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Internet Service Providers & Connectivity Providers

The Internet Service Providers and Connectivity Providers (ISPCP) offers the following input as the Constituency's response to the "Questionnaire for 20-year review of WSIS implementation" from the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/forum/2024/CSTDSubmissions.

The ISPCP Constituency of ICANN represents companies and associations that operate Internet backbone networks and/or provide access to Internet and related services to End Users. More information on the Constituency can be found at https://www.ispcp.info/.

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This questionnaire is open to all stakeholders.

Please share your experience, views and priorities in response to the following questions, addressing the issues that you consider most important for the CSTD's twenty-year WSIS review. Issues that you might consider could include any or more of the following, but need not be confined to these:

- *infrastructure, access and inclusiveness;*
- *content, applications and capacity-building;*
- *technical, financial and related issues;*
- *governance and wider public policy aspects of the Information Society;*
- *social, economic and other development activities and impacts;*
- *measurement and monitoring of the Information Society;*
- *the changes that the information society has gone through over the past twenty years and the implications for the WSIS vision; and*
- *the relationship between the Information Society and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.*

1) *To what extent, in your experience, has the "people - centred, inclusive and development - oriented Information Society", envisaged in the opening paragraph of the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles, developed within the 20 years since WSIS?*

The ICANN Internet Service and Connectivity Provider Constituency (ISPCP) represents businesses that provide much of the world's Internet connectivity and, in that capacity, have been witness to the continued evolution of the Information Society, as envisaged by the WSIS Geneva Declaration of Principles. Our members have been active participants in not only the advancement of technology that has aided in the broadening of the Information Society but also the important work to broaden access to the Information Society to all people in all areas of the globe.

The "people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society" is best supported by an entire ecosystem of players and is at its most effective when supported by multi-stakeholder decisions made up of the voices of not just governments, but businesses, technologists, civil society, and the voices of Internet users. Risks of fragmentation that drive us away from this vision tend to come out of environments not driven by a true multi-stakeholder process but by governments who may seek minimal advice from these other essential stakeholders.

Over the 20 years since WSIS, we have been party to developments of all kinds and have seen the vision of the envisioned Information Society realized in some instances and at risk in plenty of others. The Internet has become such a fundamental part of all of our lives that, as a general resource, it is itself the largest global platform for innovation and growth. The ISPCP supports innovation and the development of emerging services, including those that are taking place at the edge of the network.   We will continue our support of multi-stakeholder groups in identifying those emerging services that have the potential to cause technical internet fragmentation so that we can work together on solutions that ensure the ongoing security and interoperability of the global Internet.

2) *How has the implementation of WSIS outcomes contributed towards the development of a "people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society"?*

The ISPCP acknowledges the ITU's significant contribution towards WSIS outcomes as it has worked diligently toward its vision alongside groups such as UNESCO, UNCTAD, and UNDP. We acknowledge the work being done to align WSIS goals with the implementation of the 2030 sustainable development goals based on the specific goals of sustainability, inclusion, innovation, and digital collaboration.

As representatives of the Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) sector, the ISPCP supports the WSIS goal of highlighting the importance of ICT involvement in all sectors and

acknowledges that this is a prerequisite to meeting the sustainable development goals of the Information Society.

ICTs are facilitators in all e-strategies and provide resources that open the doors for individuals to create and participate in the Information Society's sustainability development goals, especially for emerging economies. ICTs are intrinsically involved for users everywhere, especially those living in rural areas that require access to the Internet. Connectivity is key for enabling the continued building of the Information Society, and the ICTs understand their role in ensuring affordability, equitability, and universality. ICTs understand the importance of connectivity to benefit the economic growth of countries.

In this context, it is important for ICTs to communicate with all other stakeholders about how sustainable development goals should be advanced.

The United Nations Internet Governance Forum (IGF) has been a positive result of WSIS as a key multi-stakeholder forum for sharing views and collaboration with other stakeholders, including government, business, the technical community, academia, and civil society on common issues, including sustainability goals. The ISPCP supports the continuation of the IGF as a multi-stakeholder forum for parties to come together to establish best practices, and strongly opposes efforts to transform it into a global decision-making body on internet governance issues.

3) *How much progress do you believe has been made in implementing specific WSIS outcomes?*

The ISPCP believes the WSIS outcomes were notable not only as targets to be met but perhaps more importantly as directions where effort was to be made and progress necessary. In that spirit, the very fact that those outcomes were taken over by the various WSIS forums that were convened since WSIS has marked the intention of the Internet community to not let these outcomes go unheeded. The Geneva Plan of Action and the Tunis Commitment across its numerous dimensions served as roadmaps for a number of governments and stakeholders, both individually and collectively through the various organizations involved.

Regarding the technical Governance of the Internet as part of the Tunis agenda and acknowledging the Internet as a major element of the infrastructure of the Information Society, the ISPCP recognizes ICANN as an organization that has embodied the ability of the technical community, and that of all stakeholders to come together, to define technical and public policies for the management of the Internet resources, as well as a structure that has been able to review and reform itself structurally over these 20 years to fulfill this mission. After 20 years and despite numerous challenges, its actions since WSIS along with those taken by the international organizations in charge of development of Internet-related technical standards and relevant policies, has helped maintain the integrity of the Internet and avoid fragmentation

of the Domain Name System (DNS), which in the ISPCP's view remains central to maintaining "one Internet for all Internet users".

