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Messages from Rio: Comments from the UK representatives who attended the Rio Internet Governance Forum, November 2007





# Views from Lesley Cowley

Chief Executive, Nominet

The second Internet Governance Forum (IGF) hosted in Rio was a great success. The UK had a very strong presence at the forum with attendees from the private sector, child protection and free speech organisations, government and charities. Each delegate has a slightly different perspective of the IGF depending on which area they approach it from but inevitably there is crossover. This booklet gives each one an opportunity to share the key message that they took away from Rio.

## Development of the IGF

The Rio IGF built upon the successes of the previous meeting in Athens in 2006 in many ways. Athens was proof that the concept of bringing together multi-stakeholders to engage in dialogue could work. At Rio we built on this with more substantive discussions of key issues, more workshops from a broader range of participants and more substance to those discussions. We also saw the emergence of processes at a national level to support the international process.

The IGF is a fantastic opportunity for people from all around the world to come together and share their experiences. At the national level, the UK IGF will enable participants to engage with the international dialogue from the local perspective and address emerging issues for the UK Internet community. The main challenge for the IGF in proving its relevance and usefulness is how it can enable people to take away that experience and use it in their own

communities. Emily Taylor, Nominet's Director of Legal and Policy, has pushed for the inclusion of Best Practice on the IGF agenda in her capacity as Advisory Group member. I was delighted that this resulted in several Best Practice Forum workshops taking place at Rio.

## Nominet's Best Practice Forum Workshop

Nominet's Best Practice Forum workshop, held in conjunction with the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform, the Confederation of British Industry and the London Internet Exchange focused on UK partnerships in practice. The workshop discussed how the enabling environment in the UK has helped promote investment and innovation, and how a partnership approach to Internet governance issues can support economic growth and competitiveness, while ensuring stakeholder inclusion. It was encouraging to hear people reflecting on how transferable some elements can be such as the direct transferability of the concept of Internet exchange points in reducing costs and promoting access.

The Internet industry in the UK is a place where healthy competition exists and one where all stakeholders share responsibility for ensuring a safe online environment. This model of cooperative regulation between industry, government and civil society is very successful and we are proud to be part of it.

I hope you enjoy reading the contributions in this booklet from a cross section of stakeholders including business, the voluntary sector, parliamentarians and child protection agencies.

"The view has been gathering strength in the UK that the Internet Governance Forum is an exciting and innovative opportunity for cooperation between stakeholders. Prior to the second IGF meeting in Rio in November, we consulted widely in the UK with industry, civil society, parliamentarians and government, on the priorities that we should take to Rio for discussion. Security came top of the agenda for the UK, with access and confidence online as the next biggest issue.

The Internet is a huge space where everyone grasps one corner of what is familiar to them. Most of us are actually aware that our knowledge is limited and our vision is partial, at best. The IGF overcomes such limitations – and gives all those people an opportunity to link up with others and see how they can address the issues they have locally, using others' examples of best practice.

At Rio I made a commitment to the international community that the UK would demonstrate that our belief in the IGF approach is well placed by establishing a multi-stakeholder UK IGF, to support the international process. This will exemplify the many examples of the successful partnership approach and multi-stakeholder cooperation that already exists in the UK. Following on from this we can work out how to ensure that such examples of best practice are shared worldwide and that we learn from good examples in other countries. Is this an ambitious undertaking? Yes! It's a vision of how the Internet can be made a good and safe place to be, as well as being exciting, fast and ever changing, through an industry-led partnership and well-designed governance. 'Where there is no vision, so shall the people perish: he that keepeth the law, happy is he'."

**Rt Hon Alun Michael MP**

"We came, we saw, we conquered. In the nicest possible way, of course. The UK delegation of Parliamentarians, civil servants, Nominet and 3rd sector groups was widely commended in Rio for our wide-ranging and effective representation.

We have been working hard to successfully get online child protection onto the agenda. Something I am extremely proud of, as I have been actively campaigning on the issue with various children's charities for many years now.

We believed it was important to discuss the issue at the IGF because it is a critical issue but also because the forum has been in danger of turning into a battleground over who controls the web, not what is of benefit and what it can effectively achieve. We posed the questions to the IGF:

- How can ICT participants ignore such an important global issue?
- How can they ignore an issue on which we could have a real impact?
- How could they resist the UK's voluntary approach, both as a way of addressing this issue and as an exemplar for the approach for Internet governance generally?

I believe that we were very successful in our aims and that the international work on the issue will go forward with vigour.

We also put forward two further ideas;

- 1) A UK IGF to take Internet governance forum issues forward and act as a model for other countries
- 2) My suggestion that we involve ICT users in an IGF and Internet governance issues, preferably by talking the talk – using technology

When the chair, Nitán Desai, summed up the outcomes of the IGF Rio, of his 3 recommendations ours were centre stage. How's that for a result!"

**Margaret Moran MP**

## Messages from Rio

“UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon’s commitment at the inaugural session of the second IGF for a strong focus on child protection online helped to set the tone of the summit and highlighted the relevance of Children and Young People in each of the four strands.

I was encouraged by the interest in good practice and convicted of the need for more strategic initiatives to address the practical implications for protecting children’s rights and providing safer environments and secure services for young people online.

