



## **Internet Governance Forum: 2008 and Beyond**

February 25, 2008

### **WITSA & The IGF**

The World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA), a consortium of national and regional IT industry associations in more than 60 countries around the world, was pleased to be an active participant at the inaugural UN Global Internet Forum, which took place in Athens, Greece, on October 30 – November 2, 2006.

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 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.

WITSA also contributed to the inaugural IGF program in Athens in 2006 by hosting one of the event workshops, entitled “Enhancing Multi-Stakeholder Participation in ICT Policy Making”, in cooperation with the Global Information Infrastructure Commission (GIIC). The WITSA/GIIC Workshop explored effective policy processes that enhance access to ICTs and the Internet, and provided real life examples from several different WITSA affiliated countries (including Uganda, Egypt, Bangladesh, Kenya, Lebanon, Japan and the U.S.).

WITSA has since participated in open consultations and co-organized a workshop entitled “Qualifying, Quantifying, and Meeting the Challenges of Internet Access Costs” on November 13, 2007, at the Rio de Janeiro Internet Governance Forum. Moreover, IGF was also a topic of discussion at our Global Public Policy Conference, which was held in Cairo, Egypt, on November 1-3, 2007.

## Looking Ahead

WITSA is looking forward to participating in and contributing to the February 26 IGF open consultation in Geneva, Switzerland, with a view to pave the way forward to the next phase of the Forum, taking place in India in December 2008.

A high level of business participation at the IGF is critical to its continued success, and in that regard, WITSA will reach out to all of its members to encourage their attendance of the December forum and to be 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; notably the November 4-6, 2007 Global Public Policy Conference (GPPC 2007; [www.gppc2007.com](http://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](http://www.wcit2008.org)), which will be held in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia).

As the IGF looks ahead to India and beyond, it should not seek to change or expand its mission, which was the result of lengthy and careful negotiations within the WSIS. It has a unique and key role to play and should seek to extend its reach within this mandate. Moreover, the Advisory Committee should not take on an authoritative role by developing positions themselves, but must remain focused on important process issues and continue to be a critical resource to ensure even-handedness between vast groups of stakeholders.

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. Beyond capacity building, information infrastructure, access, and security remain very important topics to WITSA members in 2008.

## Change to the Advisory Group:

WITSA has consistently supported a diverse, geographically distributed representative Advisory Group (AG) as the best way to support the purpose of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

WITSA supports the idea of a carefully planned rotational approach that will enable the AG to achieve its mission and purpose. Members should be invited to consider rotation, and new potential member nominations should be received from interested groups, individuals, and organizations. A member of the AG should bring skills, experience and expertise. It is most important to ensure that the four key sectors: business, civil society, governments, and the technical community are represented. Appointees should continue to be appointed in their individual capacity, but should also bring the ability to reach a very broad base of interested stakeholders from their own community as they engage in discussions and participation. The Advisory Group should be reappointed as early in the IGF annual cycle as is possible, by the UN Secretary General. Until this process is complete, the current AG should continue to act in a voluntary manner to support the planning processes

WITSA also continues to support Mr. Abdullah H. Kafi as a member of the Advisory Group. Mr. Kafi and other WITSA members have been active at IGF meetings. Mr. Kafi also has been instrumental in helping to organize IGF activities over the years.

## Role of Chair and Executive Secretariat:

WITSA continues to support an independent IGF Secretariat with appropriate staff support that can support the IGF events, and maintain continuity between its annual meetings. WITSA applauds the Secretariat's efforts to provide online content, including web casts and audio casts, as well as real-time transcriptions from the IGF sessions.

WITSA supports the continuation of the present Chair, Mr. Desai, and present Executive Secretariat, Mr. Markus Kummer. The Executive Secretariat, even with its small staff has been providing excellent support to the IGF and its stakeholders. We understand the interest of the host country to support a successful IGF; and we think this can be achieved without the formality of creating official co-chair positions. As in the past, we do not see any need for a 'bureau' in the usual UN context.

WITSA remains committed to the success of the IGF, consistent with the mandate from the WSIS, and anticipate an even greater business presence at the IGF conference in 2008.