

**UK Internet Governance Forum (UK IGF) Summer Session – ‘Messages for Vilnius’**  
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## Meeting Report

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## UK Internet Governance Forum (UK IGF) Summer Session – ‘Messages for Vilnius’

### Opening Session

Opening our Summer session **Baroness Rennie Fritchie**, Chair of Nominet, invited delegates to help formulate messages for ‘team UK’ to take to September’s global IGF meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania.

The internet, with its global reach, provides business opportunities and space for innovation but also plays host to many less desirable activities, Dame Rennie said. “Criminals can be innovative too”. We must evolve new approaches to tackling these problems that are in harmony with the global nature of the internet and maintain its capacity for positive innovation, she said.

Since 2005 the international IGF has provided a platform for information sharing and dialogue, fostering the sustainability, robustness, security and stability of the internet, Dame Rennie said.

There are two reasons it works, she said.

First, it provides an non-threatening environment for dialogue where “the discussion is focused on sharing and learning, providing us with resources to draw on.”

Second, it offers a “remarkable” forum for all types of body with an interest in the internet, including “governments that appreciate the internet, and some that dislike it; the rich variety of expertise and advocacy from the voluntary sector; and businesses responsible for developing, building and maintaining the infrastructure, and those developing content.”

In this multi-stakeholder environment, everyone sits round the table as equal partners, Dame Rennie said. “It helps people identify their own solutions, rather than telling them what to do. How refreshing – and it works.”

Nominet has supported the IGF from its inception and will continue to show strong commitment to the process, she said. In particular Nominet, through its internet awards, has seen the importance of promoting best practice “so that we build on solutions, rather than just discussing problems”.

The UK IGF Chair, **Rt Hon Alun Michael MP**, offered a few words of warning for delegates.

“No-one interested in governance, because it’s boring,” he said. “So until two years ago, no-one took an interest in the governance of banks. But suddenly, everybody is interested, because it all went pear-shaped. And there is a danger of internet governance going pear-shaped as well.”

The global IGF process began in 2005 because “essentially, a chunk of the world said this is all far too important to be left to the US, and everybody else said it’s too important to be left to UN bureaucracy,” Michael said.

When the IGF process began four partners were regarded as essential to it, he said. These were government; industry; Parliament, across party political lines– “this may not seem that important but if you leave anything just to government and leadership it gets too narrow”; and civil society.

The UK IGF had been pleased to see how well these four partners had worked together nationally, Michael said. “The process may not be perfect, but is bound to be better than any alternative”, he said.

“We need to make it work, because as with banking, if you don’t get an effective form of governance in place, you will end up with pressure for something different, which will be a constraint, will introduce bureaucracy and will probably not work.”

To ensure the process does work, however, a few actions are needed from key players, Michael said.

“We need business, at the leadership as well as the technical end, to take the IGF more seriously. We need governments to take it seriously. We need the whole process to realise it needs to step up to the mark and deal with the difficult issues.”

Overall, he said, “governance is important – keep that issue of banking governance in your mind.”

**Emily Taylor**, a member of the IGF’s Multistakeholder Advisory Group, said the IGF, which was created to defuse rising international tensions over control of the internet domain name system, “has not just met its mandate, it has exceeded expectations.”

This December, the forum’s mandate is coming up for renewal at the UN General Assembly, she said. A preparatory note on the continuation of the IGF by the UN Secretary General had painted a mixed picture, finding that attendance at IGF meetings had been patchy and skewed towards the developed world, Taylor said.

She said some of the report’s contents had been surprising, such as the suggestion that more than 60 % of IGF members were seeking changes to the process: her own analysis of the same responses had concluded that in fact, some 87 % of members were happy for the IGF to continue with no significant changes.

Nevertheless the likelihood was that while the IGF’s mandate will now be renewed, a working group will be established to decide on reforms to its work, she said. This was likely to result in pressure for a more formal status for the IGF within the UN, something which the UK would not welcome.

“The bad news is that the report lays the foundations for the IGF to be absorbed into the UN machinery, with a bureau and budget, and more formal outcomes.”

