



**WITSA and the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)
Hyderabad, India
December 2008**

WITSA's IGF Involvement

The World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA), a consortium of national and regional IT industry associations in more than 70 countries around the world, has been an active participant at each of the annual United Nations Internet Governance Forums (IGF) from the inaugural meeting in Athens, Greece in October 2006 to the second one in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in November 2007 and now at the latest session in Hyderabad, India in December 2008.

Previously, WITSA had been an active participant in the preparatory meetings for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) since its inception, and further contributed to this process as a founding member of the Coordinating Committee of Business Interlocutors (CCBI) – an umbrella group established by the International Chamber of Commerce to provide unified business input to the WSIS. WITSA is also a founding partner and member of the current industry initiative, Business Action to Support the Information Society (BASIS), which explores issues related to the IGF and beyond.

WITSA has published several statements related to the IGF, WSIS I and WSIS II, stressing the importance of education, the underlying telecommunications infrastructure, and applications that benefit society such as e-health and e-education. WITSA also called on governments to identify and focus on a set of priority issues that highlight the fundamental building blocks of an information society, and to recognize that capabilities based on ICTs can serve as vital tools for sustainable economic development, knowledge sharing, societal interaction and freedom of expression, particularly in the world's least developed countries.

WITSA's IGF Views

The Internet has become an essential component of economic activity and will assume an even larger role in trade and commerce in coming years, deepening its reach; broadening its

capability; embracing mobility and changing to further reflect the diversity of users and geographies that it connects.

The Internet is changing not only in access technology, but in the breadth and spread of its distribution, as well as in the applications that it is able to access and transport. Today, the Internet reaches a billion users. Our immediate challenge will be connecting the next billion users around the world in a stable, secure, and sustainable environment, and then finding ways to connect the next yet unconnected four billion users.

To date, the Internet has grown in a largely unregulated environment, and has shown an ability to thrive in a wide variety of market environments under competitive conditions. This freedom from centralized and heavy regulations has produced impressive results over a relatively short period of time, delivering innovation, productivity and opportunity to a growing numbers of users in all parts of the world. Notably, the Internet has grown fastest in markets where there is competition for the provision of underlying telecommunications facilities, as well as for access and related services. Today, policy makers at both national and global levels are considering a wide number of regulatory approaches to dealing with the challenges of cyber security, access, management of spam and malware, protection of intellectual property and other issues.

WITSA believes that the Internet must continue to thrive in an open and competitive marketplace unencumbered by unnecessary regulations.

WITSA supports private sector initiatives to develop and deliver market based solutions to the challenges faced by the Internet and its users. For example, in addition to technological approaches to improving security of information and networks, increased cooperation with law enforcement and policy makers can address many of the issues of concern to both governments and end users in cyber security. Innovations in technology delivered by the private sector are bringing affordable options in access, and combined with an enabling environment of legal, regulatory, and investment policies can further improve the availability of Internet access. Concerns of some governments seeking a more centralized regulatory oversight of the Internet and the applications it delivers through international forums can be better addressed through a deepened industry-government dialogue and collaboration on solutions that maintain the largely unregulated commercially driven environment that has supported the Internet's initial success.

WITSA IGF Positions

WITSA strongly supported the four inaugural IGF themes, openness, security, diversity and access, as well as the crosscutting theme of capacity building. Indeed, WITSA presented a detailed report in preparation for the Athens forum, which proposed a ten point plan with emphasis on the security and reliability of ICT networks and services; the integration of ICTs in government services; and the establishment of pro-competitive, predictable, transparent and non-discriminatory national legal systems. The WITSA report also urged the

removal of trade and innovation barriers, and encouraged the creation of public-private partnerships in education and training to develop much needed skills.

Thematically, the IGF should continue to emphasize the role of the Internet in economic development and the importance of capacity building as a vehicle to boost Internet access in developing countries. Reaching the next billion Internet users, information infrastructure, access, managing critical Internet resources, cybersecurity and trust remain very important topics to WITSA members.

