

**Subject:**

WSIS+20 Stakeholder Consultations: Inputs to the Elements Paper from the IAB

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H.E. Amb. Suela Janina, Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations

H.E. Amb. Ekitela Lokaale, Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations

Excellencies,

As part of the technical community, the Internet Engineering Task Force ([IETF](#)) is the leading standards development organization for the global Internet. The Internet Architecture Board ([IAB](#)) provides oversight of the process used to create Internet Standards and offers long-range technical direction for Internet development, ensuring that the Internet continues to grow and evolve as a platform for global communication and innovation in the interest of the end user and for ultimately reaching the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Together, we uphold the Internet’s foundational values of openness, trust, and inclusivity through transparent, consensus-driven processes that are open to all. Founded in 1986, the IETF today is a global community comprising network operators, engineers, vendors, researchers, academics, civil society, governments, and other stakeholders. Last year, 7,831 individuals from 77 countries participated in the IETF.

The IAB appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on aspects of the [Elements Paper](#) that are within the remit of the IETF and IAB, and thanks the Co-Facilitators for their leadership in guiding the WSIS+20 review process. The IAB welcomes the recognition in the Elements Paper that the “information society” is broad and needs a targeted approach for “digital governance” across its different dimensions. We also strongly support the emphasis on capacity building as a foundational requirement across all dimensions of digital governance. Strengthening the ability of diverse stakeholders to engage meaningfully is essential to ensuring inclusive and effective processes. The IETF and the IAB have long championed security and privacy in the Internet standards, and we wholeheartedly support and promote building confidence and security in the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) through a collaborative multistakeholder approach.

Drawing from our experience in the IETF as a global standards development organization (SDO) focused on Internet protocols, we stress that participation from a broad range of stakeholders on an equal footing is the bedrock of Internet governance. While the Elements Paper begins to address this, further refinement is needed.

While we appreciate the explicit recognition of Internet governance in paragraphs 57–64 of

the Elements Paper, we note that the current text is not consistent with the successful governance model that has enabled the Internet to thrive and allowed the global society to reap its benefits over the last several decades. Specifically, paragraph 59 references “multilateral” instead of “multistakeholder” Internet governance, which sidelines the contributions of non-governmental stakeholders and diminishes the multistakeholder principles reaffirmed in the WSIS+10 review. It is precisely this inclusive, collaborative model that has proven effective in stewarding the Internet’s development and resilience. We respectfully suggest that the Zero Draft reflects the multistakeholder model that has successfully supported the Internet’s growth and evolution, fostering economic development, innovation, and social benefit globally.

Furthermore, while the current text refers to the “full involvement” of non-governmental actors, it does not explicitly acknowledge the role of the technical community and academia as critical stakeholders. The Tunis Agenda recognized these groups as essential contributors to Internet governance. Subsequent agreements, such as the WSIS+10 Review Outcome Document and the GDC, explicitly included the “technical and academic communities” in the relevant provisions. Their omission in this iteration introduces ambiguity around whose voices are expected to shape future policy and technical decisions. We recommend that the technical community and academia be explicitly named as stakeholders in the Zero Draft.

The rapid adoption of AI across various sectors, including business and government, as well as in critical areas such as education and healthcare, as noted in paragraph 70, is striking. We also welcome the paper’s recognition of the importance of risk management and the imperative to ensure that AI does not exacerbate the digital divide. However, in response to these challenges, paragraphs 73–76 propose a predominantly multilateral approach to AI governance.

Given the rapid pace of AI’s evolution, with new applications emerging faster than their implications can often be fully assessed, a multilateral model alone is not adequate. The paper does not currently acknowledge the role of civil society, academia, or the technical community in AI governance. As demonstrated in the Internet governance context, multistakeholder models have proven effective in managing rapidly evolving technologies inclusively and adaptively. We encourage the inclusion of a broader range of stakeholders, including the technical community, academia and civil society, in any proposed AI governance framework to ensure robust, responsive, and future-ready outcomes. While we appreciate the decision to treat Internet, data, and AI governance as distinct areas, as well as the effort to examine their unique characteristics, they strongly overlap and require coordinated development. We believe the multistakeholder approach embraced by the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is not only well-suited to address these interconnected topics but is already actively doing so.

Finally, recognizing the proven value of the multistakeholder model in Internet governance and the development of Internet-based emerging technologies, we strongly believe that the

IGF should be granted a permanent mandate. As the global, open, and multistakeholder platform dedicated to dialogue on Internet governance issues, the IGF plays a vital role in fostering mutual understanding across diverse communities. A permanent mandate would ensure the continuity and stability essential for tackling evolving global challenges, while considering broad input and requirements from a wide and diverse range of stakeholders for sustainable solutions.

Respectfully,  
Tommy Pauly  
IAB Chair