

## **Report from The IGF: Messages from Hyderabad and launch of the Nominet Best Practice Challenge - 10 February 2009**

A large part of the work of the IGF should be about preventing problems rather than dealing with them, and planning for the worst was essential, Communications Minister Lord Carter of Barnes has said today.

He was speaking at a meeting in Parliament hosted by Nominet on behalf of the UK Internet Governance Forum (IGF). Lord Carter asserted that the Hyderabad IGF meeting was a turning point. By the time Sharm-El-Sheik came around there would be sharp debate on the institutional responses to internet developments which would be accelerated by the economic crisis, he said.

The Government was supportive of the IGF, Lord Carter stated, and welcomed the development of the UK-IGF and the contribution of Nominet to it. He agreed that meaningful engagement with other countries was essential both regarding security and new opportunities.

There were differing voices within the UN on what the future of the IGF should be, Lord Carter noted. He added that the internet was the most global industry in the world; therefore an international agreement was imperative. The private sector had been dramatically changed by ICT over the last ten or fifteen years, yet government policy decisions remained silo-based and top-down, the Minister lamented. The collaborative model in the private ICT sector was one that should be copied, he suggested.

Responding to a question on business engagement, Lord Carter said that it was not clear to businesses who made decisions regarding internet governance and there should be more clarity on who they should engage with both in terms of independent organisations and government departments. He lamented that there was not a single department or organisation that dealt with ICT, and argued that without this changes could not happen across Government.

Regarding a question on the problems caused by the ITU, Lord Carter stated that although it did good work in other areas it was not the right forum for internet governance.

Lord Carter said that he was expressing a view when he had mentioned the possibility of creating a Government Chief Technology Officer. He noted that there was discussion about doing this in the United States and said that if the role had sufficient functionality then there might be merit in it. However, he said he was not sure whether the UK was ready for this.

It would be a challenge for the IGF to transform itself from a stakeholder forum to having a guiding function and making recommendations to governments, but this was the track that it was on, Lord Carter asserted.

Opening the session, Bob Gilbert, Chair of Nominet, said that his organisation was committed to taking the lead in making the internet a trusted space. The UK-IGF helped to prepare the contribution to IGF discussions and to share best practice on making the internet a better, safer space, he stated.

Mr Gilbert explained that the meeting was intended to provide a forum for those who attended the meeting in Hyderabad to report back, and to look forward to the next meeting in Sharm-El-Sheik in November. He remarked that other countries were becoming more active in the IGF and this provided opportunities to engage more closely with them.

Identifying examples of best practice and successful initiatives had been one of the successes of the UK-IGF, Mr Gilbert said. Nominet had contributed to this through the Best Practice Challenge, and the Nominet Foundation, he explained. This opportunity should encourage investment and engagement with the industry to enable to UK to remain a world leader regarding the internet, he asserted.

The Chair of the meeting, Labour MP Alun Michael, reported that the Hyderabad summit showed that the IGF was becoming more of a global movement than an organisation based on an annual event. The UK-IGF had had a successful first year, he stated, noting the regional organisations that were building up in Asia and East Africa which reflected similar encouraging signs in the UK such as the establishment of the UK Business Forum.

The IGF was tapping into serious issues such as child protection and parliamentary engagement which the UK-IGF had already been exploring, Mr Michael asserted. He added that the five year period was nearly over and therefore swift action was needed.

The presence of parliamentarians and officials at the meeting in Hyderabad was welcomed, and it was unfortunate that MEPs were not able to attend, Mr Michael observed.

Chair of the Parliamentary IT Committee, Labour MP Andrew Miller, told the meeting that the delegation's experiences in Hyderabad had revealed the need for UK plc to invest in skills in areas that were currently being filled by Indian companies. Subtle differences in business models enabled some of them to achieve very high levels of efficiency, he added.

Turning to the conference itself, Mr Miller said that it addressed a series of pressures and tensions that affected both the UK and the developing world. There were both worrying and exciting features raised at the meeting, he reported.

The sharing of best practice in a range of areas was encouraging, Mr Miller stated. The improvements that had been made on child safety issues through a debate between industry, civil society and government were a real achievement, Mr Miller stated.