If it were to be absorbed into the UN machinery, Taylor said, “for the first couple of years we would probably not notice any difference. But gradually, its agenda and processes would become a bit more impenetrable, harder to understand except to the insider. And the pressure to solve things, to ‘do something’ by making decisions, would become irresistible.

“The winners would be countries which want a firmer regulatory hand. The losers would be business and the technical community.”

The key to preventing this happening is for the business community to provide enough funding for the IGF secretariat to continue and grow as a less formal, independent body, Taylor said. “I know this is not the time to be talking about money, but for business this is a strategically important investment. Unless the secretariat has secure, multi-stakeholder funding, it will always be vulnerable to being absorbed into UN machinery.

“Now is the time to show support for IGF and its lightweight, multi-stakeholder processes.”

**Markus Kummer**, Executive Co-ordinator of the IGF Secretariat, said there are two ways of approaching international policy development: the traditional, top-down, government-led approach of developing international treaties as taken with climate change policy, or a bottom-up approach, as with the IGF.

The traditional approach is based on bargaining between nation states and the protection of national sovereignty, but given the global, cross-border nature of the internet a more collaborative, shared, bottom-up approach is more appropriate, Kummer said. “For the internet, the sharing of ideas, and the sharing of best practices, seems to represent the best approach”.

The barriers to implementing such a non-traditional, bottom-up approach are not necessarily just political, Kummer said. “Governments like the old ways of doing things, they are used to it.”

Any outcomes of the Vilnius meeting will not necessarily be a critical factor in the decisions by the UN General Assembly surrounding renewal of the IGF mandate, but what happens in Lithuania will inevitably have an impact on the process, Kummer said.

“If Vilnius is a disaster, it will have an impact on the general assembly – and if a success, as I hope and believe, it will also have an impact.”

Preparations for Vilnius were now well underway, Kummer said, with an agenda in place. However, he had dismaying news for all those who had been alarmed at the number (106) of parallel workshops alongside the plenary sessions at last year’s IGF meeting in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt. “I will have to disappoint those who wanted to have fewer workshops – so far there are 102 planned, and the Lithuanians want some more: as hosts, we cannot deny them.” The secretariat has also been asked to give more space to mushrooming national and regional IGF events, he said, “and we will do so, but this also adds to number of meetings.” As a compromise however, he would strive to ensure that more workshop topics fed directly back into the main sessions, Kummer said.

He concluded with a suggestion - “Why not create a remote hub in the UK, to give people a chance to participate remotely who cannot make it to Vilnius?”

A dose of *Realpolitik* was injected into proceedings by **Nick Thorne CMG**, former UK Ambassador to the UN, Geneva and International Relations Adviser, ICANN (the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers).

Looking ahead to the UN General Assembly’s five-year review of the IGF in December, Thorne said: “The IGF is a multi-stakeholder organisation, but unfortunately only one stakeholder will have a say in its future, and that is governments. And that’s a problem, because the way in which the UN in New York works is intensely politicised.”

There are 192 UN member states, each with a seat on the General Assembly, but the most forceful group is China and the ‘group of 77’ (the G-77 group of developing countries which retains its historical name but has in fact now grown to include some 130 member countries). “And the country that would most like to impose regulation on the internet is probably China,” he said.

Supporters of the multi-stakeholder IGF approach would have to persuade developing countries that their interests will be best served by maintaining the internet governance system we have at the moment, Thorne said.

“It will be an uphill struggle, and we will certainly not win on all counts,” he said. “We will win on the IGF, but we will not win on money. It will be impossible to avoid a move to suck the IGF into the UN’s regular budget, and a lot of control will go with the money.”

As part of the reform process, there would be a move at the General Assembly to reinstate the World Summit on the Information Society, a formal two-stage biennial international event which had existed in the run-up to the creation of the IGF and was “one of those UN processes that goes on for years, with conflict between north and south. It will culminate in 2015 and it will reopen all those running sores about how the internet is governed. That is quite a big deal for those of us who want to continue with a liberal form of governance.”

Overall, there are three major issues which must be addressed if international disagreements over internet governance are to be resolved, Thorne said. These are the struggle between North and South, the haves and have-nots of the developed and developing world; the continued resistance to what is still seen as US domination of the internet; and the desire by some governments to impose regulation on the net.

