INTERNET GOVERNANCE PROCESSES
Visualizing the playing field

State-led global governance bodies under the mandate of the United Nations had little to do with the early governance of the internet which was synonymous with ‘keeping the net running’. However, the political, economic and social implications of the medium have soon put internet policy and regulation on their agendas. Most explicitly within the UN system, internet governance is being dealt with within the CSTD, a subsidiary of ECOSOC which has one of the leading roles in the WSS+10 review process. After drawing to a close the work of its Working Group on Improvements on the IGF in 2012, the CSTD has been mandated to establish a multi-stakeholder Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation (WGEC). The WGEC is seen as an opportunity for relevant UN agencies and other stakeholders to review the WSS process so far, and to outline a vision for the Information Society going forward. Primarily involved in managing telecommunications infrastructure, the ITU is becoming increasingly involved in broader internet-related policy issues through the work of the ITU Council, through its sectors, and as one of the facilitators of the WSS+10 review process. Various stakeholders have expressed concern with ITU’s expanding role in internet governance due to its inter-governmental and closed nature. The upcoming Plenipotentiary conference 2014 will serve as a platform for the organisation to review its role within the broader internet governance context.

Abbreviations:

CSTD: Commission on Science and Technology for Development
ECOSOC: Economic and Social Council
UNGA: United Nations General Assembly
WGEC: CSTD Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation

Internet Governance Forum (IGF)
The IGF is an international multi-stakeholder forum under the auspices of the UN, established by the Tunis Agenda as one of the outcomes of the 2003/2005 WSS process. The 2013 annual IGF in Bali will be the Forum’s 8th edition. Although the IGF has no decision-making powers, it is seen as the leading global multi-stakeholder forum on public policy issues related to internet governance. In an effort to make the IGF more outcome-oriented, in March 2012, the CSTD Working Group on Improvements to the IGF released its recommendations on how the Forum could develop more tangible outputs: through formulating a set of policy questions to be considered at each IGF with the results included in the outcomes of the 2014 edition; and, with this, its role within the broader internet governance context.

Abbreviations:

MHP: WSS+10 Multistakeholder Preparatory Platform

Visualising the playing field

INTERNET GOVERNANCE PROCESSES

Playing field

Coordination, administration and day-to-day management of internet technical resources is distributed across a number of bodies, including the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), the ITU and other public and private entities. Management of core internet infrastructure - Internet Protocol (IP) addresses, domain names, and root servers falls under the purview of ICANN. On its side, the IETF is in charge of ensuring interoperability by developing standards and protocols. The ITU manages telecommunications infrastructure. As overlaps between technical and policy issues become more prominent, governance of the core internet infrastructure will become more politicised - this was already exemplified by the uproar around the revisions to an IGF telecommunications treaty at the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT-12).

Abbreviations:

ICANN: Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
IETF: Internet Engineering Task Force

UN processes (GA/ECOSOC/CSTD)

World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) review process

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) framework, embedded in the Tunis Agenda and the Geneva Plan of Action, acknowledged the importance of all stakeholders in harnessing benefits of ICTs and the internet, and established the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). The year 2015 will serve as an opportunity for relevant UN agencies and other stakeholders to review the WSIS process so far, and to outline a vision for the Information Society going forward. Depending on the outcome of discussions at the main UN process strand (CSTD/ECOSOC/UNGA in 2013-14), there is a possibility of a full blown WSIS-related Summit in 2015, with Russia already putting forward the Russian resort of Sochi as one of the outcomes of the 2003/2005 WSIS process. The 2013 annual IGF in Bali will be the Forum’s 8th edition. Although the IGF has no decision-making powers, it is seen as the leading global multi-stakeholder forum on public policy issues related to internet governance. Internet Governance Forum 2013

Abbreviations:

CGO-Internet: Council Working Group on International Internet-related public policy issues
TDA: Telecommunication Development Advisory Group
WTDI: World Telecommunication Development Conference
WTDI 90th: WTDI Regional Preparatory Meetings
WTPF: World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum

Goverance of internet’s technical resources

ICANN: Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
IETF: Internet Engineering Task Force

Funding partners (funding partners)