A recent study had shown that while the UK was making good progress in physics and maths, children were not being excited by these subjects, he observed. Therefore it was hoped that the 'Make it Happy' competition would begin to address this, Mr Miller said.

With a few exceptions - principally Cisco and Microsoft - Mr Miller expressed disappointment at the low level of engagement by major industry players, but suggested that there were more representatives from UK industry than other countries.

Additionally Mr Miller expressed concern at the signs that the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) seemed to want to bring the IGF within its structures. He noted that a generally helpful workshop on climate change appeared to be led towards the conclusion that IGF should be taken over by the ITU.

Summing up, Mr Miller underlined the importance of more industry participation in the work of the IGF and warned that attempts to bring it under the umbrella of the ITU should be resisted as this could be damaging to UK interests.

Representing the NSPCC, Kathleen Spencer Chapman explained that the organisation had attended the Hyderabad summit both in its own right and as part of European coalition of NGOs working on child protection issues. She stressed that action was needed at a global level to address these challenges.

The NSPCC wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to engage with other stakeholders, Ms Spencer Chapman said, explaining that they had held a seminar on the implication of mobile phones for child safety, and an NSPCC representative was part of a panel discussing privacy issues.

Ms Spencer Chapman said that the Hyderabad conference had recognised child protection as a more important issue than at past meetings. However there still appeared to be a lack of understanding of child protection and more work still needed to be done, she said.

At Sharm-El-Sheik it would be important to ensure that child protection remained on the agenda, she stressed. Ms Spencer Chapman concurred with Mr Miller in expressing disappointment at the lack of participation by industry players.

The value of the IGF was its multi-stakeholder nature and the open dialogue that it facilitated, Ms Spencer Chapman stated. However, this meant that it was hard to have very meaningful discussions because of the number of issues and organisations present, she explained. The work of the IGF secretariat to improve this had produced good results, but more needed to be done, she said.

Some of the most successful events were cross-sectoral in nature, Ms Spencer Chapman said, such as the possibility of an internet bill of rights, bringing together human, children's and privacy rights. Global representation of civil society was important and action needed to be taken to enable more organisations to participate, she argued.

Mark Carvell, a representative from the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), stated that the Government had a longstanding commitment to support the IGF. Reflecting on the meeting in Hyderabad he said that it was impressive with a wide choice of events covering many areas.

He shared the view of Ms Spencer Chapman that the large number of events and people made it difficult to negotiate the programme of activities. In terms of content, BERR would be looking to the Secretariat to ensure greater focus on key issues so that in Sharm-El-Sheik it would be easier to concentrate on key concerns. The 90-minute limit on workshops was a problem, he added.

Mr Carvell stated that he was impressed by the international presence at the meeting, which showed the IGF's international reach. The number of contacts and enquiries sparked by meetings was especially beneficial regarding the sharing best practice, he said. Mr Carvell added that the ability of the IGF to bring together so many people on a wide range of issues in such a short time was impressive. The replication of the IGF model at a national level was a positive development and could provide networking possibilities, he stated.

It was encouraging that people at the meeting had said that they were looking to emulate the UK Government's approach of engaging civil society and businesses, Mr Carvell commented. More businesses needed to be involved upfront in the IGF, and the lack of industry presence at Hyderabad was disappointing, he said.

This year was crucial as the IGF process was coming under scrutiny, Mr Carvell said, stating that therefore a strong evidence base was needed to support the decisions at the UN on the IGF's successor. Businesses needed to show their commitment and play a full part, Mr Carvell emphasised, adding that it needed to be emphasised that the IGF presented a business opportunity.

It should also be made clear to businesses that there were threats to this process, notably from the ITU which was beginning to consider what its role would be in the internet governance field, Mr Carvell warned. He pointed out that the ITU was intergovernmental and would provide far less of a role for businesses and groups representing civil society. He called on businesses to support the IGF in its current form.

A speaker from a member organisation said that one of the useful features of the UK delegation was its wide focus. He noted that one of the themes of the IGF was the next billion internet users, who would principally gain access through mobile networks. He pointed out that work was taking place on creating domain names and content with non-roman scripts, which would lead to more demand.

The last billion internet users would present new challenges, he stated. He pointed out that there were languages in the world that did not have a written form and there had been discussion about voice-based content. There was a great opportunity for voice-to-text conversion, he added. The internet also needed to cater for disabled people, although work was already underway in this area, the meeting heard.

