

Remarks at the Closing Session
Internet Governance Forum
Hyderabad, India
06 December 2008

Peter H. Hellmonds

Thank you Chair,

my name is Peter Hellmonds from Nokia Siemens Networks.

I would like to join in the others who applaud the Indian government, in fact, the Indian people for organizing this, the third, IGF. The facility and all technical features worked well (with perhaps the usual glitches on the first day), we all feel welcomed by our Indian hosts, and I would like to thank our hosts for their hospitality. We especially appreciate this hospitality in the wake of the terrible events in Mumbai. We all feel like family with our Indian hosts and sincerely condemn these attacks. Our hearts are with the victims and their families.

Coming to the evaluation of the IGF: you know, I have been very active, both as a member of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group in the first two years and as a MAG alumnus and volunteer during this year, in shaping and supporting the IGF in both developing its processes and its contents.

Allow me to highlight where I think we made progress in this grand experiment, and where we can still do better as we go ahead.

Progress:

When we started to embark towards Athens, we did not know what would happen. In fact, some of my business colleagues were quite concerned when confronted by some civil society advocates on the issues of human rights. Well, I think we made a lot of progress here. Instead of confrontation, we see collaboration. I participated yesterday in a workshop on human rights in Internet Governance, and engaging is much more fruitful in the long run than shaming and blaming.

I particular enjoyed yesterday afternoon's session, and this also showed rapprochement amongst former combatants. Witness Patrik who agreed with Milton, or witness support for the statements of our colleague from China. So, we are making progress here. We are all seeking no longer to make statements for publicity's sake, but the success of the IGF is to allow for this frank exchange of ideas where we seek commonly accepted solutions for the challenges ahead.

We have also made progress on the level of discourse. From 14 panelists in Athens, staying still on the podium there for three hours, we now have interactive dialogues and even debates between participants from the floor, showing the high level of understanding by many participants.

So, clearly, on all those accounts the IGF has worked remarkably well. And the multistakeholder nature of the IGF, the nature of not having to come to negotiated outcomes, and the equal footing on which participants discuss with each other has surely contributed in large part to this.

Do better:

However, we can do better still in some areas. We still have too many workshops. That is clear. We should encourage more workshop organizers to work together and to merge their workshops. Early announcement and encouragement, early deadlines help to bring in proposals in time, and allow the MAG to encourage that. But clearly we need to provide for more focussed interaction, and less events competing with each other (although I am on record of promoting competition – this is no contradiction).

Also, I think we had the expectation that we would be able to go deeper in the issues, and we did partly succeed, but we could do better for the IGF to be and remain relevant. We need to recognize that there are different levels of understanding. And we may need some entry-level workshops, and also some graduate degree workshops. Entry level is to take those along who may be new to the process. Graduate level for the experts who expect more. So that everyone can seek to go to the level of depth in the discourse they feel appropriate for themselves.

The main session workshops were by and large successful, and this experiment has worked in allowing workshop organizers to organize the main session workshops. There was a difference in the main session open dialogues however. Some were excellent, especially yesterday afternoon, the session moderated very ably by Jeanette and Chris. I encourage that we further study whether this could not be a template for future debates and open dialogues. However, other open dialogues did not work as well, especially when the moderator did not take the time to prepare adequately.

On Content, I think the issues of Access and Openness, of Diversity and Multilingualism, of Security, Safety, Human Rights and Privacy, of Critical Internet Resources, and Human Capacity Building, are all still important and relevant, and the next two IGFs should again seek to go deeper in the issues of relevance within these broad baskets.

Conclusion

For us, these issues are not just an academic issue, but they affect our business, especially the access business, where we are developing concrete solutions to bring Internet to the next billions of people.

As we go forward, we should seek to encourage similar engagement of multistakeholder dialogue on the national and regional level, such as those we have heard of like the LAC and African and European regional dialogues on Internet Governance.

Again, Mr Chairman, allow me to thank the Indian hosts, and also yourself, the secretariat, the translators and the scribes to make this IGF an extraordinary success!

Thank you.