

HIGHLIGHTS Sunday, 15 November 2009

- The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) officially opened in Sharm el-Sheikh today where more than 1,500 participants government, international organizations, private sector, civil society, academics, the technical community to explore ways on how the Internet can be used to its full potential for the benefit of all people.
- Built around the main theme of "Creating opportunities for all", this year's meeting will aim at developing a common understanding of how to maximize the opportunities the Internet offers for all nations and peoples, and raising awareness on the development dimension of Internet governance. It will also focus, among others, on the emerging issue of social networks, and the more traditional issues of security, diversity, openness and critical Internet resources.
- The fourth gathering of the IGF, which will end this Wednesday, will also discuss the issue of the extension of the five year initial mandate, which will conclude at the end of 2010. In this regard, several speakers today supported the continuation of this mechanism.
- Opening the meeting Sha Zukang, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, drew attention to "a critical decision that we will have to make about the future of the IGF" and he encouraged participants to join in the discussions to say if they believe the Forum is valuable, how it needs to be improved, or speak out against an extension if they believe that the IGF has fulfilled its purpose.
- Mr. Sha said this year's overarching theme –Internet Governance: Creating an opportunity for all” – was timely and appropriate. It would allow reflection on the main themes of the IGF – access, diversity, openness, security and critical Internet resources. Mr. Sha also stressed that though the digital divide was wide – with Africa and Arab States lagging behind Europe, Asia and the Americas – gains were being made. By 2009, the number of people connecting in developing countries had expanded by an impressive 475 million to 17.5%. In this dialogue on Internet governance, the voice of developing countries must be heard. Good and democratic Internet governance was a means of achieving development for all. The Internet was a powerful tool that would help reach the Millennium Development Goals and improve the lives of millions. With its overarching development perspective and crosscutting priority of capacity building, the IGF fully complemented one of the United Nations' central mandates, to promote higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development.
- Egyptian Prime Minister Ahmed Nazif said that, four years after the creation of the Forum, great progress had been realized: the Forum was a valuable space for continuous education on the prospects of the Internet and the global cyberspace. The knowledge generated by the IGF would be used as precious learning tools for the young generations, and the Prime Minister said he saw the continuation



of this Forum as a real priority. Through the process of regular evaluations, the international community would be able to expand and administer the global cyberspace in forums that mirror aspirations for freedom of access, usage, and expression, as well as equality of opportunity in education and research allocation.

- Turning to the situation in Egypt, the Prime Minister said Internet penetration rose to almost 20% with over 15 million users in 2009, turning the Internet into a real tool of empowerment. He also underlined that Egypt had succeeded in maintaining growth during the crisis and that a substantial component of the country's banking reform program aimed at capacity building and increased utilization of ICT.
- Tarek Kamel, Minister of Communication and IT of Egypt and Chairman of the meeting, said that Sharm el-Sheikh was witnessing, again, the opening of yet another historic meeting, a meeting of Internet governance world leaders and pioneers. He said the IGF had proved only over four years that it is not just another isolated parallel process but had managed to bring on board all the relevant stakeholders and key players. He then drew attention on the breakthrough of Internet evolution in the country through a deregulated framework for service provision with strong private sector involvement. The Internet was becoming for developing countries a space of opportunities that should be handled with due attention. The IGF should continue to provide a venue where new policy issues are surfaced, voiced freely and discussed constructively.
- M. Hamadoun Touré, Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Organization that organized the World Summit on the Information Society which gave birth to the IGF, said that, taking into account the experience acquired during the last three IGF meetings, framing the decisions which will be taken concerning the future of IGF, looking at the best ways of serving the needs of the global community and engaging strongly in enhanced cooperation. He asked participants to look at the bigger picture in the context of the millennium goals and striving to meet tangible targets by 2015. The IGF is a clear part of that process.
- Tim Berners-Lee, Father of the World Wide Web, and Director of World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), also made a keynote statement, during which he officially launched the World Wide Web Foundation, an international, non-profit organization that strives to advance the Web as a medium that empowers people. Jerry Yang, Co-Founder and Chief Yahoo!, also made a statement highlighting the rapid expansion of the Internet and of its uses.
- Speaking in the high level session that followed the opening meeting, were Moritz Leuenberger, Swiss Minister for Environment, Transport, Energy and Communication, and Jozsef Györöks, State Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Slovenia, both representing the Slovenian/Swiss Chair of the Council of Europe; Pedro Sebastiao Teta, Vice Minister, Information and Communications Technology, Angola; Åsa Torstensson, Minister for Enterprise, Energy and Communications, Sweden, Representing the EU Presidency; Augusto Gadelha, Vice Minister of Science & Technology, Brazil; Philip Verveer, United States Coordinator, International Communications and Information Policy, United States Department of State; and Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet, Secretary of State for Prospective and the Development of the Digital Economy, France.
- Government representatives agreed that the IGF should continue to meet beyond the 2010 meeting in Vilnius, stressing that IGF had proven its usefulness.



