Panel 3. Critical Internet Resources

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(This document summarizes the comments on the issue of Critical Internet Resources that were made both during this Panel as well as throughout the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the IGF.)

For the IGF, the issue of "Critical Internet Resources" (CIR) has two central aspects: "Transition from IPv4 to IPv6" and "Agreements for global and national/regional Internet governance". Others translate the issue to the administration of names and numbers.

During the meeting, observations and recommendations were presented that focused on these aspects.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. Based on the adopted definition, two major problems are detected: the transition in and of itself, and how to manage the scarcity of IPv4 addresses. The current IP address block distribution at global level is highly unfavorable to developing countries and, consequently, the risk that during the transition the countries with the lowest degrees of development will have to pay the highest costs, or that they will have to resort to a parallel IPv4 address market in order to satisfy their expansion needs, cannot be ignored.

2. The following may also be considered CIR:

    a. digital content relevant to socially vulnerable sectors of the population which are the most numerous,

    b. the digital literacy of the above mentioned sectors of the population,

    c. symmetrical access to infrastructure,

    d. energy.

3. The lack of compatibility between both systems is worrisome. There is a sense that they have not been paid due attention, for the countries most affected by this situation are those least related to technological development.

4. Administrating critical resources is not only a technical activity, but it also has consequences in the area of public policies.

5. Just as Internet structure and contents, Internet governance mechanisms as they exist today reflect the needs, priorities and world view of its main users and established stakeholders, the majority of which live in the developed world. As a result, their decisions tend to favor the more socioeconomically developed world in the distribution of risks and opportunities, as can be observed in the distribution of IP addresses. Other notable examples of existing asymmetries are the structure of the gTLD domain market at global level, which is practically a monopoly, and the unfair distribution of international connection costs.

6. The region is not adequately prepared for the transition. With few exceptions, the region's governments seem to be unaware of the importance of what is at stake and of the role they are called to assume. Likewise, there is insufficient information on the part of ISPs towards their users and insufficient involvement on the part of the region's universities.

7. In general, issues that are not the most important for the region have prevailed on the forums devoted to the discussion of Internet-related issues. In addition, our population has limited possibilities of participating in IGF mechanisms. Therefore, CIR management is an issue lacking relevance from the point of view of the vast majority of Latin American and Caribbean residents, one which only concerns a reduced group of specialized individuals.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. It is essential to develop enhanced and effective multistakeholder participation mechanisms in order to establish critical Internet resource management. These must contemplate the balanced participation of representatives of every region, as well as of developed and developing countries, in every stakeholder group: governments, civil society, business sector, and academia.

2. In terms of public Internet policy decisions, the construction of a human-centered information society, one that will integrate all individuals and be oriented towards human development, depends on the establishment of decision-making mechanisms that allow the Internet to evolve according to the public interest, with particular focus on those who have yet to benefit from its existence. This objective can only be reached through a global cooperation process, one which must involve governments, civil society, the business sector, and intergovernmental organizations, as well as the institutions responsible for managing critical Internet resources at global and regional level. This is the goal of the "enhanced cooperation" process established in paragraphs 69-71 of the Tunis Agenda. ICANN must increase its efforts in this sense and expand its consultation mechanisms.

3. Future CIR management must be careful not to repeat the inequalities involved in IPv4 management, must procure system interoperability, and systems that are efficient in terms of energy consumption.

4. To stimulate regional IPv6 task forces that operate with the commitment to share knowledge and best practices in order to perform the transition within reasonable costs and terms.

5. An intensive educational task, at different levels and scales, is essential to achieve an adequate management of CIR. Education for the professional and technical staff that will be responsible for its operation, for the officials in charge of public policies that organize the activity within the sector, for university researchers so that they may facilitate the production of knowledge that will translate into innovations for our populations and for our end users, and for civil society in general, in order to make possible their effective participation within the configuration of Internet governance mechanisms.