To address the first issue, we need to work more with developing countries to improve their internet access, and we need to publicise what we do, he said.

On the US issue, ICANN is doing its best to internationalise its mechanisms, Thorne said. “Last year, a new agreement was reached known as the Affirmation of Commitments whereby supervision of what ICANN does has been spread out to international monitoring groups. These are working well, and they are truly international,” he said.

Finally, on the issue of governments imposing regulation, “We all need to speak up. It is about multi-stakeholder-ism: we need business, we need civil society, we need Parliamentarians, and we need law enforcement, to say that the best way of resolving the problems they are all facing is via co-operation between all these agencies rather than top-down imposition of regulation that would stultify the net as we know it and play into the hands of those who want to control it for their own interests.”

**Keynote Address: Graham Walker, Director of Policy, Office of the UK Digital Champion/Race Online 2012**

“The internet is now an essential tool for life in the UK. But we’re in danger of cutting some people out of that,” said Graham Walker, Director of Policy at the Office of the UK Digital Champion.

Speaking shortly before the publication by UK Digital Champion Martha Lane Fox of her ‘Manifesto for a Networked Nation’, the latest stage in a ‘Race Online 2012’ initiative to get everyone in Britain online by the end of that year, he said some 10 million people in the UK have never been online, and four million of these are among the most socially vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities.

The disadvantages of being offline include poorer educational results for children, and problems for adults in finding work, he said. The Internet can also help reduce social isolation.

To realise Race Online 2012’s ambitious goal of ensuring every UK citizen is online it will be important to explain to everyone how the Internet can enhance their lives, for example by making a hobby they love even more enjoyable by networking; or helping older people keep in touch with their families.

But as well as a strong ethical and moral case, there is a strong financial case for ensuring everyone has access to and uses the Internet, Walker said.

If the 10 million people not currently online moved just one contact a year they have with government online, it would save the country £1bn a year, he said. Overall at least £22bn of benefits would accrue if everyone moved online, he said.

Race Online 2012 is working by urging many partner organisations (more than 500 to date) to contribute pledges to bring a stated number of citizens online by the deadline. But the government was also going to have to re-use and join up work it was already funding, Walker said. “We have already invested in IT infrastructures in schools and libraries – we have got to sweat those assets.”

The government is also going to have to change its mindset to one of providing services online as a default option, he said, while striving to help those who still need offline services. “The government has really got to think internet first, and then about what can we do for people who can’t access online services. We need to say we want to deal with you online, but if you are not we can help you, not: ‘you don’t need to be online.’ Some people may need temporary help and some people long-term help, but you need to move people towards it.”

He concluded with the new motto for Race Online 2012: “We’ll all be better off if we’re all online.”

## Workshop 1: Protecting the Consumer

In the first of two parallel workshops aimed at gathering key messages for Vilnius, Lisa Horner, Research and Policy Lead, Global Partners & Associates, highlighted the importance of taking a human rights approach to internet governance. She stressed the unparalleled impact that the internet is having on society in terms of human empowerment, and the need to preserve the characteristics of the internet that support that. She expressed her concern that some models for regulating content online threaten human rights, and encouraged open discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches.

**John Carr**, Secretary, UK Children's Charities' Coalition on Internet Safety said his anxiety about the IGF process and the UN's processes in general is that they are moving "at a glacial pace, while the internet is changing at a much faster pace". Governments who want to protect their citizens will not be satisfied with things changing so slowly, he said.

He said the current system of filtering child abuse images from the Internet using the Internet Watch Foundation was working, but questioned why it was not being applied everywhere across the world.

"It is being repeated in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Holland, and partially in the US, and in Canada, and Australia, but it isn't being repeated in every country. Now that kind of lacuna is difficult to explain. When you know there is a solution available and it isn't being adopted, it does undermine people's confidence in all of these elaborate processes that we've developed for internet governance."