As an organisation, Childnet is committed to making sure that Children and Young People’s voices are heard at the highest levels, and it would be good to find better ways of including more youth at future IGF meetings.

The IGF provides the process and structure through which dialogue can be facilitated and should be supported. At Childnet, we are already building on the lessons learnt in Rio and preparing for India in 2008 and Egypt in 2009. Indeed, we are already working with the government in Egypt, building a youth Internet safety focus group and supporting them in the contribution of a major E-Safety conference being planned in the region in March 2008.”

**Stephen Carrick-Davies, Childnet International**

“Online child safety is moving towards centre stage within the IGF, and that movement began at Rio. The IGF is very well placed to take on a key role in spreading awareness not only of the problems and challenges of online safety for children, but also of some of the highly effective solutions which have been developed in a number of countries. The knowledge and expertise are there: they are just very unevenly distributed. The IGF can help plug the gaps.”

**John Carr, Children’s Charities’ Coalition on Internet Safety**

“The opportunity to consider strategic problems, together with potential solutions coupled with chances to participate in a variety of workshops dealing with a range of topics related to Internet governance, was personally invaluable. Meeting new people and sharing information to advance my understanding of their issues also presented me with opportunities to explain the background and context of significant self regulatory developments in the UK.”

**Peter Robbins, Internet Watch Foundation**

“It was an interesting and educative experience for me to participate in the IGF in Rio. There were the usual “regulate & control” countries versus the “freedom & communication” groups. I was glad that the control freaks didn’t get anywhere with their agenda.

I contributed to the discussions on privacy and security - there were some wise thinkers in this area and I hope that a good bit of this work will be carried forward. There was some very knowledgeable support for the Convention on Cybercrime from non-European countries and I feel that this is something that we should look at in greater depth.”

**Lord Erroll**



“Over the past several years LINX has used the World Summit on the Information Society and the IGF to promote the idea that developing countries can help improve their own Internet capacity by liberalising their telecoms regulation and creating Internet Exchange Points (IXPs) to take advantage of a diversified market.

Prior to the Rio meeting of the IGF in 2007 our message tended to be overshadowed by the heavily politicised arguments about international pricing models, advanced by China and its allies. Rio marked an important departure, as we found greatly increased interest from delegates from developing countries in learning more about IXPs, how to create and operate them, and how they can enhance Internet capacity.

We consider this a big step forward for the IGF model: although political arguments may continue in various arenas, this demonstrates how simply coming together and exchanging information can help solve problems through cooperation even when political negotiations remain deadlocked.”

**Malcolm Huty, London Internet Exchange**



“The Internet Governance Forum is helping us all look at the opportunities that the Internet brings. The importance of sharing ideas between all stakeholders was highlighted in the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis in November 2005: the IGF is a key output in taking forward the WSIS process.

Rio was important in moving the IGF from a talking shop into a vital forum, helping participants understand how it can help us all make better choices and decisions. Setting up a UK-IGF will help the UK make best use of this opportunity.”

**Martin Boyle, Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform**

“The IGF is a genuinely multi-stakeholder process – more or less anyone can turn up and participate in main sessions and dynamic coalitions on an equal footing with government representatives. This makes it a pretty unique experience and ensures good debate and discourse. The downside of course is that this often means ‘process’ is often placed above ‘outcomes’.

Of course, we’d like to see more input from NGOs, but beyond that we also need more participation from civil society in general – we need more from users really affected by some of these issues and more diversity. One way to do this is surely through better use of technology.

Human rights is the issue crucial to Amnesty – we believe human rights must underlie all aspects of Internet governance. Despite much discussion, there is little or no evidence that human rights have been hard-wired into the DNA of the Internet governance debate. We need to emphasise that freedom of expression is part of the solution and not, as so many see it, as part of the problem.”

**Nick Dearden, Amnesty International UK**



## Looking ahead

We were proud to showcase the winners of our Best Practice Challenge 2007 in Rio. Here is the proof that the UK has already embraced the themes of the IGF and is working on making the Internet a more diverse, open, accessible and secure place for all.

It was a great honour to be asked to contribute to the Critical Internet Resources panel in the company of such eminent people from the Internet community. The discussion illustrated to me the range of ‘critical Internet resources’ and the diversity of views regarding their governance.

We look ahead to the 2008 IGF meeting in India with great excitement and anticipation. At this meeting, we believe that looking at what regulatory and economic factors have contributed to the success story of India’s Internet experience can help in capacity building for all, especially developing countries.

Over the coming year, we commit to again creating opportunities to gain stakeholder feedback to take with us to India. In addition, we will have much progress to report from the UK IGF and an opportunity to showcase the Best Practice Challenge 2008 winners. The European Parliament resolution on the second IGF meeting held in Rio “stresses the importance of engaging national and regional interests in the IGF process in order to form ‘local’ IGFs, as is already being proposed in the UK”. Naturally we are proud that this initiative has been recognised in this way and that others, including France, Brazil and Finland to name a few, are following in our footsteps.

On behalf of Nominet, I would like to thank everyone who has supported the IGF so far. We look forward to working together to ensure that the UK IGF is a great success.