4) *What are the challenges to the implementation of WSIS outcomes?*

The ISPCP recognizes and shares the concern expressed by many that there are a number of geopolitical activities driving the potential for "Internet fragmentation", a term for which there is currently no commonly agreed-upon global definition. With this lack of a global definition in mind, the ISPCP is most concerned about technical aspects of Internet fragmentation that could have an impact on the underlying infrastructure that impede the ability of network systems to be fully interoperable and exchange data packets, and of the internet to function consistently at all end-points.

We believe that the WSIS outcomes at their best would aid in addressing concerns related to Internet fragmentation through its ongoing support of the multi-stakeholder process for internet governance. It is notable that the loudest voices opposing the multi-stakeholder approach often express disappointment in the timing or outcome of the best practices adopted and decisions-making process. In contrast, our view is that the Internet is best served when governance processes avoid sharp changes and reflect the views of the entire multi-stakeholder community.

Accordingly, we strongly support a WSIS outcome that reaffirms the multi-stakeholder process for Internet governance.

5) *How are these challenges being addressed? What approaches have proved to be effective in your experience?*

ISPs have an interest in the Internet fragmentation issues being debated in venues such as the Policy Network on Internet fragmentation (Policy Network) at the United Nations (UN) IGF. The IGF is a positive example of a multi-stakeholder process resulting from the WSIS forum. The Policy Network is raising awareness of the intended and unintended effects of technical, policy, legal, and regulatory actions on the basic features of the Internet as an open, interconnected and interoperable network of networks. These discussions are contributing to global discussions focused on providing clarity on the diverse perceptions of what may be the cause of fragmentation, including those related to the technical concerns of ISPs.

Convergence of views on technical topics also takes place in globally accepted internet standards development bodies, including the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). ISP's and consumers alike benefit from a secure and interoperable global internet. We believe that ICANN's multistakeholder model has proved itself to be an effective means to maintain the security, stability, and resilience of the Internet DNS and meets the needs and expectations of global customers and partners of the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) services while maintaining the openness of the global Internet.

6) *What do you consider the most important trends in technology and other aspects of ICTs which have affected implementation of WSIS outcomes since the Summit? What has been their impact?*

From a general standpoint, generalization of wireless Internet access, through wifi or cellular Internet, the gradual introduction of several generations of cellular network technologies to access the Internet (3G, 4G, 5G and the emerging 6G mobile networks) and generalization of smartphones have been major factors the development of the Internet over the last 20 years. In two decades, the steady increase of processing and computing has enabled generalization of IP based communications, including VoIP, Instant Messaging and video communications, the growth of social networks at application level and more recently introduction of cloud architectures and platforms.

A number of technology and engineering breakthroughs have made those advances possible. Technologies that preserve privacy and personal data such as encryption have played an important role, as well as technologies such as domain names and IP address resource certification and proof of ownership possible, which help make the Internet more secure while maintaining a steady growth of its ecosystem as defined by the Summit. In the domain namespace, examples include Domain Name System Security Extensions (DNS Sec) as developed by the IETF and actions for signing both the DNS root and Top Level Domains (TLD) as taken by ICANN and country code TLD managers, or the secure Border Gateway Protocol for IP addresses.

So called 'Internationalization' technologies such as Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) as defined by the IETF as well as the action plan for supporting these new formats by ICANN through the Universal Acceptance program have help advance the process for the introduction of multilingualism on the Internet, and more generally the ability of Internet users who do not use ascii to come on-line.

It is worthwhile noting that all advances have been made with 'incremental improvements' with backward compatibility and minimal impact to the existing technologies and infrastructures, and existing organizations.

7) *What should be the priorities for stakeholders seeking to achieve WSIS outcomes and progress towards the Information Society, taking into account ongoing and emerging trends?*

At a high level, policymakers that prioritize preservation of human rights for individuals, whether they are online or offline, will support the WSIS outcomes and progress towards the Information Society. With this in mind, we encourage policymakers to continue to take

concrete steps that enable Internet access for all individuals through initiatives that support connectivity such as infrastructure growth and internet exchange point provisioning.

An inclusive approach to Internet governance ensures that the relevant parties whose work and views are critical to achieving the WSIS goals are considered is critical to ensure the policy outcome is acceptable by the members of the entire Internet ecosystem through a multi-stakeholder consensus-driven process. This approach is foundational to produce policy outcomes that preserve interoperability and end to end connectivity for the end-users, and avoid outcomes that, intentionally or unintentionally, result in a technical fragmentation of the Internet.

8) *How will ongoing trends and new developments in technology, especially in the deployment, access, and use of ICTs, impact future progress toward human development, specifically in relation to the SDGs?*

The ISPCP believes current trends in technology can have a significant impact on the progress toward human development, the reduction of digital divide and the achievement of the 17 UN SDGs. Internationalization of the Internet as a driver for economic growth will help progress a number of these goals, and Internet-based technologies will continue to support a globally interoperable network where everyone accessing the network may innovate for the benefit of their local community and beyond. Continued deployment of specific technologies related to the Internet of Things or Artificial Intelligence will play a role in achieving goals such as Climate actions, smart sustainable cities and communities, and affordable and clean energy. The need for a strong model of cooperation such as the multistakeholder model has never been more critical to develop commonly-agreeable technical evolutions and public policies.

9) *Please add any other comments that you wish to make on the subject of the review that you believe would be helpful.*

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