Finally, he said it was vital to ensure that Internet registrars take verified contact details when registering a domain name. He said ICANN recently debated a proposal for this to happen, but it was deemed too controversial. "Now, the astonishing thing is that this isn't already the case," Carr said. "Some national domain registries do it, many don't. Guess which ones the criminals use. Guess where the child abuse images are found. It's wrong, it shouldn't be like that but apparently it is too difficult for ICANN to change that policy. So again, it makes it hard for people to have confidence in the governance arrangements when things as clear and as simple as that are not already done, let alone considered controversial."

**Lucinda Fell**, Policy and Communications Manager, Childnet International, stressed the importance of giving a voice to the young.

"It's not just about responding to the risks, it's also about championing the great things that young people can do online," Fell said. "One of the things we talk to young people a lot about is digital citizenship. Empowering the user is absolutely key to enabling them to protect themselves."

**Philip Virgo**, Secretary General of EURIM – The Information Society Alliance, said the way to improve consumer protection was to allow domain registrars to make extra money out of setting up enhanced services as trusted registrars who verified domain owners, alongside the current system, "and then allow market forces to produce the outcome we want."

However **Lesley Cowley**, Chief Executive, Nominet, said that taking such action would put up barriers to entry, and raising the cost of domain registration would not work. The best way was to continue with the current model of reporting and filtering undesirable sites, she said.

With the workshop opened to further comments from the floor, one delegate said that while many people who were there at start of the internet want to keep it free of controls, the reality is

that the internet today is a mass consumer product, in the heart of people's homes and families. "We've got to stop thinking about it as if it's only about dissidents in China or Iran. Anybody that is going to release a service into the free space should be required to do a child protection audit. Currently companies just launch to millions of members and then consider child protection issues as an afterthought," he said.

Another delegate said people must exercise huge caution in using the language of human rights in the debate about internet freedoms. Such talk assists those who want to impose regulation, she said. "Be specific – talk about issues and talk about practical issues, otherwise it will politicise the debate and play straight into the hands of those who want to regulate."

Closing the session, **Rt Hon Alun Michael MP**, Chair, UK IGF, said he recalled a young man speaking eloquently at last year's Parliament and the Internet conference of how young people want to be free to go where they want to online, but also want to know they are safe. "That's not a stupid comment, to say I want to be totally free and I want to be safe, it's actually a sensible starting point because you have two priorities, freedom and safety, and you need to keep them in tension," Michael said.

He said the way forward was to simplify and separate the key issues relating to consumer protection, rather than trying to get them all into the same discussion – issues such as how to protect citizens, how to protect human rights, how to deal with the responsibilities of business, and how to create co-operative regulation which engages the citizen.

Very often there is polarised discussion, such as the debate about data protection versus sharing information to combat crime, or protecting children versus protecting online freedoms, he said. But these are not separate discussions, and they need to be looked at at the same time in a co-operative way within the IGF, with all stakeholders. "If the IGF doesn't deal with them, nobody else can, and we will be back to a top-down approach. Internet governance is a chance to rebuild international governance in general, which has not always worked that well."

## Workshop 2: Digital Inclusion

Opening the workshop **Ian Clifford**, Head of Policy and Business Development, UK Online Centres and Co-Chair, Telecentre-Europe said people in hard-to-reach, socially-excluded groups needed several different kinds of support to use the Internet.

Clifford quoted the manager of one UK Online Centre in Bristol, who had said the hardest part of the process of getting someone online for the first time is “the part that happens in the car park – the most difficult bit is getting them to walk through the door for the first time. Getting them to walk into a room with banks of computers in it is like walking into a cellar with the lights off in a scary movie.”

In that first taster session the trainers spent at least 20 minutes just explaining why computers are good for you. “These people don’t get technology, they don’t see the value of it, don’t understand it.

We try and make that first encounter non-threatening, and provide resources to help centres help take those first steps in a non-threatening way. We underestimate how hard that journey is for some people.”

Clifford said it was also important to stress that such problems and challenges always related to issues of social inclusion as a whole, not just digital inclusion.

**Ellen Ferguson**, Education Manager, Childnet International, said it was important for any digital inclusion outreach work not to assume any computer knowledge at all – not even how to use a mouse.

