Information by the Presidency to the Council on the 4th e-Government Ministerial Conference
2835th Council meeting, Transport, Telecommunications and Energy, Brussels, 29-30 November 2007, 03 December 2007

Information on the EU Participation on the UN Internet Governance Forum

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 12-15 November 2007

In the framework of the WSIS – World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva 2003 and Tunis 2005), the Secretary-General of United Nations was invited to convene a new forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue called the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). Following the inaugural IGF meeting held in Athens in 2006, the "2nd Internet Governance Forum" (IGF) took place in Rio de Janeiro on 12-15 November 2007. Its agenda included the four themes discussed in the Athens meeting, namely Access, Diversity, Openness and Security, and also a new theme: Critical Internet Resources.

For the EU, the Forum was also an opportunity to stress European values and the EU perspective on the Information Society and on cooperation actions with other regions.

The EU Presidency was represented in the opening session (see Annex A) by the Portuguese Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education, José Mariano Gago. Several Member States delegations had a very active and visible participation in many of the different types of sessions. An EU intervention prepared in meetings of representatives of the Member States and the Commission present at the meeting, with the support of the Council Secretariat office at Geneva, was delivered in the final plenary working session dedicated to "Taking stock and the way forward" (see Annex B).

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Address by the Portuguese Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education, José Mariano Gago, to the UN Internet Governance Forum

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 15 November 2007

Opening Session

Minister Sérgio Resende
Under Secretary-General of the United Nations
Government members
Directors of international organisations
Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

As President-in-Office of the Council of Ministers of the European Union with responsibility for information society policies and representative of the government of Portugal, let me begin by extending a very warm welcome, in Portuguese, to the Brazilian government and organisers of this Forum.

Congratulations and thank you: for the initiative, for the quality of the organisation and also for your exceptional hospitality.

Portugal feels justifiably proud of the success and affirmation of Brazil, which has shown, in an exemplary manner, a tremendous capacity for progress in shaping and implementing policies for the information society which benefit its economic and social development.

The Brazilian initiative to organise a seminar tomorrow on free access to knowledge in Portuguese-speaking countries deserves our full support, because we are certain that this will stimulate similar action in other language areas or regions.

From the outset, the EU has supported the main objectives and preparations for this IGF as well as the meetings that preceded it.

The European Union has always favoured the open, diverse, multifarious nature of the forum, which is geographically balanced and made up of various kinds of organisations, and whose wealth lies precisely in its innovative nature as a venue for discussion and agreement, i.e. a forum. This is not a prelude to yet another multilateral political body, but an open and innovative forum in its own right. This seems to us to be the best way for us to work together to defend the very social innovation the Internet has brought about.

Moreover, the nature of the Internet and its evolution have emphasised the dynamic and multipolar relations made possible by its adaptability and capacity to serve as an instrument for networked communities. The model of Internet governance thus constructed in the image of the open networks that it promoted and is today the most impressive example of organisational innovation and mutual adaptation between technology and society on the planet. We must not go back to adopting multilateral models which are clearly retrograde given the nature of the Internet and its real development: instead, we must continue to develop using the flexible dynamic which has led us to the progress already demonstrated. As citizens, as governments, companies, social organisations, scientists, we feel proud to be part of this extraordinary human and scientific adventure which is the development and social appropriation of the Internet.

The European Union understood early on that the main issue here was not infrastructures but social networks and movement. The policies shaped for the information society, in each country, and at EU level, is evidence of that interpretation. Common EU objectives are a further consequence of that policy. The reference framework adopted, which we call i2010, enshrines our current goals: a common European area of information, a stake in research and development in information and communication technologies, and encouragement of advanced content and services.

In the European Union, these political objectives take the form of courses of action such as widespread access to broadband, the security, neutrality and interoperability of the network, digital inclusion, the modernisation of public services as a modern vector for e-Government, the public stake in the widespread use of the Internet and information technologies for economic competitiveness as well as for health, education, trade, supply and production of multicultural and multilingual content, for capacity building and for breathing life into democratic societies, as a support for policies of social and cultural inclusion and to people with disabilities or special needs, and more recently, initiatives for the development and use of RFID; they are the subject of benchmarking, discussion and exchange of experience between countries and regions based on an open method of coordination of highly effective national policies.

It is this experience that the European Union wishes to share with the rest of the world.

The EU's investment in setting up and operating networks for science and education, in conjunction with Latin America, Africa and the Mediterranean basin, is a concrete example of the will to cooperate and support development on a global scale. Naturally, the European Union would like to see its international efforts to promote development and knowledge produce an ever greater response and partnership in other areas, organisations and countries.

It is, of course, no coincidence that the World Wide Web model was developed in one of the most important international research laboratories, CERN, as an open, free-to-use tool.

The new forms of development and open organisation of the Internet and the role played by the various organisations participating in the present open model of governance, especially the ICANN, have so far shown an unprecedented capacity for response.

