

The following text is excerpted from an ongoing discussion on the IGF Advisory Group mailing list thread on its own future. The only changes made relate to an effort to anonymize the comments in respect of the Chatham House rule. The discussion took place between 4 and 10 February, 2008.

(From Writer A:)

- > I have said it before, but as well as the impact on the Chatham House
- > rule (which I think is not easily solved), there is also the issue of
- > equitable access. Yes, some people may extend their stay in Geneva if
- > they are there for other IGF or UN meetings, but for all of those who
- > are not just an hour or two away from Geneva, there are real distance,
- > time and cost barriers.

(Writer B)

I agree with Writer A's comment.

(Writer C)

About openness of the mailing list and meetings.

I'd be happy with two lists as suggested by Writer D and others. Use the open list as default, if someone wishes to begin a discussion on the closed, un-archived list then announcing that intention (...I want to discuss speakers, I will be having a discussion on the closed list) seems fine to me. If appropriate, discussion might then be summarized, anonymized etc. and shared back on the open list for all to see. I'm sure there are many ways to make this work so advisory group members are comfortable and people feel informed.

We do need to discuss this during our meeting later this month. Perhaps go around the room asking for comments on the various options. There's a tendency to take silence for agreement, perhaps best not to do that with this topic.

About opening the face to face meetings to observers. Agree with the points about "equitable access". Plus a practical concern: during the last meeting in Geneva we heard how our consultations didn't have the highest priority on the UN calendar. Would we be able to get a room

large enough to meet demand? If there's an open meeting, even one where non-members can only observe, will most Geneva delegations feel obliged to send people? Would other stakeholders?

(Writer E)

thanks for putting in diplomatic wording what I also find a main concern: the silence of a large part of our colleagues. It may mean:

- silent approval,
- that some of the ones not expressing themselves are in their minds and jobs not any more involved,
- not caring,
- the attitude that "as long as I don't say anything, I haven't made any promises",

the third having the potential to erupt as you say in the physical meeting, or later.

The discussion about whether to make some discussions public, all, or none, for example, is being held among those who discuss, so why would all others care?

In order not to remain blind we may need to ask Markus and even Nitin to find out one by one what the situation is.

At this point in time, I do not see that we can logically make a decision on posting or not in public, for example. We can make the decision but it may not have the logical conditions, and we can find that if we decide to make all or any discussions public, the decision will have the chilling effect that has been mentioned already (by Writer C, I think) and further even.

So unless we see the participation broadened I would suggest that we either move to a different subject, concerned either with the contents and speakers for Delhi, or with the organizational issues of the Advisory Group itself.

(Writer F)

Please do not take my silence as "not caring" or simply "silent approval"!

I have been following with great attention all the comments on the list in relation with the possible evolution of the AG and other issues.

As I am rather new in the group and must learn from your valuable experience, for me it is very important to understand clearly what you all suggest and comment.

Let me share with you some ideas:

- I agree that we must work at the same time in organizing the New Delhi meeting
- In relation with the future of the AG, it should be balanced in regions, gender and stakeholder representation
- Equitable access is relevant, especially for members coming from developing countries located far away from Geneva. In this sense I would strongly suggest to always allow remote participation for meetings, as it was kindly arranged in the September meeting.
- I agree with the idea of having two lists one open and one closed.

(Writer G)

Let me also add my voice to the ongoing debate on the evolution of the IGF Advisory Group. To start with, let me comment those who have continuously kept this list very active by actively contributing on the various topics/issues.

Further, I want to add my voice to those who are keen to have two discussion lists: an open one and a closed one. However, as we make a decision on which way to go we need to be guided by the spirit of transparency of the Group's discussions/proceedings.

Last but not the least, let's not perceive silence as 'not caring' or 'silent approval', please.

(Writer H)

If the decision was to have a public list I support Writer D, that it is public to read but not to send to, leaving the comments from outside the AG as per the usual now (through the IGF website and other channels).

Another note for the info of my colleagues and specifically about access, I witnessed in the last week this problem, if you did not know one of the main FLAG under sea cables that connects our region, was disconnected and the result was almost 100% disconnection on the Internet the first day in many countries, until now and for the

coming few days until it is totally solved most of the countries affected by this have only 70% of the usual bandwidth through backups links. You feel you are away and I am still catching up email (most on our list).

