

## **The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) Report on ISOC-AU's Involvement**

ISOC-AU greatly valued the opportunity of attending and participating in discussions of the information society during WSIS 2005 in Tunis. We particularly appreciated the support provided by the Department of Communications, IT and the Arts that allowed our participation. The following report outlines the experience and knowledge that ISOC-AU gained from participation in WSIS. Fortuitously, the continuation of the work of Prepcomm 3 and its collocation with the full WSIS allowed us to gain further insight into that process and the views of its constituent delegations and other organisations.

This report covers the topics of:

- General Experience and Knowledge
- Lifting Australia's International Status on ICT Issues
- Internet Governance Forum
- Operation of the Internet
- Potential Future Issues and Directions

### **General Experience and Knowledge**

Our overall impression from WSIS is that there was very great enthusiasm for use of ICT, and the Internet in particular, among the large crowds of people attending WSIS - almost like the enthusiasm at other previous events around the time of the dot-com boom. Some of this interest seemed to be focusing on a 'development' theme of how to involve and benefit people in countries around the world, particularly less developed countries.

At the same time, delegations raised turning point issues about Internet governance arising from this interest - as presented in many media articles over the last year. From ISOC-AU's perspective, the dangers associated with these issues are real, particularly in relation to the way that ISOC, IETF, ICANN and the RIRs function. The Internet Society (ISOC) continues to play a central role in many of these areas. A few key underlying issues include: address allocation & IPv6, internationalised domain names, role of the Internet in development and engagement with multiple stakeholders. This topic bears more detailed discussion below.

The arrangements for WSIS allowed facilitation of many formal and informal discussions about the role of Internet technology, particularly by members of civil society. We are grateful to Tunis and the organisers of WSIS for making this opportunity available. In general, we found this opportunity for dialogue very helpful, even though the sheer quantity of meetings was somewhat daunting. There is no way that any single organisation could have done more than sample some of these discussions. On behalf of ISOC-AU, I highlight our attendance at three very useful formal discussions, including:

- Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Japan  
– Towards the Realisation of the Ubiquitous Network Society

ISOC-AU has been monitoring international developments in respect of IPv6, particularly over the last 12 to 18 months. In Korea, IPv6 is an integral part of the policy for development of u-Korea under the policy titled "IT-839" as discussed

during the Korea Australia New Zealand Broadband Summit held in Seoul in June this year. I was invited as a keynote speaker at the Global IPv6 Summit in Seoul in July this year on the topic of "IPv6 Interoperability and Ubiquitous Applications". Some key thinking about the development of ubiquitous networks has come out of Japan. This session provided reinforcement and updates of the thinking of key individuals from Japan.

- ICT Development in the Arab Region (ICTDAR) – UNIDO – The use of ICT to support Small and Medium Enterprises

ISOC-AU has taken a strong interest in the way that the benefits of Internet based technologies can be maximised for all sectors and users. We have a close interest in the way that these benefits can be maximised for small and medium enterprises. This session provided understanding of the way that the benefits of a full range of ICT technologies were being made available to small and medium enterprises in a development context. The discussions focused on applications of particular systems for business planning.

- Agence Tunisienne de l'Internet (ATI) - IPv6 Colloquium

ISOC-AU has been monitoring international developments in respect of IPv6, particularly over the last 12 to 18 months. This session provided an update of transition plans that are being developed for Tunisia and Egypt as well as allowing an introduction to key individuals involved. Both countries have national transition plans developed proceeding into 2006.

Informal discussions and contacts were equally important with the formal discussions at Tunis. On behalf of ISOC-AU, I made numerous new contacts from around the world, including more than 30 specific introductions, that would have been unlikely in any other way. These contacts help to raise the profile of Australia and Australia's positive attitudes to development of the information society worldwide. Contact was made with people throughout the Internet community, including ISOC Chapters in many locations, regional internet registries and people with an interest in Internet development and governance issues. As a result of these contacts, we also received invitations to participate in other international events, that unfortunately, we will be unable to take up at this time. However, we will be able to focus on continuing development of links to organisations in the Asia-Pacific Region, particularly other ISOC chapters, including through an event we are organising in parallel with APRICOT 2006 that will be held in Perth, Australia.

My overall impression of these various discussions, combined with those of the formal sessions of WSIS, is that there is a strong enthusiasm for increased participation in the information society and maximising the social and individual benefits that can flow. Australia has already experienced substantial benefit from development and widespread use of the Internet. We continue to work on a national level to increase this level of benefit and continue to work through national discussions on issues raised by the speedy rate of technology change. This process will continue at least at this pace for the foreseeable future.

Australia's success in maximising information society benefits has been based strongly on private sector involvement, with effective government support through limited regulatory intervention and funding of key areas where market forces were insufficient.

The *Tunis Agenda for the Information Society* embodies many of these principles and concepts, thanks in no small way to the interventions of the Australian delegation. The *Agenda* highlights their importance for successfully achieving diffusion of information society benefits around the world. In particular, it highlights the potential for reorienting financial arrangements to support development and diffusion of the information society as well as identifying implementation arrangements for outcomes of the WSIS.

