

Internet Governance  
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The Internet is 40 years old and it is 16 years old in Ghana. The pioneering works of NCS on Internet occurred in 1993 and unleashed a technology drive that can't be stopped and can't be captured either

Last year my introductory remarks referred to the contributions of Mr. Tsatsu Tsikata for establishing a Petroleum Information Processing Center at GNPC that laid the foundation for much of the exploration leading to subsequent discoveries of oil in Ghana, all around the Tano Basin.

This year's introductory comment is on the confusion in the meaning ICT. Let me first note that in Ghana there is a Ministry of Information and a Ministry of Communications. The first one suggests humanities intensiveness and the other is science and technology based  
Thus the core skills required by actors in those ministries would be different and mixing them up would unsatisfactory

Now, ICT, Information and Communication Technologies is coined to emphasize the convergence of the tools necessary in information, telecommunications and computer networking technologies industries. The tools being discussed are the tools of computer networking, that is everyone is using the same tools and the tool happens to be the tools created by computer networking professionals i.e. geeks!

In other words the media and the telecommunications industry now depend on the work of geeks. This community is often very busy and silent thus overshadowed by media and telecommunication interests who even though are principally users of tools created by the geek community. This can't be sustained as there are three separate professions included in ICT hence if one claims to be an ICT professional one would have to be quick to mention which part i.e. information, telecommunication or computer technology. Which one are we you? One can't be all three

On the substantive issue of the Internet Governance, it might interest you to know that the first ever Internet Governance (IG) meeting worldwide was held on Cotonou, Benin December 1998. This is alongside the formation of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the most recognized IG stakeholder organization today, in 1998.

Thanks to the foresight of Pierre Dandjinou, (Pierre is from Benin and member of Board of AfriNIC) the motivation grew in 1998 to organize and position Africa to have a place in the technical development of global policy. This team including your's truly, saw the need to have African participation in policy on Internet resources and understood the barrier of technical knowhow and coordination and thus implemented a focused techno-liberation movement in Africa. The principal goal was to evolve a technical community in Africa and to fight to manage a regional numbers registry.

In 1998 there was a narrow view of technical administration and coordination of Internet resources and we felt un-represented so we sought a correction and there was a governance of a global resource issue

as well. We had a technology barrier and an internal struggle for techno-liberation. The developed countries were in 1998 pre occupied with the redistribution of economic gains emanating from the new markets for Internet based resources.

Now that the Internet has become a stable with high user penetration in the developed countries its governance has become a challenge employing a much larger concept of governance than the technical coordination of the 90's. Africa in the meantime is barely managing its technical Internet resources with limited technical capacity and now has to battle with the new and larger concept of IG.

Perhaps, in the case of Africa we have to be part because it is the entangled concurrent tracks that are in a discussion at Internet Governance Forum organized by the UN Secretary General.

The larger concept or definition of IG worked its way through several parallel forums.

The technical forums of IETF, ISOC and ICANN continued to develop its bottom-up technical policy and standards processes mindful of the larger issues that needed to be worked elsewhere.

Meanwhile other groups including the UNICT task force and dotForce were keen on mainstreaming Internet for development while others including ITU and certain states, some of who also had concerns about the present arrangement that has the US government with oversight of root servers.

Current discussions on IG trace roots to World Summit on Information Society (WSIS)

The WSIS Declaration of Principles (2003) asked the UN Secretary General to form a working group on IG in an open, multi-stakeholder and transparent process to investigate and make proposals before 2005 (WSIS II).

The WSIS Action Plan defined the tasks of the WGIG to include principally a definition of IG

The WGIG attempted a definition of IG,

“IG is the development and application by governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programs that shape the evolution and use of the Internet”

Other groups also made definitions but these were always larger in scope than the technical administration and coordination of core Internet resources.

Nonetheless, UN WSIS II at Tunis occurred in November 2005 and caused the UN Secretary-General to a following next step in IG discussions which is on-going. The IGF mandate is stated in WSIS commitments which asked the UN Secretary General to convene a new forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialog called the Internet Governance forum, a non binding forum for discussing policy issues related to key elements of Internet governance to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet.

The UN Secretary-General appointed an Advisory Group and the IGF has held meetings in Athens in 2006, Rio in 2007 and Hyderabad in 2008. The next meet is in Sharm El Sheikh next week and it's the first time in Africa. The meetings have been organized around five thematic panel discussions built

around the IGF themes - critical Internet resources, access, diversity, openness and security and were followed by a session on both 'taking stock and the way forward' and 'emerging issues' Thousands of participants from governments, civil society and business from hundreds of countries attended each of the IGF forums held so far.

The MAG has determined that discussions moved in an arc from "no agreement" through "need for informed exploration" to "need to talk about how to take action." I think that is a very significant development, because it shows that there is broad acceptance that the IGF does have a purpose as a catalyst to action, even if it is not appropriate for it to take action in its own right. This is a new model that prevents duplication, keeps resource use down, and serves as a source of new ideas and approaches for established organizations. That in itself is a great strength.

