

Already a pressing global issue, internet governance is growing in importance in international debates. With internet governance debates taking place across a range of fora, this visual timeline was developed in an effort to better focus civil society advocacy efforts by understanding where main discussions about global internet governance are taking place. This timeline aims to: 1) identify forums where internet governance is being discussed/decided over the next few years; and 2) identify avenues for participation for civil society to influence those processes.

The landscape is divided into several processes, including those falling under the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) review, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), and the processes related to the governance of internet's technical resources. Main events related to these processes are then weaved around two particular forums – the ITU Plenipotentiary in 2014 and the WSIS+10 review event in 2015, which were taken as framing references and provisional end points for the mapping.

NB: This is a work in progress. Additional processes and extension of the endpoint beyond 2014 is planned as the timeline gets developed, and more information becomes available.

INTERNET GOVERNANCE PROCESSES

Visualising the playing field

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UN processes (GA/ECOSOC/CSTD)

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 WSIS+10 review process. After drawing to a close the work of its Working Group on Improvements to 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 a possible means for identifying the appropriate model for global internet governance. Within the General Assembly, discussions that may have an impact upon broader internet governance are taking place in the GA's First Committee (cyber-security), the Second Committee (WSIS outcomes and implementation), and the Third Committee (human rights and free expression online).

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

World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) review process

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) framework, embodied 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 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:
MPP: WSIS+10 Multistakeholder Preparatory Platform

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

The ITU is a specialised agency of the UN which defines and adopts telecommunications standards, regulates the use of the radio-frequency spectrum, and develops capacity in these sectors around the world. 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 WSIS+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 basic texts (ITU Convention and Constitution) and strategy for the next 4 years, and, with this, its role within the broader internet governance context.

Abbreviations:
CWG-Internet: Council Working Group on international Internet-related public policy issues
CWG-WSIS: Council Working Group-WSIS: Implementation of Outcomes
TDAG: Telecommunication Development Advisory Group
WTDC: World Telecommunication Development Conference
WTDC RPMs: WTDC Regional Preparatory Meetings
WTPF: World Telecommunication/ICT Policy Forum

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 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:
MAG: Multistakeholder Advisory Group
Regional IGFs:
AfIGF: African IGF
Arab IGF
APrIGF: Asia Pacific Regional IGF
EuroDig: European Dialogue on IGF
LACIGF: Latin America and the Caribbean IGF
SAIGF: Southern Africa Internet Governance Forum
West Africa IGF

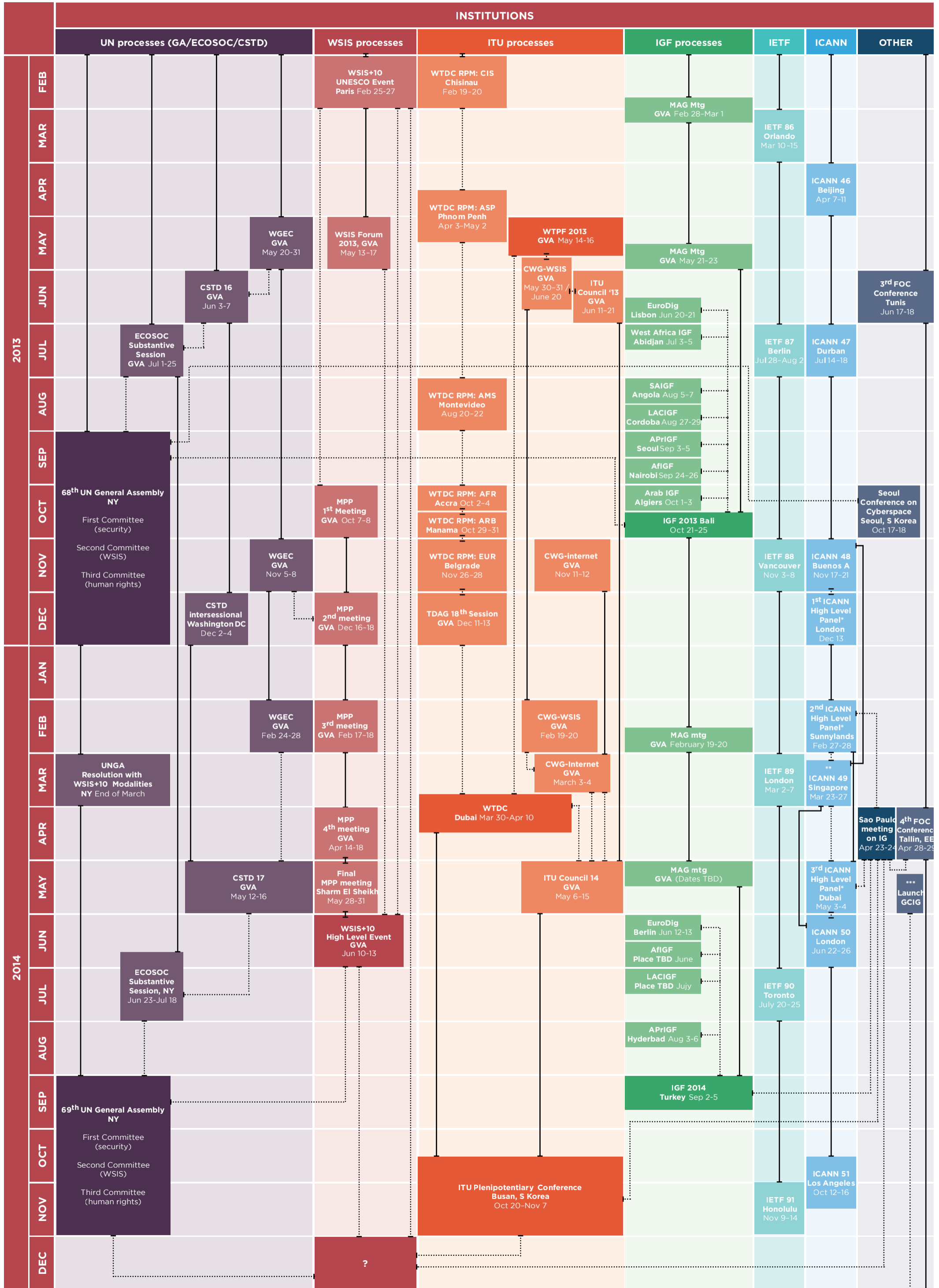
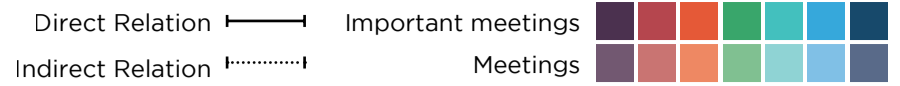
Governance of internet's technical resources (ICANN, IETF, etc.)

Coordination, 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 politicised - this was already exemplified by the uproar around the revisions to an ITU 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

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* Panels on Global Internet Cooperation and Governance Mechanisms
 ** NCU Cross-community Event, Singapore Mar 21 *** Launch of the Global Commission on Internet Governance