However, some views put forward in Tunis showed limited understanding of Internet technologies and governance arrangements. There is continuing debate about whether the WSIS process has advanced understanding of these issues sufficiently (or even at all). Australia needs to remain alert to the dangers arising from lack of understanding and support of these critical principles, both in relation to governance and operation of the Internet as well as in relation to the range of supportive social institutions required for its effective development.

### **Lifting Australia's International Status on ICT Issues**

The Australian delegation and its members demonstrated a high level of understanding and expertise in relation to Internet and information society issues, particularly as part of their interventions in the various Tunis forums. The Australian delegation's contributions demonstrated the extent of preparation for our participation in Tunis and hence the independence of our position on various issues. These positions were reached on the basis of independent assessment of the issues and a strong history of participation in the range of international processes surrounding ongoing evolution of the Internet.

The independence and sound basis for Australia's position has lifted Australia's international reputation as a leading country in respect of ICT technologies. The value of this reputation is that we are recognised as a country that can contribute positively to fostering development of the information society nationally and worldwide. Specifically, we should continue to enhance this reputation to ensure that we contribute to building and maximising benefit from the information society for countries around the world, through our industries, companies and civil society links. As chair of the National ICT Industry Alliance, I see particular implications for national industry development opportunities.

### **Internet Governance Forum**

Establishment of the new Internet Governance Forum was a key result of the discussions in Tunis. The *Agenda* has asked the Secretary General of the United Nations to convene a meeting of the Internet Governance Forum by the second quarter of 2006. This forum will provide potentially a useful opportunity for continued discussions in developing, and diffusion of, the information society around the world. However, it will potentially also provide an ongoing platform for political discussions around key issues of Internet governance. Australia needs to maintain an active and vigilant stance to support the security and stability of Internet governance arrangements.

Australia's input at WSIS has brought the role of ISOC to the fore and given ISOC a strong potential role in future discussions. ISOC will have the opportunity of taking a central role for the new Internet Governance Forum. Consequently, I also see a key potential role for ISOC Chapters both through participation in IGF as well as through discussions with their own governments. ISOC has established new

arrangements that will allow it to continue to contribute to international discussions and it will be considering options on the best approach to making these contributions. ISOC-AU is working to host a joint session with the Asia & Pacific Internet Association (APIA) at APRICOT 2006 to discuss new developments in Internet technology and the best approaches of communicating with multiple stakeholders, including governments, about these developments. We see this discussion as including the activities of IETF, IAB, IESG, ISOC and technologies such as IPv6 and address allocation, internationalised domain names, ubiquitous networks and Internet governance.

APIA is a regional trade association established in 1997. APIA Forums are informative educational conferences and cover the Internet industry's latest technical and business issues. Their forums provide in-depth coverage of a specific subject and focus on business as well as operational technologies and the industry direction: <http://www.apia.org/>

### **Operation of the Internet**

At times in the Tunis meetings, the position supported by Australia was misrepresented as a “status quo” position implying that there should be no changes in the operation or structures of current Internet governance arrangements. This is not the position of ISOC-AU nor was it the one being supported by the Australian delegation. We support the current structure and range of organisations as having delivered an effective an open governance structure with opportunities for effective multi-stakeholder involvement and ongoing evolution as appropriate. Indeed the open process for development of Internet standards conducted under the IETF stands in marked contrast to many other standards development processes that are more closely aligned to supporting tightly held proprietary standards. IETF processes allow participation by anyone with the interest and knowledge to contribute. Internet standards are open to implementation by anyone without licensing fees and often there are open source operating samples ready for implementation. However, we need to listen closely to any legitimate concerns. Wherever the existing structures can be demonstrated to be lacking then they should be adjusted to allow a continuous process of improvement.

The *Agenda* provides recognition that protection of the security and stability of the Internet are key issues, and the role that existing organisations have played in bringing about this result. Their continuing role is essential, including engagement of the Internet Community. However, ISOC-AU is disappointed that the role of the Internet Community, as presented by ISOC, was not more strongly recognised despite the efforts of the Australian Delegation supported by other delegations. Some interventions by other delegations seemed to border on misrepresenting the role of the International Telecommunications Union as substituting for the role of the Internet Community.

The text of paragraph 38 seeks to reinforce current Internet governance arrangements, particularly including the roles of Regional Internet Registries. However, ISOC-AU would be concerned if the wording of this paragraph was interpreted to mean that the functions of Regional Internet Registries were subsumed under national control.

## **Potential Future Issues and Directions**

The WSIS process and discussions have highlighted the level of interest that is emerging around the world in relation to participation in the information society and Internet governance arrangements in particular. Debate on these two issues represents a mixture of political and social interests as is so often the case in public debate. Establishment of the Internet Governance Forum will provide an ongoing forum for continuing such debate. ISOC-AU is concerned to see that Australia continues to present an active, soundly based and independently well informed position in this continuing international debate and looks forward to working with the Australian Government towards this end.

As a chapter of ISOC, we will also continue to work to ensure that ISOC plays a positive and central role in discussions, through providing soundly based information and encouraging effective multi-stakeholder involvement in Internet governance arrangements, particularly through the established mechanisms. If there are limitations to these mechanisms then there should be adjustments in a continuous process of improvement.

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14 December 2005