

WORKSHOP SULLA INTERNET GOVERNANCE – SIDNEY ICANN 25 JUN 2009

MARKUS KUMMER

>>MARKUS KUMMER: Good afternoon. My name is Markus Kummer. I'm the executive coordinator of the IGF Secretariat, and I have been a regular visitor of ICANN meetings for the past five years where I informed you about U.N. activities in this area.

>>MARKUS KUMMER:

I will not give you a history of the IGF, Internet Governance Forum. Just a brief reminder of the definition of "Internet governance," which is much broader than the remit of ICANN and it relates to all public policy issues related to the Internet, to its use and abuse.

We have had three meetings of the IGF so far: In Athens, Rio and Hyderabad. They were based on the five overarching themes of access, diversity, openness, security and critical Internet resources and had the cross-cutting priorities of development and capacity-building.

In Athens and in Rio, we dealt with them separately in silos, so to speak. In Hyderabad, as an innovation, we paired related themes, and that is access and diversity. We felt that they are very much to do with each other. "Access" is the physical access to the network. "Diversity" relates to the capacity of actually being able to do something with this access. It relates to the multilingual Internet but also to people with disabilities.

The other pair of issues was security and openness. There obviously we were talking about the balance to find between an open Internet and between a secure Internet.

In Sharm, again, we tried to innovate and build on the previous meetings. And we found that in previous meetings maybe where we were not as good as we hoped for was making the linkages between the other events and the main session and also about involving young people. Young people are the prime uses of the Internet. They're the natives. Our generation, we are the immigrants. So we want to involve the digital natives a little bit more and hope that they will take up our offer.

And, also, we will use different formats for different sessions. This is based on the recognition that there is a different level of understanding depending on the issues at stake.

There are three types of sessions based on this recognition. The first type is where we find that there is a large convergence of views. There is a shared objective like, for instance, to improve access or to take measures to make the Internet more linguistically diverse or to improve access for people with disabilities. There's nobody against these issues. The question, the focus is rather on what to do and how to improve it. So for these issues we try and feed in the workshops that deal with these themes such as protecting, empowering children, such as improving access for people with disabilities, such as creating multilingual content.

The second category of issues may be an emerging convergence of views, but there's still a need for further clarification of issues. So the focus will be more on what are we talking about. And these are the issues related to security and openness and also on privacy. And we will introduce these with relatively compact expert panels.

In the past, people made fun of our huge panels of football teams sitting up on the stage. I mean, this was caused not so much because we loved huge panels but because everybody wanted to have representatives of their respective stakeholder group to have a word to say. So we are trying to change that somewhat.

And then there is a third category where we have noted continuing differences of opinion, so the focus will be on sharing of opinions and the aim is to contribute to a better understanding of each other's opinion. The aim clearly is not to bridge differences in these points of views but rather to create a better climate for discussion through listening to each other.

And as an example for these issues, they are the critical Internet resources where we know what each other think but where we allow for the open discussion and to encourage the sharing of opinions.

And to a lesser extent also, the WSIS principle. One session will be devoted to WSIS principles. Yes, everybody agreed on these principles but there are different interpretations of what these principles are. And some of these principles also relate to the open and inclusive information society and to development in a larger perspective. So we hope that we also will promote a little bit more the discussion on development.

That was also one area where we found we were wanting -- yes, we say we have a priority that is development and it is cross-cutting. But as is often the case with cross-cutting issues, instead of dealing with them everywhere as a priority, we don't deal with them at all. So hopefully this session will bring this important priority a bit more to the fore.

And in addition, then the program for Sheik has the traditional program, emerging issues. This year it will be devoted to the impact of social networks, and we hope that this session in particular will bring in young people as they are users of the social networks. And, also, that will be an innovation.

We have noted the data spread of regional and national initiatives from Europe, East Africa, Caribbean, Latin America and also various country initiatives: Italy, Spain, U.K. So we encourage them to bring in their regional perspectives right at the beginning. There will be a session devoted to regional perspectives.

And apart from the sort of traditional opening and closing session, there will also be a session -- a review session. I will come back to that right at the end. We will have in parallel to the main session, as we had in previous years, workshops, open forums. And we will have an IGF village.

Right now we are putting together the workshop proposals. We had a deadline, and we have now to identify who merged and proposed a final proposal for a workshop. And we had hoped actually that we would lose some workshops, not because we don't value them highly but we basically had far too many after the first deadline. But now they have even multiplied, and I think we have 139 proposals and it will not be possible physically to accommodate them all.

The facilities we will have are excellent, and we have more or less the same number of rooms as we had in Hyderabad. We will be able to set them up in classroom setting. I think we make the workshop rooms a bit smaller. As we found last year, some of them are almost too big and almost too intimate, I think. So we make nice setting for workshops, but we cannot accommodate 139.

The IGF village, we will repeat what we had in Hyderabad. And I can take this opportunity to remind participants here in this workshop that we have set the 30th of June as a deadline for filing a request for a booth in the village. We need to be relatively early to allow our hosts to set up the architecture for the village, so we need to know how many booths will be required. And please let us know if you have not yet done so, whether you want a booth or not for your organization. It's not a commercial exhibition. It is a space where not-for-profit organizations can exhibit their activities or if it is a for-profit organization that they can exhibit initiatives they may have taken that fall under the overall theme.

I would also invite participants to send us their comments. We had set deadlines, 15th of July for comments on the review process and 15th of August for substantive contributions related to the agenda of the IGF. We will post all the comments also received after these deadlines, but the deadlines mean that comments received prior to that respective deadline, 15th July, 15th August, the comments, contributions received will be synthesized in a paper that will be translated in all U.N. languages and will go to IGF participants in the six U.N. languages prior to the meeting as an input into the discussion.

And this brings me to the last point I was going to raise to the review. The Tunis Agenda calls on the Secretary-General of the United Nations to hold formal consultation on the desirability of the

continuation of the forum with forum participants. This is somewhat winded language but is the negotiated diplomatic language. And translated into everyday language, it means we need formally to have this kind of consultation which will be prepared on an online process. And the paper I mentioned will be the official document that goes to forum participants so they can read what we have received, form their opinion.

We will go through the motion about talking about whether or not to extend the mandate, but Sharm El Sheikh will not take a decision. The IGF is not a decision-making body, but it is a consultation. People may say yes or may say no and they may give their reasoning for it. And based on this consultation, the Secretary-General will make a report with a recommendation that will go to the U.N. member states.

And we'll follow -- we'll have the following rhythm. It goes to the Committee on Science and Technology for Development in May 2010. That committee then submits it, passes it on to the Economic and Social Counsel, ECOSOC in 2010. And ECOSOC finally submits it to the United Nations General Assembly as the supreme organ of the United Nations.

So the decision will be taken by governments, and that's why it is important that all stakeholders be heard so governments also know what the stakeholders think about the desirability on whether or not to continue the mandate beyond its original five-year mandate.

So, once again, I would like to invite you for this purpose to send in your written contributions.

And end with a commercial. Please do come to Sharm El Sheikh. You will not regret it. As I said, it is an excellent venue. It is a really nice resort, town. And I hope the program will be as interesting at least as in the previous meetings. So you will not only enjoy your time in Sharm but also your time at the meeting itself.