Over recent decades the Internet has revolutionised and expanded our expectations of freedom and democratic participation, of access to information and knowledge, of the multiplicity of languages and cultures, of the variety and wealth of action for millions of social actors worldwide. The Internet has fulfilled its early promise not just a hundred but a thousand times over and has continued to set us new challenges. All the varieties of fanaticism and all the enemies of democracy have set themselves against free access to the Internet, against the formation of worldwide social and information networks and against freedom of expression and free access to knowledge. But in vain!

The Geneva Declaration of the World Summit on the Information Society has solemnly affirmed what we steadfastly defend, not just for ourselves in Europe but throughout the world:

> "We reaffirm, as an essential foundation of the Information Society, and as outlined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; that this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. Communication is a fundamental social process, a basic human need and the foundation of all social organization. It is central to the Information Society. Everyone everywhere should have the opportunity to participate and no one should be excluded from the benefits the Information Society offers."

José Mariano Gago
Acting President of the European Union Council of Ministers responsible for Information Society Policies
(Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education of Portugal)

ANNEX B

European Union Intervention in the UN Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

Rio de Janeiro, 15th November 2007

Plenary Session "Taking stock and the way forward"

Text prepared in meetings of representatives of EU Member States and the Commission

Dear host country, dear IGF Secretariat, dear participants,

I am speaking on the behalf of the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union.

This IGF meeting in Rio has been a very successful event. The European Union is particularly grateful to Brazil for having hosted the Forum and to the IGF Advisory Group and Secretariat for having ensured a good framework for dialogue and exchange.

Both the number and diversity of the participants and the impressive amount of workshops, best practice forums and dynamic coalitions have proven that Athens was crucial for the start of a successful process, and Rio managed to bring us an "Athens plus".

The Internet is a platform of global value that should develop in the spirit of its pioneering times, offering ample opportunities for creativity and innovation to all users. It should remain open, people-centred and multilingual, flexible to foster new technologies and uses, preserve neutrality, inclusive and supportive of global social, cultural and economic interaction and development, but at the same time meet the new challenges of today and tomorrow.

Improving access to the Internet is a goal for us all, and freedom of expression and access to knowledge through the Internet stand as important democratic values to be preserved.

The current arrangements for Internet Governance have worked effectively to make the Internet the highly robust, dynamic and geographically diverse medium that it is today.

The European Union remains fully committed to the IGF. We have shown this commitment by our active engagement in the process, by hosting the first IGF, and by financial contributions to the secretariat. This forum is an important tool for the implementation of the Geneva Plan of Action and of the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society. It has successfully established a wide platform for stakeholders to contribute, based on their specific expertise, knowledge and interests. The multistakeholder approach of the IGF, allowing for sharing points of view and best practices among very diverse groups, stands at the core of its success.

The European Union and its 27 Member States have shown in concrete projects a strong commitment to the development of the Information Society in several regions of the world, with specific cooperation programmes such as ALICE with Latin America EUMEDIS with Mediterranean non EU countries or Asia IT&C in the Asian region. An important chapter of this cooperation is dedicated to the interconnection of the regional Research and Education networks with the EU GÉANT network, currently achieved through projects like REDCLARA (in Latin American), EUMEDCONNECT (in the Mediterranean), TEIN 2 (in the Asia Pacific region) and ORIENT (in China).

A similar cooperation scheme with Sub Saharan countries has been prepared and is planned to be adopted at the EU-Africa Summit to be held in Lisbon on 8 and 9 December 2008 under Portuguese Presidency.

The European Union current initiative for the Information Society, namely i2010, can be a source of inspiration for the WSIS follow-up. As in the European Union, we should promote that the benefits of the information society can be enjoyed by everyone, including people who are disadvantaged due to limited resources or education, age, gender, ethnicity, etc. (namely, e-Inclusion), people with disabilities (namely, e-Accessibility) as well as those living in less favoured areas (preventing "digital divide" resulting from unequal access to high speed "broadband" connection to the Internet), while assuring more security and a safer Internet, in particular for children. The contribution of the Internet to capacity building, to economic development and competitiveness, to the provision of better public services (namely through e-Government and e-Health), and to strengthening and building social networks and movements has to be further extended for the benefit of people worldwide.

The working methods of the IGF also allow us to explore further improvements of its functioning

and contributions to the implementation of the World Summit for the Information Society goals.

The European Union and its Member States have been actively involved in dynamic coalitions and co-organized several of them. We believe that dynamic coalitions have brought added value to the IGF, in particular because they provide a good opportunity for pursuing work between sessions of the IGF. The EU will continue its active participation in dynamic coalitions in preparation of the next IGF in Delhi, in 2008.

The IGF agenda will also have to take into account the technological and social evolution of the Internet, including mobility and the upcoming Internet of Things.

The multistakeholder nature of the Advisory Group remains its vital characteristic. The role and experience of the Advisory Group have been instrumental in moving the IGF forward and the European Union supports its continued development and implementation in the same spirit. It is therefore of crucial importance that the Advisory Group starts the preparation of the next IGF in New Delhi as soon as possible, also taking into account the tasks of the Advisory Group set out in the Secretary General's decision.

Let me again thank the host country for the huge effort and commitment that enabled all of us to work together towards a successful IGF contributing to the sustainable, robust, secure and stable Internet envisioned by the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society.