### **Critical internet resources**

The primary focus has been on domain name and Internet Protocol (IP) addresses. The cross-cutting theme of capacity-building and the other IGF themes of access and security, as well as the routing and the basic need for electricity, and frequencies are all discussed as critical to the Internet's development at some point in its evolution

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and its responsibilities has also been the focus of much interest

The issue of unilateral control of an ICANN resource root zone by a single government US is raised while some argued that the international community should take a more active role in addressing critical Internet resources. With the termination of the Joint Project Agreement (JPA) between the USA Department of Commerce and ICANN and affirmation of the Commitments with the US Department of Commerce the discussions on this subject will change

Among the topics discussed were the essential bottom-up nature of the ICANN processes and discussed the eventual exhaustion of ICANN's reserve of unassigned IPv4 addresses and importance of the effort to bring the IPv6 network on-line and the need for the full interoperability between the IPv4 and IPv6 networks

There are calls for the creation of national IGF following the multi-stakeholder model.

There was also recognition of the importance of building human capacity as a critical resource and pointed out, the spread of the multi-stakeholder methodology was an important new protocol for resolving issues of critical Internet resources

### **Access**

The development impact of access was emphasized though there were questions about who might be the next billion people to connect to the Internet. There is also recognition of the importance of building human capacity as a critical resource. Cooperation among stakeholders and the spread of the multi-

stakeholder methodology is an important new protocol for resolving issues of access. There is an acknowledgement that governments had an important role to play, but had to work closely with private sector, civil society and the Internet community in that regard the need for private companies to work with governments and civil society in order to provide access to rural areas

That government's had an important role to play in creating a solid regulatory framework and making sure that the rule of law was well established and respected

Access was considered much broader than connectivity and a relation between access and development was noted; prices/interconnection costs, quality, availability and content remained significant issues debated

The importance of regional multi-stakeholder collaboration in terms of creating regional Internet Exchange Points (IXPs), is stressed

### **Diversity**

Different dimensions of diversity are considered including linguistic diversity, cultural diversity, diversity of media, and diversity relating to people with disabilities.

It is evident that consideration should be given to spoken languages that were not written and to sign languages that were not spoken

Some felt that culture was at the core of any discussion of identity, enabled social cohesion, and was critical to the development of any knowledge economy

Adhering to standards enables diversity and the Internet, if available in a local language, can help to change society.

The change was facilitated by bringing together the network culture with the local culture through a reduction in the knowledge gap described as another way to promote diversity, especially with regard to accessibility standards

There is urgent need to provide for content in diverse languages and Formats as the Internet provided the opportunity for protecting cultural Diversity

It is argued that to respect diversity, the Internet should be a caring, peaceful, and barrier-free place

### **Openness**

Openness was considered multifaceted and multi-dimensional issue which is also a cross-cutting issue with linkages to the other IGF themes, namely diversity, access, and security, with legal, political and economic dimensions

Openness demands a balance between 'the two IPs, the IP for Internet protocol and the IP for intellectual property. The balance between freedom of expression and free flow of information and the freedom to enjoy the fruits of one's labor remained a challenge for the openness of the Internet.

Both open source and proprietary software were seen as equally valuable and of different merit

Regarding the economic dimension, there was a discussion on market dominance and virtual monopolies and their relationship to openness and freedom of expression

## **Security**

Addressing security globally would require a multi-stakeholder involvement and cooperation as essential ingredients of solutions mindful that several have formulated their own definition of security often including national security, security for business, users, network security, and network reliability

Resilient and secure networks are mentioned as key elements while security is considered as an attempt to achieve 'control over the future'

On the other hand it was emphasized that the legal dimension of the security debate was crucial and widely appreciated that on-line and off-line inequalities should not be treated differently since a crime was always a crime.

Although 95% of the crimes committed on-line were covered by existing legislation it was noted that while legislation may exist, the real solution to the problem involved enforcement, given the borderless nature of the Internet.

As to what type of software was best suited to security, proprietary or open source, transparency was classified important with regard to security solutions and the open software approach offered greater transparency in the light that security through obscurity was a flawed concept

An explicit public policy demanding open source solutions in procurement processes could limit the development of the indigenous software industry

## **Emerging Issues**

The issue of anonymity on the Internet and its implications took center stage depending on the level of protection of fundamental freedoms

One of the cross-cutting issues throughout the meeting concerned the Border-less nature of the Internet and the fact that there was no global society and national regulations and legislations varied

The complications of user generated content and social networks led some to observe that the Internet does not forget

Public policy explored the linkages between Internet governance and sustainable development

The need for governments not to pursue policies which could inhibit demand for broadband service access, such as restricting the use of VoIP and regulating videos over the Internet was stressed

IPv6 was critical to providing for the growth of the Internet but that care needed to be maintained that connectivity with the global Internet was protected

Internet could be seen as the scaffolding of new research and innovative activity and as a result key features of the Internet today could be replaced in the foreseeable future; an example suggested here was the use of URLs

### **The African IG Scene**

That's what is happening on the global scene regarding IG. I next make a few comments on the African experience and efforts.