(Markus Kummer)

We have now created a special section for the Advisory Group in our forum page and posted the digest of our discussion thread up to 3 February. The cut-off date is somewhat artificial, as the discussion on the same threat continued for one more day or so. The latest additions will be posted next week.

I concur with the remarks that we have reached a point where we cannot go much further in an online process. While there is strong support for more openness in our list discussion as well as in our f2f meetings, there are also some concerns that need to be taken into consideration.

Should we consider the option of making our list discussion publicly available, there seems to be a general understanding on the following points:

(a) we should adopt a ‘two-list-approach’ – one list to for the general discussion that would be made public and one list for private communications of logistical nature etc. which is of no interest to the general public;

(b) the open list would be ‘read only’;

(b) both lists would be archived.

Similarly, the discussion whether or not to allow ‘onlookers’ to sit in at Advisory Group meetings was not conclusive. There was a general understanding however that in any case there would be a need for closed sessions to deal with particular agenda items. Also, it was understood that whoever should be allowed to sit in would have no speaking rights. (For this reason I prefer the term ‘onlookers’ to ‘observers’, as ‘observers’ usually have some speaking rights, however limited they may be. Maybe someone else has a better suggestion for this category?)

In any case, ‘onlookers’ would be different from representatives of IGOs. Until now they had equal speaking rights as members, although, on the whole, they behaved very discreetly. I would strongly argue in favour of continuing this practice, as they have the expertise of their respective organization to bring into the discussion. The active participation of representatives from IGOs is also in line with sub-paras (b) and (c) of our mandate, as contained in para 72 of the Tunis Agenda (“Facilitate discourse between bodies dealing with different cross-cutting international public policies..” and “interface

with appropriate inter-governmental organizations and other institutions on matters under their purview”).

One commentator referred to the size of the meeting room. While it would be no problem to get a bigger room, if we fix the dates early enough, I would not like to repeat the experience we made in the WGIG process, when we, on one occasion, allowed in onlookers in one of the big meeting rooms of the Palais. This simply did not work, as the room was too big to create a working atmosphere. Also, as it turned out, there were only a few people left as the meeting went on. I would therefore stick to the smallish rooms we had so far for our meetings, assuming we would decide to open our doors. I don't think there would be that much interest, once the onlookers would realize (a) that the Advisory Group meetings were fairly technical and straight-forward and (b) that sitting in on a meeting without the right to speak could be fairly boring.

While we may have exhausted this particular subject, I would be interested to hear your opinions also as regards the stock-taking of the Rio meeting and the preparation of the Delhi meeting. Should we continue with the same format? Should we keep the same themes? Should we keep all the new types of meetings we introduced in Rio? Should we re-think the main sessions? Should we, for instance, have special sessions on the horizontal themes of 'development' and 'capacity building'? Should we allow for more time for the reporting-in of the workshops and all the other events? Should we get started with asking for workshop proposals? Etc. etc...

I look forward to your comments.

(Writer I)

thanks for this good summary and update. A few comments on the issues you described.

a) mailing lists

From a principles point of view of allowing more transparency, I generally agree with the two-list approach as outlined and have only one question: since this list is to be public, should the names of the posters be visible to the public? Because if they are, then we lose the Chatham House Rule for all messages to the public list. The current practice of anonymized posts to the forum on the website seems more in line with the Chatham House Rule.

But I have no clear picture whether it would be practical and advisable to have the listserv anonymize the posts, as invariably someone will say: I agree with Mr. X's remarks, or I support Mrs. Z's proposal in the body of the text, and then the rule would be broken in any case for a public list.

Of course someone could break the Gordic knot and propose to abolish the Chatham House Rule for the Advisory Group all-together, but I do think that the rule has served us

well and would support keeping it. Perhaps someone else has thought about how this could be handled in practice and propose a simple way forward.

b) observers

Agree with your distinction between intl. org observers, who I would call "active observers", in line with the Tunis Agenda mandate you outlined, and the "onlookers", as you call them, who I would call "passive observers", to highlight their non-contributing nature. I think it would be good to highlight to the passive observers that they would of course be free to chat with the AG members during breaks, and make their opinions known in such a way to the AG members, but should be asked to keep silent during AG meetings proper, unless the Chair opens the debate to the passive observers, for example to actively seek their opinions or in a general questions and answers session. Also, it might be useful to allow them to put some questions in writing to the Secretariat/Chair before or during sessions to be introduced into the session at the Chair's discretion.

