

Vint Cerf - Opening statement at IGF Leadership Panel press conference - July 14 2023

Vinton Cerf: Speaking for the Leadership Panel, we propose that the Internet Governance Forum should evolve to become more output oriented. Given its 18 years of experience in multistakeholder work on Internet and digital ecosystem governance matters, we believe that the Internet Governance Forum is the best vehicle for considering the challenges and opportunities implied by the establishment of the Global Digital Compact.

So, the key message today is the evolution of the Internet Governance Forum, and the Leadership Panel support for that evolution.

Let me give you a little bit of background. The Internet was invented 50 years ago, and went into operation 40 years ago in 1983. The World Wide Web was announced in 1991, here at CERN in Geneva, and became globally visible by 1995. Tens of thousands of independent networks all cooperate to form the Internet, the World Wide Web application rides on top of the global Internet as its most used application.

The Internet Governance Forum was established at the close of the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis in 2005. Its first meeting was in Athens in 2006. It's a multistakeholder body, comprising civil society, the private sector, academia, the technology community, and government representatives. Its mission is to articulate the opportunities, challenges and potential paths forward for the best use of this global digital ecosystem.

A hundred and fifty national and regional multistakeholder Internet Governance Forums have self-organized over the past decade or

more, to bring local attention to the challenges of the Internet and World Wide Web applications, and to contribute to the annual IGF meetings.

The Leadership Panel of the Internet Governance Forum was chartered and appointed by the Secretary General of the United Nations with the goal of amplifying and spreading the messages of the IGF, supporting its operation, helping to shape its agenda, and assisting it to respond to the changing demands of the emerging Internet and World Wide Web ecosystem.

The Global Digital Compact is being developed with the facilitation of Sweden and Rwanda, and is assisted in this work by the Office of the UN Technology Envoy. It seeks to create a global framework for the safe and secure use of digital technologies, such as those we use daily with the Internet, the World Wide Web, our smartphones, laptops and pads.

Once in place, the implementation of the provisions of the Compact will require multistakeholder collaboration to ensure that the Internet, World Wide Web, and other digital ecosystem components can meet the expectations of the Compact.

The Internet and the World Wide Web have delivered massive economic, educational and social benefits to its over 5 billion users, but the excitement of artificial intelligence, internet of things, cryptographic applications, and social media, and the misinformation, disinformation, and other harmful behaviors, have led to renewed attention on the need for broad agreement on the responsible use of these powerful technologies.

The Leadership Panel believes that, in addition to preserving all the constructive values of the Internet and the World Wide Web, we must also respond to the potential risks and harms that have arisen in recent years. The Internet we want must address those concerns while fulfilling the aspirations of the Global Digital Compact.