WITSA has commented on:

- Access: Access is vital to empowering more businesses and individuals to take advantage of the powerful resource that the Internet represents. An enabling regulatory environment at national level can do much to foster the deployment and growth of the Internet. National policies can encourage investment in capacity and growth, as well as support the local exchange of traffic including the establishment of local Internet exchange points (IXPs).
- Openness: Access to knowledge and empowering people with information and knowledge that is available on the Internet is a critical objective of an inclusive Information Society and to continued economic and social development.
- Security: Achieving its full potential to support commercial and social relationships requires an environment that promotes and ensures users' trust and confidence and provides a stable and secure platform for commerce.
- Diversity: Current efforts should continue to promote a multilingual Internet and local content and overcoming barriers to the development of content in different languages.

WITSA's IGF Activities



A high level of business participation at the IGF is critical to its continued success, and in that regard, WITSA reaches out to all of its members to encourage their attendance of IGF sessions and to take an active part of this important interaction and dialogue on Internet Governance. Moreover, WITSA promotes awareness of and interest in the IGF at its conferences and meetings: for example at the November 4-6, 2007 Global Public Policy

Conference (GPPC 2007; www.gppc2007.com), which took place in Cairo, Egypt, as well as the May 18-22, 2008 World Congress on IT (WCIT 2008; www.wcit2008.org), which was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.



At the 2006 IGF Athens meeting, WITSA worked with partners to organize a workshop entitled, “Enhancing Multi-Stakeholder Participation in Policy Making.” The workshop explored effective means by which representatives of different sectors of society in individual nations can work together to foster adoption and adaptation of public policies likely to enhance access to ICTs and the Internet. This workshop topic paralleled “capacity building,” a concept that has been emphasized as being at the heart of the Internet Governance Forum. Participants gained new insights and a number of instructive success stories – from Egypt, Bangladesh, Uganda, and Lebanon – about how business people, along with public officials, academics, and researchers have, in fact, worked collaboratively to abolish particular regressive policies that were punitive toward or inhibiting of ICT diffusion and to foster adoption of new laws that gave birth to new applications of ICTs – particularly in the realm of rural health services – and that in other ways resulted in a greater diffusion of ICT capabilities. Participants agreed that it was precisely this realization – the power of partnerships in changing and shaping the thinking of public policy makers – that was as overarching a theme as any other that came from the discussions.



As part of the Rio de Janeiro Internet Governance proceedings on November 13, 2007, WITSA worked with five organizations to organize a workshop on access entitled “Qualifying, Quantifying, and Meeting the Challenge of Internet Access Costs.” The five organizations, representing various multistakeholder groups, involved in the planning were:

- The **Global Information Infrastructure Commission (GIIC)** –an initiative by ICT industry leaders to promote the infrastructure for the advanced information society.
- **iGrowthGlobal**, an organization providing independent policy research on the major ICT policy issues domestically and internationally, including in the developing world.
- The **World Information Technology and Service Alliance (WITSA)**, an alliance of over 70 national IT Associations facilitation the use of ICT
- **Packet Clearing House** or **PCH** is a non-profit research institute formed in 1994. It supports operations and analysis in the areas of Internet traffic exchange, routing economics, and global network development , and
- The **Nippon Keidanren** – the influential Japanese Business Federation with the mission to accelerate growth of Japan's and world economy.

The speakers and the workshop participants discussed:

- The importance of increasing access to the Internet, and providing affordable solutions to the vast number of users who have yet to connect to the Internet, as well as the role of public policy and regulation and various approaches, including international, regional and domestic peering and transit agreements as a component of lowering overall connectivity costs
- The identification of various “best practice” initiatives (e.g., construction of Internet exchange points, capacity building in skills and expertise) that Internet service providers, government officials and other stakeholders have used in local, national and regional communities to boost Internet penetration rates, particularly in Africa and Latin America; and

- How policy making, including regulation and competition can contribute to lowering end-to-end connectivity costs.

