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APDIP e-Notes present an analytical overview of specific issues related to information and communication technologies for sustainable human development in the Asia-Pacific region. APDIP e-Notes are developed by the United Nations Development Programme's Asia-Pacific Development Information Programme based at the UNDP Regional Centre in Bangkok, Thailand. For more information, visit <http://www.apdip.net> or contact [info@apdip.net](mailto:info@apdip.net)

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### Summary

Internet governance was one of the two issues on which governments were unable to reach agreement during the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in December 2003.

As the Summit plans for its second meeting in November 2005 to make decisions on appropriate actions for Internet governance, it is timely to look at the perspectives and priorities of stakeholders in the Asia-Pacific region.

The **Open Regional Dialogue on Internet Governance (ORDIG)** was initiated in October 2004 by UNDP-APDIP in collaboration with other organizations<sup>1</sup> to ensure that the voices from Asia-Pacific are heard in these discussions. The initiative focused on raising awareness, building capacity, facilitating participation and promoting the representation of Asia-Pacific countries in the Internet governance debate. This note presents Asia-Pacific perspectives and priorities on Internet governance.

ORDIG offers six working principles to set the stage for Internet governance discussions in the Asia-Pacific region. These principles extend beyond the technical aspects of Internet protocol (IP) numbering and domain name registration, and recognize the need for a broad, holistic and human development approach that balances global solutions with diverse local interests.

Based on these principles, ORDIG conducted a series of research involving multiple and wide-ranging stakeholders, to produce six key recommendations and priorities for Internet governance in the Asia-Pacific region. They include the need for: subsidiarity; governments to have a role; multi-stakeholder participation; preserving cultural diversity; capacity building; and supplementing law with other tools.

Other emerging priorities and concerns consist of: access costs; voice over Internet protocol; wireless networks; root servers; country-code top-level domains; internationalized domain names; IP address management; technical standards; content pollution (e.g. spam, spyware, viruses); and the related issue of cybercrime (e.g. online fraud, pornography, terrorism).

### Introduction

At the start of 2005, there were an estimated 750 million Internet users<sup>2</sup> worldwide and this figure is expected to continue growing at exponential rates, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region – home to over half of the world population. In fact, the Asia-Pacific region contributes a larger share of users (about one-third) than North America and Europe.

Inevitably, such numbers will have a profound impact on the structure and use of the Internet. In turn, these impacts will have transformative effect on commerce and culture around the world. Rapid growth in the use of the Internet raises questions on whether we need Internet governance and if so, in what form. Who will make these decisions and what are the processes for making these decisions?

Internet governance was one of the two issues (the other being related to financing mechanisms) on which governments were unable to reach agreement during the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in December 2003.

<sup>1</sup> These organizations include the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and the Asia Pacific Network Information Centre (APNIC).

<sup>2</sup> Gelbstein, E. & Kurbalija, J., 2005, Internet Governance: Issues, actors and divides, Geneva: DiploFoundation & Kuala Lumpur: Global Knowledge Partnership. <http://www.diplomacy.edu/isl/ig/>

This led to the establishment of a United Nations Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) to develop a working definition of Internet governance; identify public policy issues; define roles and responsibilities; and develop proposals for action at the second WSIS meeting in Tunis 2005.

## **What is Internet governance and why is it important?**

The concept and scope of Internet governance has been the subject of intense debate. Recently, WGIG came up with a working definition of Internet governance:

*Internet governance is the development and application by Governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the Internet.*

It refers to all policies and interventions that influence the structure, operation and use of the Internet. These policies and interventions are linked to development objectives in many ways. The choice of technical Internet standards determines how easy it is to adapt Internet technologies to local needs, such as multi-lingual capabilities. Likewise, the rules for the global Internet naming and addressing system determine who has access to critical infrastructure components that ensure global connectivity.

Policy decisions in this area influence a wide array of the Internet's practical characteristics including costs for access and content, speed, reliability and privacy of network services. In a nutshell, Internet governance critically determines how widely and how fairly the opportunities of the information society can spread and thus, what benefits the Internet holds in store for all users.

## **Who is making the decisions in cyberspace: Implications for sustainable human development**

WGIG's working definition on Internet governance emphasizes the role of governments, the private sector and civil society in the mechanisms of Internet governance.

Making the Internet work for sustainable human development requires policies and interventions that are responsive to the specific needs of all countries. It requires a strong voice from different stakeholders and their constructive engagement in the policy-making processes related to Internet governance.

This is a huge challenge, especially for developing countries because presently, Internet governance comprises a range of different rule-making bodies and systems. The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), for example, manages the domain name system and is under the control of the U.S. government. Helping to set technical standards

are the International Telecommunication Union, an international organization; the private-sector-led Internet Engineering Task Force; and the more academic W3C.