Why was the Cotonou accord, an outcome of the Benin IG meeting so important? We failed miserably a year earlier to secure the registry because the African technical community was non-existent, unprepared, ignorant and had no consensus even though we had convinced the global authority, including Jon Postel

We were ready to implement but the people were not ready; thus the Cotonou meeting was called to work out consensus on AfriNIC. This saw the postulation of several African Internet organizations including AfNOG, AfTLD, AfISP, AfChapters etc. It took 8 years more before AfriNIC got established in 2005.

On the whole the African technical community has held its own through AfNOG and AfriNIC but we ought to admit that Africans are largely the cause of their techno-underdevelopment often out of ignorance in policy environment resulting in slower pace

Science and technology require community for survival; computing science and Internet require coordination and cooperation among peers often working with meritocracy not autocracy.

On the Ghanaian scene I chose to pose questions,

How come the first country in West Africa to have Internet access can be classified as one with a user penetration lower than the African average?

Why was not effort made to stop obvious attempts to incapacitate the Internet pioneering company Network Computer Systems (NCS)?

Why has the Ghanaian Internet technical community not been engaged in managing Internet resources?

Is the Ghanaian Legal system ready for the Internet if an Internet related court case could carry on for over 5 years?

Failure of policy and regulatory relation to ISPs who have been constrained from VOIP yet have had to compete at retail with large multi nationals from whom they buy backbone services. Thus the corporate monopolies of GT Vodafone with cross subsidy without separating services will deny small ISP operators ability to compete spelling the death of indigenous ISPs in Ghana.

On the other hand is this a failure of the ISP association to create a cartel (lock a price) instead of promoting decoupling of the Telco for competition

We now hear calls to magically increase broadband penetration from 0.01%, which took 15 years, to an increase of 10% per year for 5 years without rigorous economic, engineering and policy analysis

There are many questions suggesting that we need to involve people who have real experience (e.g., Internet technical community, people working to make the Internet widely available, etc.) because they can anchor whatever is going on in the practical world.

Advocacy alone is grossly insufficient to bridge the divide

Thank You

Below is an excerpt on Internet Governance from the WSIS Declaration Principles (2003):

50. International Internet Governance issues should be addressed in a coordinated manner. We ask the Secretary General of the United Nations to set up a working group on Internet Governance, in an open and inclusive process that ensures a mechanism for the full and active participation of governments, the private sector, and civil society from both developing and developed countries, involving relevant inter-governmental and international organisations and forums, to investigate and make proposals for action, as appropriate, on the governance of Internet by 2005.

Following is an excerpt on Internet Governance from the WSIS Action Plan:

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organisations and forums, to investigate and make proposals for action, as appropriate, on the governance of Internet by 2005. The group should, *inter alia*:

- i. develop a working definition of Internet Governance;
- ii. identify the public policy issues that are relevant to Internet Governance;
- iii. develop a common understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of governments, existing inter-governmental and international organisations and other forums, as well as the private sector and civil society from both developing and developed countries;
- iv. prepare a report on the results of this activity to be presented for consideration and appropriate action for the second phase of WSIS in Tunis in 2005

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The IGF mandate is stated in section 72 of WSIS commitments.

**72. We ask the UN Secretary-General**, in an open and inclusive process, to convene, by the second quarter of 2006, a meeting of the new forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue—called the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). The mandate of the Forum is to:

- a. Discuss public policy issues related to key elements of Internet governance in order to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet;
- b. Facilitate discourse between bodies dealing with different cross-cutting international public policies regarding the Internet and discuss issues that do not fall within the scope of any existing body;
- c. Interface with appropriate inter-governmental organizations and other institutions on matters under their purview;
- d. Facilitate the exchange of information and best practices, and in this regard make full use of the expertise of the academic, scientific and technical communities;

- e. Advise all stakeholders in proposing ways and means to accelerate the availability and affordability of the Internet in the developing world;
- f. Strengthen and enhance the engagement of stakeholders in existing and/or future Internet governance mechanisms, particularly those from developing countries;
- g. Identify emerging issues, bring them to the attention of the relevant bodies and the general public, and, where appropriate, make recommendations;
- h. Contribute to capacity building for Internet governance in developing countries, drawing fully on local sources of knowledge and expertise;
- i. Promote and assess, on an ongoing basis, the embodiment of WSIS principles in Internet governance processes;
- j. Discuss, inter alia, issues relating to critical Internet resources;
- k. Help to find solutions to the issues arising from the use and misuse of the Internet, of particular concern to everyday users;
- l. Publish its proceedings