INTERNET GOVERNANCE PROCESSES
Visualizing the playing field

UN processes (GA/ECOSOC/CSTD)
World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) review process
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
Internet Governance Forum (IGF)
Governance of internet's technical resources (ICANN, IETF, etc.)

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 "keep 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 WSIS+10 review process. After drawing to a close the work of its Preparatory Platform (MPP), the CSTD has been mandated to establish a multi-stakeholder Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation (WGEC) and is seen as the leading global internet governance forum. 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 a possible venue. Regardless of the end point, the review is already under way. A review statement on the implementation of the WSIS outcomes, as well as a visioning statement for WSIS beyond 2015 (forward-looking outcome) are currently being drafted through the Multi-stakeholder Preparatory Platform (MPP) facilitated by the ITU.

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

WSIS is the purview of the ITU which is in charge of ensuring that the core internet infrastructure – Internet Protocol (IP) addresses, domain names, and root servers – functions appropriately. As overlaps between technical and policy issues become more prominent, governance of the core internet infrastructure will become more politicized - this was already exemplified by the uproar surrounding the IANA transition in 2015 (ICANN, IETF).

The IETF is in charge of ensuring interoperability by developing and coordinating the suite of protocols. The IETF has been established by the Tunis Agenda 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. 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 outcome documentation; mapping areas of converging and diverging opinions on issues; and enhancing IGF reporting.

Abbreviations:
MPP: WSIS+10 Multi-stakeholder Preparatory Platform
CWG-Internet: Council Working Group on International Internet- related public policy issues
TDAG: Telecommunication Development Advisory Group
WTDC: World Telecommunication Development Conference
WTDC RPMs: WTDC Regional Preparatory Meetings
WTTP: World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum

Coordinating, administration and day-to-day management of internet’s 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 politicized - this was already exemplified by the uproar surrounding the IANA transition in 2015 (ICANN, IETF).