Agree that we should keep the small room as before. There are approximately 10-20 chairs empty at any given AG meeting, and that would be the max amount of passive observers I think the meeting would sensibly be able to manage. How such seats could be allocated to passive observers is another question. Perhaps by lottery, with equal numbers of seats for the various stakeholder groups, or just on a first-come first-serve basis. There should perhaps also be some rules to be given to the passive observers about how they are expected to behave and the Chair should have discretion in asking an unruly passive observer to leave.

c) stock-taking

This is a question that requires more thinking and I will provide more thorough inputs later through the usual channels (via INSTITUTION NAME). However, shooting from the hip, I would say: keep the four big themes (they really cover everything), but concentrate on a few sub-topics within these themes that are relevant in the context of that year's IGF. We might even think of giving one group of themes more of a weight in one year (say: Access and Diversity in Delhi, Openness and Security in Egypt), to concentrate and focus minds and attention.

I like the idea of the broad cross-cutting themes of development and capacity building (it's in the Tunis Agenda mandate), and I think we did agree before the Athens meeting that these should be cross-cutting themes throughout the IGF. Also, I would favor that we keep the main sessions free from competing workshops, and reduce the absolute number of workshops and other formats to something where the average person can actually manage to make for oneself a meaningful programme. Therefore, the earlier we start the workshop process, and the earlier we put the deadline for workshop proposals, the more time we would have to ask organizers to combine and thus to reduce the number of parallel events.

(Writer C)

Dear Markus,

Thanks for this. Comments below:

(Markus Kummer wrote:)

>Dear colleagues,

>

>We have now created a special section for the
>Advisory Group in our forum page and posted the
>digest of our discussion thread up to 3
>February. The cut-off date is somewhat
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>discussion publicly available, there seems to be
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>Similarly, the discussion whether or not to
>allow Conlookers¹ to sit in at Advisory Group
>meetings was not conclusive. There was a general
>understanding however that in any case there
>would be a need for closed sessions to deal with
>particular agenda items. Also, it was understood
>that whoever should be allowed to sit in would

>have no speaking rights. (For this reason I
>prefer the term 'onlookers' to 'observers', as
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>however limited they may be. Maybe someone else
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>In any case, 'onlookers' would be different from
>representatives of IGOs. Until now they had
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>contained in para 72 of the Tunis Agenda
>('Facilitate discourse between bodies dealing
>with different cross-cutting international
>public policies..' and 'interface with
>appropriate inter-governmental organizations and
>other institutions on matters under their
>purview').
>

Could these suggestions be included in the
synthesis paper (or some paper) and made
available for the consultation?

>One commentator referred to the size of the
>meeting room. While it would be no problem to
>get a bigger room, if we fix the dates early
>enough, I would not like to repeat the
>experience we made in the WGIG process, when we,
>on one occasion, allowed in onlookers in one of
>the big meeting rooms of the Palais. This simply
>did not work, as the room was too big to create
>a working atmosphere.

That was also something I was concerned about.
Good to hear about room availability, but keeping
to smaller space would be better.

>Also, as it turned out, there were only a few
>people left as the meeting went on. I would
>therefore stick to the smallish rooms we had so
>far for our meetings, assuming we would decide
>to open our doors. I don't think there would be
>that much interest, once the onlookers would
>realize (a) that the Advisory Group meetings
>were fairly technical and straight-forward and
>(b) that sitting in on a meeting without the
>right to speak could be fairly boring.
>

Could we take a note of all who are in the room,
names of all advisory group members, observers
and onlookers. Publishing attendance, notes etc
help with transparency.