Malcolm Hutton, Head of Public Affairs at the London Internet Exchange and President of EuroISPA, which represented internet service providers, agreed that he would have liked to have seen more executive participation. He also agreed that there was so much happening at the conference that it was difficult to take everything in, but added that it was positive that there was no single issue dominating the agenda.

His personal highlight of the meeting was a statistic from the Kenyan Internet Exchange that it now dealt with over one gigabyte of traffic per second and 60% of this was email. He noted the problem of high international connectivity charges for developing countries and the need to develop local infrastructure networks. Within three years nearly all internet users in Kenya had begun using locally-based services, he stated.

In this case the establishment of an internet exchange and liberal market could be shown to be directly responsible for the increase in traffic, he argued. This showed that internet governance mattered, Mr Hutton asserted. Once a few technical and regulatory matters were resolved it was possible to achieve great things, he said.

Mr Michael then opened the discussion to questions from the audience. Responding to a question on child protection Labour MP and PITCOM vice chair Margaret Moran said that the UK delegation had agreed that engagement with young people on the future of the internet was crucial.

Mr Michael underlined the importance of protecting the IGF space from government interference. In terms of action, he stressed that the future should not be either an ITU or UN takeover, or leaving it to businesses, but collaboration between government, business and civil society. He agreed that issues relating to children should not be neglected.

Mr Hutton added that the emphasis should be on the 'forum' element of the IGF and that it should be about promoting different ideas that smaller organisations could choose to adopt.

Nick Thorne from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office emphasised the importance of pragmatism. He said that the creation of the IGF was defensive, and partly to demonstrate that an organisation of its type could work. The UN review process would start in earnest next year and it was therefore necessary to build up an evidence base that the stakeholder-forum approach worked, Mr Thorne asserted.

He praised work by Nominet and BERR in this area but argued that wider support was needed for this in the international community. In terms of action, the UK should emphasise the achievements of the IGF, Mr Thorne argued. He gave the example that the creation of standardisation agreements on the use of Arabic online which could never have been achieved in three years by the UN. A more regional approach was needed, as well as greater involvement of parliaments, he said. He noted that it was necessary to be aware of the ITU and its political ambitions.

Nominet had done very good work in the UK and internationally, Mr Thorne reiterated. He argued that businesses should be getting more involved in the regulation of the internet, especially when it was in their interest to ensure that it was free-flowing.

Asked about what things should be taken forward to the meeting at Sharm-El-Sheik, Ms Moran said that there was a further challenge of how to approach terrorist threats on the internet. Additionally, she stated that insufficient attention had been paid to the environment, and to engaging the developing world.

Introducing the second part of the meeting looking at the way forward Mr Michael said that Digital Britain created a real opportunity for discussion on internet regulation in Britain. He pointed out the leadership the UK had shown in the IGF process. It was necessary to show what the IGF was capable of, rather than just opposing the creation of a UN agency, he stated.

Lesley Cowley, CEO of Nominet, argued that the creation of the UK-

IGF had been successful in identifying key priorities and taking them to Hyderabad. She was particularly pleased by the response to the 2008 Nominet Best Practice Challenge. This had generated some high quality innovation and awards had been given to Barclays, Get Safe Online and Common Knowledge UK, she stated. By sharing best practice others would be able to learn from the UK's experience, Ms Cowley said.

The Best Practice Challenge highlighted the UK's leadership and innovation in the internet, she asserted, and therefore would take place again in 2009. Ms Cowley announced that the deadline would be 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2009 and the winners announced in June. It was hoped that all stakeholders would help shape the agenda taken forward to Sharm-El-Sheik, she stated.

Drawing the meeting to a close, Alun Michael said he hoped that there would be wide participation in creating the UK contribution to the meeting at Sharm-El-Sheik. He argued that it was necessary to protect the IGF by making full use of it. Mr Michael called for a more long-term perspective over the next two years, and for the UK to show that it could tackle difficult issues through its collaborative model.

The main issue in this area would be making the UK the safest place in the world to do online business, he argued. Mr Michael closed by repeating calls for greater engagement of major industry players as well as representative organisations in the IGF.

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