Moving on to youth engagement, she said Childnet had run a Youth Internet Governance Forum project which had consulted young people on the issues which mattered most to them. These included diversity, openness and security – “kids hate having web sites blocked, but they want to be safe”, Ferguson said.

**Manoraj Sivantharajah**, a work experience student at Childnet International attending with Ferguson, said young people want to be trusted – his own school does not allow access to Google images, for example, even though he is 15 years old.

For everyone, there has to be a strong motivation to use the Internet, not just simple access, he said. His mother, for example, had understood the basics of Internet access for a while but did not use it until she saw she could use it to talk to his aunt, who lives in Sri Lanka.

**Andrea Saks**, Convenor, Joint Co-ordination Activity on Accessibility and Human Factors, International Telecommunications Union (ITU), said it was vital that technology designers took account of people with disabilities, but the problem is that “everybody is an individual – one size does not fit all.”

The answer is to ensure where possible there is interoperability of devices and systems, so people can choose whatever means of accessing information and services suit them best. “People have to be educated about universal design, and standards have to be applied. We have to be careful that new technology does not create new barriers.”

**Roger Darlington**, Member, Communications Consumer Panel (formerly the Ofcom Consumer Panel) said that “for all our familiarity of the Internet, it is still accessed through a very

complicated and fearsome interface for many. I look forward to when we can all have Internet access through our television – no mouse and keyboard are a way of getting it simpler.”

There are already many good schemes for getting people online locally or in small groups, said Darlington, but “what we seem to lack is scalability – we don’t seem to be able to scale a lot of these local initiatives.”

Finally, we need to accept there will always be a proportion of people that will not be online, as the benefits of getting online are not evident to everybody, and it is not possible to reach everyone with training . “With the best will in the world, there are going to be some people for the time being that will not use the net. So the government is going to have to be very cautious about closing down offline options for accessing services.”

**Dr Louise Bennett**, Chair, Security Forum, British Computer Society (BCS), said there are three main groups of people who do not use the Internet: those who are aware of digital society, but unaware of the potential benefits to them; those who would like to be included, but don’t have the skills; and then those who have the desire and skills but not the means or resources to get online.

How do we help all three groups?

First, technology companies have to make it easier to understand and use their services – “and it is in their interests to do it,” Dr Bennett said. Internet Service Providers also need to provide reasonable measures of safety and security, and online service providers should be forced, maybe through legislation, to promote safety and security – not making users’ personal information available to online advertisers, for example.

For its part, the government should mount more Internet awareness campaigns, Dr Bennett said. “There are resources such as Get Safe Online, but you have got to know about them.” The government should also see it as a duty to provide basic Internet infrastructure such as broadband access to all citizens, in the same way as they provide transport infrastructure.

Overall, she said she was “appalled by the quality of legislation in this area, and the small number of MPs we’ve had with knowledge of this area.”

**Andrew Miller** MP, Chair, House of Commons Science and Technology Committee and Vice Chair, Parliamentary Committee (PITCOM), picked up this point in saying that if there were few MPs who understood the Internet, then in a democracy, “it’s your fault – you should think about who you want to represent you.”

Groups like PITCOM also need citizens’ help to inform Parliamentarians better, Miller said. “Speak to your own MP – go and see them and make the case about why they should be involved directly to them.”

## Ministerial Address

Speaker:

Ed Vaizey MP, Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries

In what was his first ministerial speech on internet-related issues, Ed Vaizey MP, Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, said the new government supported the view that it is essential to preserve the bottom-up nature of the Internet.

“We do not want a top-down approach to Internet regulation, though of course we must recognise legitimate interests of governments in such areas as law enforcement,” Vaizey said.

He backed a multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance, in contrast to “the belief within parts of some organisations – such as the International Telecommunication Union - that issues such as the stability of the naming and addressing system for the Internet, cybersecurity and malicious abuse, and child protection are solely for governments to resolve.

“This, of course, does not mean that governments should simply walk away and shun all responsibility; the Internet touches every element of society. But it means mustn’t lose sight of partnership approach, where government works with business and civil society.”