>While we may have exhausted this particular
>subject, I would be interested to hear your
>opinions also as regards the stock-taking of the
>Rio meeting and the preparation of the Delhi
>meeting. Should we continue with the same
>format? Should we keep the same themes? Should
>we keep all the new types of meetings we
>introduced in Rio ? Should we re-think the main
>sessions? Should we, for instance, have special
>sessions on the horizontal themes of
>Development¹ and Capacity building¹? Should
>we allow for more time for the reporting-in of
>the workshops and all the other events? Should
>we get started with asking for workshop
>proposals? Etc. etc...
>

New subjects: as Writer H just noted, there's
been another undersea cable break. This follows
the major cable disruption in the asia pacific of
a year ago. When discussing critical Internet
resources last year we went back and forth over
what was meant (text from the WGIG report etc.)
Perhaps for Delhi we could split CIR as two
sessions, one addressing physical resources
(cable, power etc) and the other (for want of a

better word) DNS and ICANN etc.

The CIR session and workshops a success in Rio and should continue.

Perhaps associated with the physical aspect of CIR, a new issue for 2008 we'll see coming up in other forums is ICTs and the environment. Question would be to how to ensure that cable breaks, power, environment are tied to notions of Internet Governance. I am not suggesting dropping the DNS aspect of CIR, on the contrary I think we should consider splitting it as two main sessions and workshop tracks. There's also an overlap with some access issues perhaps.

Yes, asking for workshop proposals early would be helpful. Ensuring all address "Internet Governance" has been noted in a number of comments by people on civil society mailing lists. Suggest we stress relevance to Internet governance in proposals (i.e. the proposer must state why it's relevant.) We've done something like that in the past, but people seem to think the workshops strayed from the purpose.

The idea of associating a number of workshops to the main sessions is worth trying again, there should be time to arrange.

I heard many comments to the effect that there was too much going on in Rio. No time between main sessions, workshops, best practises, etc. I think we need to thin the programme.

I sat in most of the main sessions and found them quite flat compared to Athens. There were far fewer questions from the floor. For the CIR and emerging issues sessions there were more question/comment requests than could be accommodated, and access on the edge, otherwise it was a struggle to get enough questions. Taking stock was cut short and had other problems. I wonder if there's value in continuing diversity in particular (as a main session, not workshops.) And the approach to openness and perhaps access could be re-thought.

Have all the workshops submitted reports? Could the secretariat list those that have and those that have not?

Question: does anyone know how "enhanced cooperation" will be reported on by the secretary general for the WSIS weeks processes? I expect it will come up again in the IGF consultation.

(Writer C)

(Writer I wrote:)

>

>c) stock-taking

>This is a question that requires more thinking

>and I will provide more thorough inputs later

>through the usual channels (via INSTITUTION NAME). However,

>shooting from the hip, I would say: keep the

>four big themes

I remember five major themes! Critical Internet Resources, Access, Diversity, Openness and Security.

>(they really cover everything), but concentrate

>on a few sub-topics within these themes that are

>relevant in the context of that year's IGF. We

>might even think of giving one group of themes

>more of a weight in one year (say: Access and

>Diversity in Delhi, Openness and Security in

>Egypt), to concentrate and focus minds and

>attention.

>

Around the time of the first IGF consultation, February 2006, people were asked to say what they thought the key themes were. Perhaps we should repeat the exercise. What are the key Internet governance themes the IGF should address. Ask for a top 5 or top 10 and explanation.

>I like the idea of the broad

>cross-cutting themes of development and capacity

>building (it's in the Tunis Agenda mandate), and

>I think we did agree before the Athens meeting

>that these should be cross-cutting themes

>throughout the IGF. Also, I would favor that we
>keep the main sessions free from competing
>workshops,

I didn't attend many workshops, but heard many were well attended and lively. On the other hand I felt some of the main sessions were less informative. So I'm wondering if we should be emphasizing workshops rather than the main sessions (but not having much experience of workshops am not at all sure.)

>and reduce the absolute number of workshops and
>other formats to something where the average
>person can actually manage to make for oneself a
>meaningful programme.

Agreed, the schedule needs to be thinned.

>Therefore, the earlier we start the workshop
>process, and the earlier we put the deadline for
>workshop proposals, the more time we would have
>to ask organizers to combine and thus to reduce
>the number of parallel events.
>

Agree the process must start earlier.
