

Asia Pacific Internet Governance Academy 2017
Opening remarks by the IGF MAG Chair, Ms. Lynn St. Amour

Dear colleagues,

As Chair of the United Nations Internet Government Forum Multistakeholder Advisory Group (IGF MAG), and on behalf of all MAG members I would like to congratulate you for organizing the second Asia Pacific Internet Governance Academy.

I sincerely regret I could not be there in person. Events such as these are so informative and I always look forward to engaging with and hearing the perspectives of newer advocates. Efforts such as this Academy are instrumental to advancing the Internet and all its benefits around the world.

I would like to take a moment and thank the Korean Internet & Security Agency (KISA) and Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) as co-hosts of this event for facilitating my participation. I would also like to recognize Mr. Billy Cheon for his important contributions as a member of the IGF MAG.

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) was established 12 years ago as an outcome of the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). It is an open global forum for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue. Its purpose is to advance public policy issues related to key elements of Internet governance in order to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet. It is structured to have a real impact in the world – and this starts with dialogue and an open exchange of views.

In December 2015 at the WSIS+10 High-Level Meeting, the UN General Assembly adopted a Resolution (70/125) which among other things extended the existing mandate of the IGF - as set out in paragraphs 72 to 78 of the Tunis Agenda - for another 10 years.

But, its future has not always been clear. It is worthwhile to note that the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS I) in 2003 in Geneva failed to agree on the future of Internet governance and even on what Internet Governance was, hence a UN Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) was established.

They were advised to think broadly about Internet Governance and not define it too narrowly.

Ultimately, the WGIG developed the following working definition of Internet Governance: “Internet governance 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 programmes that shape the evolution and use of the Internet. “

Virtually every word in this definition matters. And, the definition still holds today - 12 years later, which in Internet time is virtually a lifetime. It is also worth noting that what still frames, and really governs Internet Governance discussions today, is the Tunis Agenda from WSIS II in Tunisia in 2005 and the Geneva Declaration of Principles from WSIS I. Both these documents are well worth reviewing and can serve as useful references.

Returning to Internet Governance and the IGF, it is critically important that we empower all stakeholders. The IGF is central to this. The IGF itself is a bit of a hybrid. It is convened by the UN Secretary General, and the Secretary General appoints the Chair of the IGF Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group. At the same time, the IGF is multi-stakeholder and community led.

Input from all stakeholders (Government, Civil Society, Private Sector and the Technical Community), from communities, organizations, and all nations is crucial in order to maximize the benefits the Internet can bring, as well as for the full achievement of the IGF’s mandate. That is why efforts like this Academy are so critical. They enable direct input from you, learning from and sharing with you, and very importantly identifying further opportunities for collaboration and advancement.

This year’s IGF is particularly important. For many, the Internet has become an integral part of our daily life, yet sadly over 50% of the world is still not connected. And even when connected, the disparity in the quality of services, and the types of access that exists among countries and regions still shows a significant divide. Cybersecurity and privacy are critical and increasing areas of concern, as well as issues of access, digital divide, and support to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

In 2017, the IGF will be hosted by the Government of Switzerland, on the Geneva premises of the United Nations from 18 to 21 December. Geneva is a major hub of

international and inter-governmental organizations and many of them are focused on the Internet, giving the IGF a truly unique opportunity to benefit from all these perspectives, and very importantly, for its outcomes to be taken as an important input to all these agencies.

The overarching theme for this year's IGF is '**Shape Your Digital Future!**', emphasizing both the IGF's participatory mechanisms and a forward-looking approach to Internet governance discussions.

Equal and meaningful participation of all stakeholders from across the world should guide the Internet's development. It is imperative that we increase participation of stakeholders from all countries and regions, and particularly from the developing world. The National and Regional IGF Initiatives (NRIs), which are another outcome of the IGF, are central to this effort and are important and crucial collaborators.

To that end, I would like to point out that there are many opportunities for participation in the IGF's intersessional programmes (such as Best Practice Forums (BPFs), Dynamic Coalitions (DCs), Connecting and Enabling the Next Billion(s) (CENB) as well as in the IGF itself (in person or remotely). Details and how to participate are available on the IGF website.

As can be seen from your programme this week, multi-stakeholderism is a key component of any Internet Governance discussion or process. It is being adopted by more and more organisations – big and small, private and public sector, governmental, and intergovernmental. So, my final point is to stress that there are many and varying examples of multi-stakeholder processes. And, I believe there needs to be. A good multi-stakeholder process is open, transparent, inclusive, and allows for broad participation. The mechanics or decision processes may differ but should be clear, known, and agreed.

Congratulations on what I am sure will be an extremely successful event. The IGF community very much looks forward to benefitting from your reflections in all its activities.

As I am not able to be there in person, I would like to offer to respond by email to any questions, please send them along and I will respond.

Lynn St. Amour
UN IGF MAG Chair

