



January 20, 2006

Mr. Markus Kummer  
United Nations  
Palais des Nations  
CH-1211 Geneva 10  
SWITZERLAND

Dear Mr. Kummer,

The Working Group on Internet Governance of the Global Information Infrastructure Commission,<sup>1</sup> pursuant to your January 17 request for input, submits the following five comments for your consideration in planning the February 16-17 Internet Governance Forum consultations.

First, the GIIC believes the February 16-17 consultations should be dedicated to establishing a broad, yet specific-as-possible, outline of the processes and procedures – rules of the road, so to speak – that will guide administration of the IG Forum, and, additionally, govern the conduct of the issue-substantive deliberations of the Forum. An aim of the consultations, the GIIC feels, should be to achieve, if not perfect agreement, at least a palpable consensus of opinion by and between consultation participants on process and procedural points.

Second, and notwithstanding likely claims of some that this should go without saying, the GIIC would like consultation participants to affirm that the “Tunis Agenda for the Information Society,” most particularly paragraphs 67-82 therein,<sup>2</sup> constitutes the cornerstone authority against which to measure the

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<sup>1</sup> The Global Information Infrastructure Commission is a confederation of chief executives and other officers of business firms engaged in the development, manufacture, deployment, operation, modernization, financing, and use of services and products based upon information and communications technologies. These executives head enterprises headquartered throughout the world and, as GIIC commissioners, are convinced that ICT-based capabilities have given rise to a rapidly evolving new era, denoted most frequently as an “information society,” and widely regarded as one that transcends borders and is an increasingly powerful force in all societies. As such, they acknowledge and are dedicated, through the instrumentality of the GIIC, to fulfilling the essential role that must be played by the private sector (by virtue of its technological, human, and financial resources) to foster development of an information society that is sustainable, equitable, and enhances the economic and social well-being of people everywhere. Toward these ends, the GIIC mission is to: (1) advocate the promulgation, adoption, and enforcement of responsive public policies; (2) convene forums within which to address public policy challenges and different approaches thereto; (3) collaborate with other sectors of society; (4) conduct formal studies; and (4) publish and in other ways share and disseminate the conclusions of its deliberations and research.

<sup>2</sup> See, <http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs2/tunis/off/6rev1.html>

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appropriateness of all Forum activity. The Tunis Agenda should be regarded as more than just the foundation for the legitimacy of the existence of the Forum. Additionally, we feel, it should be regarded as the primary authority for defining and delimiting topics and issues suitable for Forum deliberations, determinations, and action.

The effectiveness of the IG Forum, the GIIC believes, will in all likelihood be commensurate with the extent to which its topics of deliberation square with the spirit and carefully composed prescriptions and proscriptions of those parts of the Tunis Agenda that envisioned an IG Forum. Quite frankly, the GIIC is concerned that the procedures and processes yet to be agreed upon or otherwise adopted for the IG Forum will, unless meticulously crafted, expand upon or distort that which was envisioned for the IG Forum by the plain meaning of the words in the Tunis Agenda. Allowing the IG Forum to become a free-for-all for proponents of positions on all but a properly focused group of topics related to Internet governance could, the GIIC fears, seriously jeopardize not only the effectiveness of the Forum, but meaningful and needed participation in it, as well.

Third, the GIIC is of a mind that representatives of all segments of the global business community must be afforded opportunities to participate in IG Forum deliberations and activities in ways that are equal to those accorded representatives of national governments. The Internet as we know it today and almost all we associate with the "information society" has sprung largely from and been based on private sector investment. Indeed, only the private sector possesses the resources – not just the financial ones, but human and technological ones, as well – with which to develop, manage, and modernize the world's information infrastructure. Accordingly and in the view of the GIIC, representatives of business (both as providers and users of such infrastructure) are deserving of places at the Forum that are equal to those of government representatives and others.

Fourth, and further to the preceding point, the GIIC believes that an effective way of fostering needed levels of private sector participation in the Forum would be to designate a single official or office within the administrative bureau or secretariat of the Forum to be responsible for fostering and coordinating private sector involvement, as well as making all necessary logistical arrangements for such participation. Importantly, the GIIC believes this responsibility should be regarded as ministerial in nature, carried out within the administrative machinery of the Forum, and be totally divorced from the processes by which business firms and associations thereof, individually and collectively, develop and advocate substantive positions on issues under

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discussion in the Forum. In short, we feel the roles of IG Forum administrators and advocates must be separate.

Finally, and in keeping with the spirit of the Tunis Agenda and the exercise from which it sprang (i.e., the World Summit on the Information Society), the GIIC encourages you and your colleagues, as you go about the arduous process of establishing the IG Forum, to remain mindful of the overarching purposes of that from which the need for an IG Forum arose. The ends toward which the Summit was originally directed were, of course, directly tied to the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations and had to do with the diffusion of information and communications technologies to ICT-underserved regions, nations, and communities of the world. The recommendation of the GIIC, accordingly, is for you and your colleagues to adopt a sense of proportionality as you develop agenda and work programs for the IG Forum. By "sense of proportionality" we refer to the need to keep in mind the reality that the Internet and the "information society" of which it is a part are evolutionary phenomena. If the Forum is to serve beneficial ends, ones directly linked to the Millennium Development Goals, it must concentrate on that part of the Internet and the "information society" evolutionary continuum that is in greatest need of being addressed and is closest to those who, at present, are largely unconnected to the increasingly global economy because of their lack of access to communications conduits, network-connecting information appliances, and, of course, the Internet. Absent such an orientation, the GIIC fears, the focus of the Forum may be diverted to other issues. The GIIC would like to see the Forum address Internet governance issues of importance to those parts of the world with advanced levels of access to the Internet and other ICT capabilities, as well as to the vast numbers of the inhabitants of the world living on the trailing edge of technology.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. The GIIC stands ready to be of whatever assistance it can be as you and others within the United Nations convene the Internet Governance Forum.

Respectfully,

Robert G. Rogers  
Executive Director

Attachments: (1) December 9, 2005, letter from GIIC Chairman Naoyuki Akikusa to U.N. Secretary General Kofi A. Annan; (2) November 15, 2005, GIIC

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Declaration Regarding the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society, WSIS background and GIIC Viewpoints