They vary dramatically in their structures and operating models, in their degree of openness and transparency and thus, in their accountability, inclusiveness, democratic legitimacy and responsiveness to developmental concerns.

Developing countries are further challenged by the global nature of the Internet that puts many areas of Internet governance beyond the direct control of any individual country and into the realm of global cooperation. Furthermore, participation in far-away fora is often costly and complicated for stakeholders from developing countries.

Timing also poses a problem. The most fundamental rules for Internet governance are already well established or under long-term negotiation and newcomers to the Internet have had little opportunity to generate awareness across all stakeholder groups, mobilize the required policy expertise and coordinate strategies for effective engagement.

In sum, the march of Internet governance continues and threatens to leave behind developing countries that are forfeiting opportunities for an inclusive information society.

ORDIG is a timely response to these concerns. Over the last ten months, ORDIG has gathered and analyzed perspectives and priorities through an extensive multi-stakeholder and participatory process that has involved more than 3,000 people in the Asia-Pacific region.

ORDIG's activities include a regional online discussion forum featuring more than 180 participants; a multi-lingual survey on Internet governance that collected 1,243 responses from 37 countries; a series of sub-regional consultations; and a variety of research on governance and other topics<sup>3</sup>.

An Input Paper<sup>4</sup> and Policy Brief<sup>5</sup> of ORDIG's outcomes were presented and endorsed by WGIG at its Fourth Meeting in Geneva on 14-17 June 2005.

The next section summarizes the working principles and recommendations highlighted in ORDIG's Policy Brief.

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<sup>3</sup> ORDIG's outcome and activities are fully described in the Input Paper. UNDP-APDIP, 2005, *Voices from Asia-Pacific: Internet governance priorities and recommendations* – An ORDIG Input Paper for the UN Working Group on Internet Governance and the World Summit on the Information Society. [http://igov.apdip.net/ORDIG\\_Paper.pdf](http://igov.apdip.net/ORDIG_Paper.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> UNDP-APDIP, 2005, *Voices from Asia-Pacific: Internet governance priorities and recommendations* – ORDIG Policy Brief and Executive Summary for the UN Working Group on Internet Governance and the World Summit on the Information Society. [http://igov.apdip.net/ORDIG\\_Policy\\_Brief.pdf](http://igov.apdip.net/ORDIG_Policy_Brief.pdf)

## Where are we now: Setting principles and identifying issues

ORDIG offers six working principles that together establish some parameters and context for discussions of Internet governance in Asia-Pacific.

Three working principles are derived from WGIG's own definitions<sup>6</sup>, presented in its preliminary report in February 2005:

1. The terms "governance" and "govern" mean more than "government activities."
2. The enabling dimension includes organized and cooperative activities between different stakeholders.
3. Internet governance encompasses a wider range of conditions and mechanisms than Internet protocol (IP) numbering and domain name administration.

In addition, ORDIG proposes the following three working principles for Internet governance in the Asia-Pacific region:

4. **Broad, holistic and oriented towards human development:** As recognized by the WSIS process, the Internet has an essential role to play in meeting the objectives set forth in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the outcomes of its governance therefore extend beyond merely the technical domain.
5. **Balancing global and local interests:** Governance mechanisms and processes should recognize the Internet as a unified and coordinated global platform, and should foster international cooperation and coordination. In addition, Internet governance should recognize (and, when possible, reconcile) the genuine conflicts that sometimes exist between the need for global solutions and the desire to safeguard national interests.
6. **Maintain stability and interoperability:** The Internet is an essential service and a critical infrastructure in the region, and it should be governed in a manner that reflects its operating realities and exigencies. Any proposed evolutions or changes that arise through the process of governance should therefore take into account the need to maintain the stability and continued interoperability of the network.

Based on these six principles, activities have been implemented and research findings analyzed to produce six key recommendations and priorities for Internet governance in the Asia-Pacific region.

1. **Subsidiarity:** The Internet is a distributed network and Internet governance should similarly be distributed with its mechanisms and decision-making located as close as possible to the issues

or problems that are being addressed. While some issues require global or regional coordination, many others, notably internationalized domain names (IDNs), country-code top-level domains (ccTLDs), and localized content and software, demand local input, and are best designed with the participation of those most directly affected. It is therefore vital to design mechanisms and structures that include representation from the national level, as well as from grassroots and other local communities.

