

There was praise for the achievements of the IGF, which was felt to have established a sound basis for multistakeholder dialogue about Internet governance and public policy issues. Several delegates noted that the IGF has stimulated the exchange of views and ideas about a wide range of Internet issues, including critical Internet resources. The work and report of the CSTD Working Group on Improvements to the IGF were recognised as a contribution towards further improvement of this important Forum. Some participants also emphasised the need to strengthen the IGF.

A number of governments felt that, while the IGF has become an established and valued mechanism in Internet governance, progress towards enhanced cooperation on international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet has been much more limited. Participants noted the lack of common understanding on enhanced cooperation on international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet. There was a common understanding among delegates and participants that governments have an important role in Internet governance, within the multistakeholder framework established by the *Tunis Agenda*.

Some delegates called for the establishment of an intergovernmental mechanism for enhanced cooperation within the United Nations structure, which would enable governments, on an equal footing, to carry out their roles and responsibilities in international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet. They emphasised the need to initiate, and reinforce, a transparent, democratic, and multilateral process as provided for in the *Tunis Agenda*. A number of different ways in which such a mechanism could be established were suggested.

A number of other governments and participants suggested, however, that enhanced cooperation, along the lines envisaged in the *Tunis Agenda*, is already taking place, although there are certain gaps

or needs for improvement that should be addressed. This cooperation was apparent in existing Internet governance mechanisms, including the Internet Governance Forum, the Governmental Advisory Committee and other mechanisms of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, a variety of other intergovernmental, international and Internet organisations, as well as more informal mechanisms and arrangements. These governments and other participants suggested that enhanced cooperation could be developed starting from these existing mechanisms.

A number of suggestions were made concerning the next stage of work to facilitate enhanced cooperation as envisaged in the *Tunis Agenda*.

Some delegates recommended that existing Internet governance entities should be invited again to submit reports concerning their work to enhance cooperation, along the lines of reports on this subject which were requested by the Secretary-General in 2006.

Several delegates suggested that it would be valuable to collect examples of cooperation on international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet which are currently taking place, in both United Nations and other contexts. These could then be mapped and reviewed in order to identify gaps in existing cooperation, to establish the effectiveness of these examples of cooperation in enabling governments to fulfil their responsibilities, and to suggest ways in which cooperation could be further enhanced. It was suggested that this would provide a systematic evidence base for decision-making by governments and international organisations including the CSTD.

One government emphasised that the principal challenge facing the CSTD was to identify the next step required for achieving progress towards enhanced cooperation, building on those areas of common understanding which had been identified during the meeting.

A number of delegates and other participants suggested the establishment of a multistakeholder working group which could give further consideration to the best ways of achieving enhanced cooperation. They noted that gaps remain in addressing international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet, emphasising the need to address issues such as the digital divide, accessibility, affordability, inclusiveness, dominance and control of the Internet, cyber-security and privacy. A number of ways in which such a working group could be established were suggested. Some delegates compared this approach with the appointment of the Working Group on Internet Governance by the Secretary-General between the first and second phases of the World Summit on the Information Society.

Delegates suggested a number of topics which might be considered by such a working group, including the development of overarching principles for enhanced cooperation, the definition of roles and responsibilities of different stakeholder communities, the mapping of existing Internet governance institutions, and the modalities of multilateral and multistakeholder approaches. If such a working group were established, delegates noted, consideration would need to be given by the CSTD to its selection, funding and working methods.

In summarising the discussion, the Chair observed that, while significant cooperation concerning international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet is taking place, there remain gaps in cooperation which need to be addressed. He noted the emphasis which participants placed on enabling stakeholders, including governments, to fulfil the roles recognised for them in the *Tunis Agenda*, within an overall framework of multistakeholder cooperation supported by transparency and accountability. A number of suggestions had been made during the meeting, including the suggestion that there should be an intergovernmental mechanism to fulfil the mandate of governments, the

suggestion that future arrangements for enhanced cooperation could be built upon existing mechanisms and experience of cooperation amongst governments and other stakeholders, and the suggestion for a multistakeholder Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation. These suggestions are to be considered further by the CSTD during its 15th meeting.

ANNEX 1 – Provisional list of participants

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