

NRO Submission to the IGF Open Consultation, February 2013

The Number Resource Organization (NRO), representing the five Regional Internet Registries (RIRs), has been a strong and active supporter of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) since the first event in 2006, providing financial backing and expert input to discussions. The five RIRs have also contributed actively to IGF discussions, workshops and events over the past seven years.

The IGF is a multi-stakeholder space, where governments, civil society, the private sector and the Internet technical community can discuss pressing Internet governance issues on the basis of an equal footing. These issues extend beyond matters relating to Critical Internet Resources, encompassing a broad agenda that includes cybersecurity, privacy, spam, access, openness and diversity. Discussions at the IGF foster essential international cooperation, and help shape policy discussions that occur at the national, sub-regional, regional and global levels.

Reflecting on Internet governance in 2013, we must take account of events at last year's ITU World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT). This conference and its preparatory processes revealed strong and, in many cases, fundamental differences of opinion concerning Internet matters among ITU Member States and other stakeholder groups. Such disagreements highlight the pressing need for processes that allow different stakeholders to better understand each other's perspectives. The NRO believes that the IGF, neutral and fully multi-stakeholder, is the most appropriate venue for these discussions.

The NRO is pleased to see that many of the issues raised in our previous Open Consultation submissions (listed at the end of this document) have been addressed, including suggestions to improve remote participation and encourage greater participation from the full range of Internet stakeholders through concerted efforts to include new speakers in workshops and main sessions. There has been marked improvement in these areas at recent IGF meetings, helping to ensure that the discussions are truly multi-stakeholder and incorporate all relevant perspectives. The NRO encourages the MAG and the Secretariat to maintain their focus on improvement and innovation in these areas.

Past NRO submissions have also called for greater integration of regional and national Internet governance dialogue into IGF main sessions and workshops. Significant progress has been made toward this goal, with several sessions at the 2012 IGF dedicated to reporting from regional Internet governance events, including the Africa IGF, the Arab IGF, the Asia-Pacific Regional IGF, LAC IGF, and EuroDIG. As these regional and national events multiply and mature, the importance of effectively channeling their output into the IGF will continue to increase. Internet governance events organised at the national and regional level provide opportunities for direct participation by those who may not be able to attend the global IGF, and bringing the results of these discussions into the IGF, particularly the main sessions, is vital to ensuring comprehensive consideration of the issues.

The NRO has been a strong supporter of the IGF's status as a non-decision making forum for discussion. In this form the IGF can inform and inspire those that make decisions in the appropriate venues. We continue to see this non-decision making status as one of the key strengths of the mandate of the IGF. This status has in fact contributed to making the IGF a safe and valuable arena in which all stakeholders can discuss difficult topics, crucial to the future of the Internet, on an equal footing. The IGF has also proven to be influential at the domestic level in informing legislative and public policy processes, reducing the risk of unintended or negative consequences for the Internet's underlying architecture.

Within that remit though, there is room for evolution of the IGF's formal processes. Discussions at the 2012 IGF produced a number of suggestions for how the IGF could contribute to the work of reaching a common understanding of the term Enhanced Cooperation. The NRO, recognizing that Enhanced Cooperation is one of the main pillars of Internet governance identified in the Tunis Agenda, supports further consideration of how the IGF, as the organ which effectively incorporates the full range of Internet multi-stakeholder community perspectives, might contribute formally to this work.

In considering the ongoing evolution of the IGF, it is clear that the stability of the Secretariat and administration of the MAG must be an immediate priority for all IGF stakeholders. Past NRO submissions have stressed the need for transparency and multi-stakeholder input into the selection of MAG members, and we note the improvements evident in recent MAG renewal activities. The appointment of an Executive Coordinator to the Secretariat and stabilization of the IGF's financial basis must now be top priorities. The NRO reiterates its call for all stakeholders to consider becoming regular financial contributors, as it is only through such arrangements that the future growth, independence and multi-stakeholder nature of this forum can be assured.

The NRO hereby commits a sum of USD 100,000 to support the IGF secretariat during 2013, and reiterate our intention to continue this level of support into the future.

Over the past seven years, the IGF has proven its worth as a venue for discussing the broad range of governance issues raised by the Internet's explosive growth. As the centerpiece of a maturing system of Internet governance based on open, transparent, multi-stakeholder dialogue, the NRO is committed to the continuation and ongoing evolution of the IGF, and looks forward to contributing to the 2013 event.

We thank you for this opportunity to provide our feedback and concerns.

Past NRO Open Consultation submissions

2012: <http://www.nro.net/wp-content/uploads/NRO-Contribution-re-IGF-2012.pdf>

2011: <http://www.nro.net/documents/nro-contribution-igf-feb-2011-consultations-html>

2009: <http://www.nro.net/news/nro-statement-about-igf-continuation>