2. **Governments have a role:** National governments have a vital facilitating and enabling role to play in Internet governance. Governments can set up an efficient market environment, establish and monitor broad competition principles, and ensure that the benefits of the network are equitably maximized. A liberal market environment, nurtured by the government is often important in lowering access costs and encouraging innovation. Governments should also encourage the development of comprehensive national ICT agendas to optimize resources and ensure coordinated participation in national and international governance processes.
3. **Multi-Stakeholder participation is required:** Internet governance is a broad-ranging process that affects, and frequently requires collaboration between, a variety of stakeholders. Governance mechanisms should therefore include all stakeholders from government, the private sector and civil society in the processes of decision-making and implementation.
4. **Preserve cultural diversity:** Bodies responsible for international Internet governance functions should reflect the priorities of all affected cultures in their operations. They should ensure an effective voice for all cultures in the deliberations and decision-making processes of these bodies. Such representation will facilitate the development of local content in local languages, help implement IDNs, and ensure that cybercrime is confronted in an effective and culturally appropriate manner.
5. **Enhance participation with capacity building:** Multi-stakeholder participation is most meaningful when supplemented by capacity and awareness building measures. Governance topics (e.g. standards) are frequently complex and require technical knowledge and other forms of expertise. In order to participate in a substantial way, stakeholders need information, knowledge, resources, and the opportunity to participate.
6. **Supplement law with other tools:** Law and regulation are not the only tools available for Internet governance. On a variety of issues (e.g. cybercrime, content pollution and localized software) these traditional tools should be supplemented by a variety of innovative mechanisms, including codes of conduct, self-regulatory mechanisms, and international, multi-stakeholder collaboratives. In addition, technology itself can play an enabling role in achieving governance goals. Free and open source software,

<sup>6</sup> Towards a Working Definition of Internet Governance.  
<http://www.wgig.org/Definitions.html>

in particular, can help increase participation and network stability, and facilitate the development of local content and localized software.

In addition to the six key recommendations, ORDIG also addresses specific Asia-Pacific concerns and priorities organized around four dimensions – infrastructure; logical, content; and social and developmental.

The infrastructure dimension covers the issues of access costs, voice over Internet protocol (VOIP) and wireless networks. Priorities are to:

#### *Access Costs*

- Ensure a robust competitive environment with limited barriers to entry and strong protections against monopolistic behaviour.
- Liberalize access to international bandwidth, promote diversity in domestic infrastructure, ease Internet service provider (ISP) licensing restrictions, and encourage “peering” between ISPs.
- Actively seek and develop international fora to solve the problem of high international settlement charges.
- Consider aid and other financial mechanisms to help developing countries develop infrastructure capacity.

#### *VOIP*

- Legalize VOIP services and promote a “light touch” approach to any regulation.
- Implement Quality of Service laws, allocate number resources, and provide access to emergency services.

#### *Wireless*

- Adopt spectrum management regimes that embrace unlicensed spectrum.
- Promote the use of wireless as a technology to bridge the digital divide and provide social benefits.

The logical dimension sits atop the infrastructure dimension; it is the interface between the hardware (infrastructure) and application (content). It consists of the code and logical switches that make infrastructure work. In this sense, the logical dimension can be considered the “brains” of the network. Here the issues covered include root servers, ccTLDs, IDNs, IP address management and technical standards. Priorities are to:

#### *Root Servers*

- Enhance international participation to address concerns over sovereignty.
- Ensure that any steps taken maintain one and only one authoritative root.

#### *ccTLDs*

- Promote local control and authority over ccTLDs.
- Take steps to ensure a coordinated local approach that includes all stakeholders.

#### *IDNs*

- Ensure a multi-stakeholder and participatory process to build on progress with technical standards.
- Promote greater coordination between language and cultural groups to ensure smooth implementation.
- Begin implementation of IDNs even if technical standards have not yet been perfected.

#### *IP Address Management*

- Develop fair and equitable mechanisms for IP version 6 (or IPv6) allocations.
- Reconcile perceived need for national allocations with desire to avoid central-planning type approaches.
- Ensure that increased government involvement does not result in censorship, inhibit innovation, or prevent the deployment of new services.

#### *Technical Standards*

- Increase participation in national and international standards-creating organizations.
- Supplement participation with capacity building, including education, awareness raising and resource support.
- Ensure availability of standard specifications.
- Consider the use of Free and Open Source Software to promote open standards.

The content dimension is the one most directly experienced by Internet users. It contains the applications and services through which users communicate, seek information and perform e-commerce transactions. Here the issues covered include content pollution (e.g. spam, spyware, viruses) and the related issue of cybercrime (e.g. online fraud, pornography, terrorism). Priorities are to:

#### *Content Pollution*

- Supplement legal measures with technology, user education, and other mechanisms.
- Ensure that legal measures do not diminish the openness of the network or lead to censorship.
- Develop global solutions to solve what is a global problem.