Lessons learned:

- Development of local traffic exchanges (IXPs) can provide greater Internet Access and lower connectivity costs.
- The existing regulatory approach in certain countries does not necessarily adequately support the development of IXPs, or encourage the emergence of local ISPs. Additional liberalization is part of the solution in many countries; a flexible legal, policy and regulatory regime is required to allow such services. Often a country must reach across different agencies to create involvement from numerous players to create an effective strategy. In many cases, it may be the freedom from regulatory restrictions which allows new investments
- How an extensive set of national initiatives in Egypt to provide affordable Internet access and computers to those in need of assistance proved successful with the added benefits of building up ISPs and facilitating e-government goals.
- Linkage to the regulatory framework in Egypt and how it has contributed to increased competition and choice for users. We also heard about the role of the Ministry as a champion to draw resources and participants together. About a 'case study of a success story by a private ISP in South Africa where an initiative calling attention to the need for deregulation and working with the government for reforms produced a healthy environment for ISPs to grow and provide more Internet services.
- Some of the concerns expressed include that regulators and policy makers should avoid creating "islands of local access" by ensuring interconnection of various networks that begin to emerge
- "Lessons learned' by Japan's deregulatory efforts to reduce Internet costs to consumers may be helpful as other regulators explore such directions.

At the 2008 IGF Hyderabad, WITSA would like to focus on the challenge of connecting the next one billion users to the Internet should also include a discussion about how this can be done in an environmentally sustainable way. Overall, the impact of ICTs and the Internet on the environment needs to be fully explored. ICT has had the greatest benefit/effect on business and economic structures, such as efficiencies in business processes and the shift away from manufacturing toward the delivery of services. The Internet services and applications provide new ways to communicate and transfer information, including voice, data and video services. These services can facilitate telecommuting, teleconferencing, e-commerce, telemedicine and other applications that will save consumers and businesses travel expense, traffic congestion and time, as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions. A main environmental impact has been the increasing power needs of ICT products as the production of electricity to support the spread of ICT and greater Internet can add to Green House Gases (GHGs). Another concern is that the 'rebound effects' of the greater efficiencies in businesses processes and transportation enabled by the Internet and ICTs lower prices and increase demand for materials and energy, thereby offsetting environmental gains and resulting in neutral or even negative impacts) The discussion will

focus on how to ICT and Internet use can address environmental problems, and what kinds of complementary actions may be needed to maximize potential benefits by minimizing rebound effects. The workshop will also highlight data, policy, and directed research in areas where ICTs can help with climate change solutions (in a way similar to ICTs' effects on communications and business) while providing an environmentally sustainable Internet for the next one billion users or more around the world.

Looking Ahead

WITSA continues its involvement in the **Internet Governance Forum (IGF)** and believes that all stakeholders should identify and focus on a set of priority issues that highlight the fundamental building blocks of an information society, including the Internet. Focusing on these priority issues will create a meaningful framework for demonstrable progress toward the long-term sustainability of a truly global information society.

The value of the IGF is its open and informative nature, allowing a variety of views to be expressed, and the full range of experience and expertise to be shared so that all can continue to learn more about how to use, grow and expand, and protect the key communications and information resource that the Internet has become. As such, the IGF should remain consistent with its mandate for facilitating a dialogue and not engaging in the negotiation of formal documents or outcomes. WITSA supports the continuance of the multistakeholder nature of the IGF, with all stakeholders interacting on an equal basis.

WITSA also supports the importance of the IGF's focus on engagement with developing countries and seeking ways to encourage participants from those countries to participate in the IGF process and annual forum. Such participation is supported by continuing to ensure timely and frequent publication of useful and informative materials on the IGF website as well as enabling participation in the annual forums.

In order to ensure the Internet's further growth and continued success, WITSA calls upon all stakeholders to work together:

- **To keep the Internet open and accessible to all of society;**
- **To ensure reliable and secure access to information and communications networks and services;**
- **To recognize the multistakeholder nature of Internet Governance and to strengthen and broaden involvement and leadership of industry in relevant forums ;**
- **To promote the transition from the current Internet addressing system (IPv4) to an addressing system capable of supporting continued Internet expansion and new applications for the foreseeable future (IPv6);**
- **To ensure that global public policy and governing national systems enable the use of ICT products and services throughout societies.**