Overall, governments need to be extremely careful about what they regulate, Vaizey said. “We should not seek to impose unwarranted regulation on the day-to-day operation and functions of the Internet. I do not see, for example, why government or Brussels should, as some advocate, need to impose so-called ‘Net Neutrality’ legislation.

“I think we have to be very careful not to second-guess development of business models or the generation of innovative ideas through intervention and regulation.”

The Internet should remain open and led in its development by the private sector, he said. “The innovators and developers of applications need to have confidence that their nascent products will reach an audience; would the developers of Skype have risked their shirts if they thought VOIP services would be blocked?”

While there is much content on the Internet which we may consider undesirable, Vaizey said, “This does not mean to say we should simply legislate that all ISPs block access to it; I prefer the approach we have in UK of providing the user with the means and tools to make their own choices. We have also seen that self regulation can be effective in dealing with illegal content. The Internet Watch Foundation in partnership with the police, government and the online industry, has had a major impact in successfully removing child abuse and other strong pornographic images from the web, and has become a model for many other similar initiatives around the world.”

On the issue of who should oversee the development of the global Internet, he said: “I make no bones as to where I come down on this argument. I believe that the multistakeholder approach is the only sensible way forward. The strength of the IGF is in the vast variety of participating stakeholders it brings together from many different cultures, backgrounds and philosophies.

“We are working to ensure that the UN, following the endorsement given by almost all the responses to the consultation held last year at the IGF in Sharm el Sheikh , will agree the extension of the mandate of the IGF for a further five years, while also addressing the constructive points of criticism made during that consultation with regard to improving the way the IGF is structured and conducted.”

I am pleased therefore that the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development – the CSTD - agreed in May to recommend to the Economic and Social Council – ECOSOC - that at its meeting next week in New York it asks the CSTD to set up a working group to examine how the IGF can be improved. I encourage you all to consider how you could contribute to that work.

We are in a critical period for the future of Internet governance. In addition to the decision by the UN General Assembly on the future of the IGF mandate in December, many of these issues are expected to be the subject of scrutiny and debate at the ITU's Plenipotentiary Conference in October;

Referring to the review being currently undertaken of ICANN's accountability and transparency, Vaizey said that it was "very important, both in terms of the UN decision on the IGF mandate but also the discussions at the ITU Plenipotentiary in Mexico in October, that ICANN demonstrates its willingness to be accountable to the global Internet community and to be responsive to international opinion and sensitivities.

The prospect of a "land grab" by the ITU may be somewhat overstated but I am concerned that a head of steam is being generated by a number of ITU member states in favour of greater ITU involvement in Internet governance issues - especially naming and addressing. They may well have ambitions for treaty changes further down the road - possibly in early 2012 when the Constitution and Convention is due to be updated – that would threaten the multi-stakeholder ICANN model and role of the IGF;

And none of us, I'm sure, would want to see two different Internets emerge from such a confrontation between the proven, successful private sector-led multi-stakeholder model, and the alternative of an inter-governmental organisation lacking true accountability and transparency.

## Closing session

In closing the UK IGF Summer Session **Lesley Cowley**, Chief Executive of Nominet, said it is essential that the UK continues to be committed to and engaged with the IGF process.

Nominet is keen that the national UK IGF should grow and develop, alongside other nations IGFs and the international IGF, she said. In particular it is important that more organisations are involved, and that sharing best practice continues to be central to the UK work through the Nominet Internet Awards, which have allowed UK delegates to the international IGF to highlight some of the best things happening here.

“We’ve heard today about how crucial it will be for business, civil society, Parliament and government ministers to be engaged and involved given the crucial decisions that will shortly be made,” Cowley said. “Nominet is pleased to support this work – it firmly fits with our vision and mission to make the Internet a better place.”

NOTE: This report was written for Nominet and the UK IGF by Dan Jellinek of technology policy analysts Headstar ([www.headstar.com](http://www.headstar.com)). It is based on the sessions which took place at the Fifth Meeting of the UK Internet Governance Forum in Westminster on 7 July 2010. Video footage of the plenary sessions can also be viewed at:

<http://www.nominet.org.uk/about/events/UKIGF/Video/>

And the Preparatory Note by the UN Secretary General on Continuation of the IGF is at:

<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan039400.pdf>