

**Introduction of the report of the Secretary-General on enhanced cooperation on
public policy issues pertaining to the Internet by**

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to introduce the report of the Secretary-General on enhanced cooperation on public policy issues pertaining to the Internet with dual symbol A/66/77 and E/2011/103.

The purpose of this report is to convey to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, the outcome of open and inclusive consultations involving all Member States and all other

stakeholders with a view to assisting the process towards enhanced cooperation.

The consultations were organized by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at the invitation of the Council in the second half of 2010. In accordance with Council resolution 2010/2 calling for balanced participation of all stakeholders in their respective roles and responsibilities as stated in paragraph 35 of the Tunis Agenda, invitations to participate in the consultations were widely circulated. Opinions were solicited from all Member States, as well as some 150 international organizations and 3,500 civil society and private sector entities.

Stakeholders were given the opportunity to express their views in two different ways. They could submit written comments from September to December 2010. They were also invited to attend a face-to-face meeting held in New York on 14 December 2010, which was convened by the Under-Secretary-General.

What is the process of enhanced cooperation and what does it mean to move towards it? The consultations revealed that, five years after WSIS, there is no single answer to this question. However, the consultations also clarified that many stakeholders have a strong interest in pursuing enhanced cooperation on Internet-related public policy issues, assuming agreement can be reached on an appropriate mechanism, or mechanisms, for doing so.

Broadly speaking, the future road to enhanced cooperation was surveyed from three angles. Participants commented on which public policy

issues pertaining to the Internet were of concern. They expressed opinions on institutional arrangements for discussing the relevant issues. And, they reflected on the role of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and other international actors in facilitating deliberations.

On the first point – public policy issues of concern – the range of objectives is broad. The Internet continues to be seen as a vital element of the people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society envisaged at the World Summit of the Information Society. At the same time, its increasing centrality to economic activity and social relations raises important questions of international security, human rights and law. As at Tunis in 2005, cyber-crime, privacy, freedom of information, consumer protection, international interconnection costs, capacity-building, management of critical Internet resources and other key policy issues are of significance to many stakeholders concerned with the Internet's evolution and use.

This brings me to the second point – on the most appropriate mechanisms of international cooperation. Here opinions diverged. Nonetheless, a few shared principles could be discerned, echoing the WSIS outcomes.

Chief among them is that policy authority is the sovereign right of States. But, governments have an obligation to consult with civil society and the private sector on decisions that affect them. Enhanced cooperation mechanisms must take this multi-stakeholder dynamic into account. Another is that Internet-related policy-making, development of technical standards

and day-to-day operations should be seen as distinct, wherever these layers of cooperation may be situated within the “Internet ecosystem.”

Regarding the last point – the responsibilities of the Secretary-General – the consultations reaffirmed the facilitating role of the United Nations in Internet-related policy-making while recognizing the contribution of other intergovernmental organizations such as the International Telecommunication Union, based on a clear understanding of their respective mandates.

The General Assembly, in its resolution 65/141, welcomed the Council’s initiative and reiterated the significance and urgency of pursuing the process towards enhanced cooperation in full consistency with the mandate provided in paragraph 71 of the Tunis Agenda.

Should the Council request further assistance from the Secretary-General in pursuing the process towards enhanced cooperation on public policy issues pertaining to the Internet, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs will provide its full support.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

Questions and answers

The Tunis Agenda (para. 71) requests “all relevant organizations” to provide annual performance reports on the steps they had undertaken towards enhanced cooperation. What is the status of these reports?

Annual performance reports were provided by ten organizations in 2008, 2009 and 2010. Compilations of the content of these reports were transmitted by the Secretary-General to ECOSOC in documents E/2009/10 (2008), E/2009/92 (2009) and E/2010/CRP.4 (2010). Some Member States have expressed the view that such compilations are insufficient.

In the most recent exercise, all stakeholders were invited to comment on the process towards enhanced cooperation in the context of the consultations mandated by ECOSOC resolution 2010/2, including intergovernmental organizations from developing regions, as requested in GA resolution 65/141. A number of organizations took the opportunity to provide updates on their activities over the past year. The contributions have been posted online (<http://www.unpan.org/dpadm/wsisfollowup/>).

How were the ten “relevant organizations” selected?

The ten organizations were selected on the basis of a series of bilateral discussions between the Secretary-General’s Special Adviser for Internet Governance and representatives of the various stakeholder groups. They were: Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), Council of Europe, Internet Society (ISOC), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and Number Resource Organization (NRO). One additional organization, the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), submitted a report of its own accord.

Were any suggestions made regarding the complementarities between enhanced cooperation and the IGF?

GA resolution 65/141, adopted on 20 December 2010 recognized that the process towards enhanced cooperation and the convening of the IGF are to be pursued by the Secretary-General through two distinct processes, while the two processes may be complementary. There was no clear-majority opinion on the link between the two processes. Some were of the view that multi-stakeholder dialogue should be an integral feature of international cooperation in Internet-related public policy issues. Others suggested that the Forum itself exemplified enhanced cooperation inasmuch as it allowed stakeholders to interact cooperatively.

Which issues warrant consideration as a matter of urgency?

This is a question for Member States to decide. Consultations participants identified a broad range of international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet. There was no clear indication that any one issue should take precedence over another. Opinions also diverged as to the most appropriate mechanisms for pursuing enhanced cooperation, as I mentioned in my earlier remarks.

What advice has CSTD provided on the question of enhanced cooperation?

The 14th session of CSTD took place in Geneva from 23-27 May 2011. The issue of enhanced cooperation on international public policy issues pertaining to the Internet was discussed in connection with “Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society outcomes at the regional and international levels” (agenda item 2).

Has there been any progress on enhanced cooperation since the December consultations?

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs has prepared the report currently before the Council (A/66/77 – E/2011/103) but has not pursued other activities related to enhanced cooperation as there does not seem to be a clear mandate to do so.

Paragraph 71 of the Tunis Agenda attributes an important role to the Secretary-General in promoting enhanced cooperation on public policy issues pertaining to the Internet. Intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations are ascribed a facilitating role in the coordination of Internet-related public policy issues. However, opinions vary as to how active the Secretary-General should be in promoting enhanced cooperation within and between the various stakeholder groups, and exactly what form this interaction should take. Further guidance from ECOSOC and the GA would be helpful.