#### *Cybercrime*

- Ensure that legal steps do not infringe on civil liberties.
- Promote multi-stakeholder collaboratives and other mechanisms, including codes of conduct and self-regulation.
- Ensure that definitions of criminality are culturally and regionally sensitive and specific.

The social and developmental dimension focuses on cultural diversity and participation, supplemented with capacity building. The priorities are to:

#### *Cultural Diversity*

- Carefully consider the impact of technical governance on cultural diversity.



- Enhance localized software and localized content, and consider financial or other support mechanisms.
- Promote the use of Free and Open Source Software to facilitate local content and software.
- Protect indigenous intellectual property rights.

#### Participation

- Take all steps to promote multi-stakeholder participation in decision-making processes.
- Supplement formal participation with capacity building to ensure that participation is meaningful and substantive.
- Make special efforts to enhance participation by developing nations.

According to the regional survey (see Table 1), issues relating to Internet use such as cybercrime, spam, viruses, illegal content, and piracy are the areas generating the most dissatisfaction. These are the highest priorities for existing Internet users in the Asia-Pacific region. However, it should be remembered that some issues such as multilingualism or access costs may impact those who are not yet connected, so all of the above recommendations should be considered simultaneously.

Rank	Issue	% dissatisfied	% satisfied
1.	Cybercrime	94	5
2.	Virus	93	6
3.	Spam	93	7
4.	Illegal Content	82	16
5.	Privacy	66	31
6.	Availability/Cost	61	38
7.	Reliability/Speed	59	40
8.	Wireless	59	25
9.	Availability of Public Info	58	39
10.	E-Commerce Payment	53	37
11.	Local Language Software	53	39
12.	IPR	52	31
13.	Local Content	52	42
14.	Internet Telephony	51	30
15.	Network Interconnection	47	39
16.	ISP Market Conditions	46	34
17.	Secure Server/Encryption	44	33
18.	Technical Standards	37	39
19.	IDNs	37	23
20.	DNS Management	35	44
21.	IP Address	32	40

**Table 1: Asia-Pacific concerns and priorities (ranked by level of dissatisfaction)**

#### What are the next steps?

Many of these issues and recommendations have been incorporated in WGIG's final report to WSIS<sup>7</sup>. Both ORDIG and WGIG take a multi-stakeholder and participation-driven framework for effective Internet governance.

<sup>7</sup> WGIG, 2005, *Report of the Working Group on Internet Governance*.  
<http://www.wgig.org/docs/wgigreport.pdf>

WGIG's final report proposes the creation of a new multi-stakeholder forum to deal with all matters related to Internet governance. The report also outlines four organizational models for Internet governance. It is important to note that the framework is likely to evolve over time. The upcoming WSIS in Tunis represents not the conclusion of a process, but rather a milestone on an ongoing discussion that will change over time.

As the discussion continues, it is essential that Internet governance remain as open and inclusive as possible, encompassing the views and priorities of all stakeholders, regions, and communities of the world.

ORDIG is committed to ensuring a voice for the Asia-Pacific region in the continuing discussion. Planned activities include awareness raising and capacity building initiatives at national levels, and the development of an Internet Governance Primer and toolkit. ORDIG will also continue to build on its Asia-Pacific Internet governance portal <<http://www.igov.apdip.net>> as an important forum for information dissemination and sharing.

~ Akash Kapur, Consultant and Christine Apikul, APDIP

#### Additional Reading

UNDP-APDIP, 2005, *Internet Governance Priorities for Asia-Pacific: Summary analysis of a regional survey*.  
<http://igov.apdip.net/ORDIG.Survey.Report.pdf>

UNDP-APDIP, 2005, *Open Regional Dialogue on Internet Governance: Summary report of the online forum on Internet governance priorities for the Asia-Pacific region*.  
<http://igov.apdip.net/undp-apdip%20forum%20summary.pdf>

UNDP-APDIP Collection of Resources on Internet Governance  
<http://www.apdip.net/resources/governance/igov/>

Asia-Pacific Internet Governance Portal  
<http://igov.apdip.net>

International Telecommunication Union Internet Governance Resources  
<http://www.itu.int/osg/spu/intgov/index.phtml>

Peake, A., 2005, "Internet Governance: Urgent issues for Asia Pacific" in Chin, S.Y. (ed.) *Digital Review of Asia Pacific 2005/2006*, Penang: Southbound, pp.15-29.  
<http://www.digital-review.org>

United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force Global Forum on Internet Governance  
<http://www.unicttaskforce.org/sixthmeeting/>

United Nations Working Group on Internet Governance  
<http://www.wgig.org>

World Summit on the Information Society  
<http://www.itu.int/ws>