- Also speaking this afternoon were Lisa Horner, Global Partners tld, United Kingdom; Subramanian Ramadorai, Vice-Chairman of Tata Consultancy Services Ltd, TATA, Charman, ICC-BASIS, India; Viviane Reding, European Commissioner for ICT and Media; Jean Rozwadowski, Secretary General, International Chamber of Commerce (ICC); Abdul Waheed Khan, Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information, UNESCO; Lynn St. Amour, President & CEO, Internet Society (ISOC); Nitin Desai, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Internet Governance.
- The President and CEO of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), Rod Beckstrom, drew attention to the recent agreement between ICANN and the US administration, which provided for greater transparency on the international level, adding: "Because of you, things have changed".
- Speaking at an opening press conference, Mr. Kamel, Minister of Communication and IT of Egypt, underlined that challenges facing Internet growth were global and that was where the Forum was important. He said Egypt welcomed the involvement of civil society and other actors in discussing Internet governance. He stressed the importance of the recent agreement between ICANN and the US administration as a major step in making the Internet global, adding there was still room for improvement. He also stressed progress in the use of non-latin script and insisted on Egypt's role in this regard. The Minister said Egypt was in favour of the Forum extending beyond its initial 5 year mandate.
- At the press conference, Under-Secretary-General Sha welcomed Egypt's active participation in the IGF, demonstrating the priority the country places in the Internet as a tool for development. At IGF, Governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society discuss technical but also important issues of social development, and search for a common understanding of Internet and challenges the international community faces in this area.
- The IGF will also discuss in Sharm el-Sheikh the desirability of continuation of the forum and Mr. Sha said he would report to the Secretary-General for him to submit recommendations to the UN membership next year. He noted the position of Egypt in this respect was made loud and clear by the Prime Minister this afternoon and said this important position of Egypt would be reflected in his report. After hearing statements today, he believed the IGF still had a lot of work ahead of it.
- Responding to a journalist's question, Mr. Markus Kummer, Executive Coordinator of the IGF secretariat, said that Kenya had indicated it was ready to host the Forum in 2011, if the UN membership chose to extend the mandate.
- During an orientation session held this morning, M. Kummer said IGF did not have "the power to take decisions", but had "the power to put issues on the agenda of international cooperation". It was stressed by speakers that the IGF was the only forum paving the way for the involvement for all stakeholders in the Internet governance process and establish a productive dialogue between all parties involved, interacting on an equal footing and respecting the perspectives and the role of each. Speakers agreed that discussion forum was, indeed, the proper format for significant impact in Internet governance.
- The impact of IGF in capacity building was also stressed, including its role for fostering inclusive participation and in the democratisation of education. International organizations, including ITU, UNESCO, World Bank, have trained many people in Internet governance issues, including



infrastructure and multilingualism. International organizations such as ICANN have also trained a large number of people. Internet society is one of the most prominent players in capacity building, especially on the national level.

- The orientation session was moderated by Nermin El Saadany, Director of the Egyptian International Relations Division at the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and Markus Kummer. The panellists were Ravi Shanker, Joint Secretary at the Department of Information Technology, Ministry of Information Technology, India; Marilyn Cade, President, ICT Strategies, mCADE llc; Rafik Dammak, of the Graduate School of Interdisciplinary Information Studies, University of Tokyo; Lee Hibbard, Media and Information Society Division/Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs, Council of Europe; Jovan Kurbalija, Director of the DiploFoundation; Virginia Paque, Program Coordinator, Internet Governance Capacity Building, DiploFoundation; Alexander Ntoko, Head of ITU Corporate Strategy Division; Nii Qaynor, President of the Internet Society of Ghana.
- At the start of the day, the IGF held a minute of silence in memory of Francis Muguet -- a leading figure of the open source community closely associated from the start with the Internet governance process -- who died on 4 October.
- A panel on regional initiatives was also held this morning, bringing together different regional experiences, as they emerged from various regional and national meetings.

A full text of the statements can be found on the IGF website at www.intgovforum.org -- scroll down to "transcripts".

