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Written Statement from Internet Society

\\Item 3: “Moving from commitments to results: transforming public institutions to facilitate inclusive policy formulation and integration in the implementation and monitoring of the sustainable development goals”

\\There can be no doubt that the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was of significant importance for the international community’s efforts to address the greatest challenges of our time. From the Internet Society’s perspective, it was also a confirmation that addressing these challenges has to be done in a holistic manner, with technology playing a crucial role in channeling the efforts of all stakeholders.

\\The new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which set targets to reduce poverty and secure basic needs such as food, water, health and education, also call for public-private cooperation to “Significantly increase access to information and communications technology and strive to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet in least developed countries by 2020” (para 9c). This recognizes the contribution of ICTs towards development as they have become more widespread in developing countries. They have made important contributions in enabling access to information and educational resources, improving food production and distribution, facilitating participation in decision-making, and ensuring early warning of threats to vulnerable communities.

\\The Internet has also made important contributions for improving public governance through the dissemination of good governance practices (efficiency of public administration, access to public data spurring economic growth, effective tools to engage stakeholders, etc.) but also by setting an example through its history and multistakeholder model. Indeed, the importance and complexity of the issues set by the 2030 Development Agenda cannot be solved by one stakeholder on its own – which is why our experience from the Internet’s governance can serve as a useful insight on how to improve inclusive governance.

\\Our Experience

\\The Internet’s open nature, including open standards, voluntary adoption and permissionless innovation, has allowed for innovative applications of information technology to solve a variety of social challenges – not least in relation to public governance. Due to the general purpose of the Internet, not designed for any specific application and service, it has allowed for new solutions to address anything from education and tax administration to water management.

\\As in most applications of technology, many of these solutions are first used in developed countries, where high Internet penetration rates create a natural bridge between the larger population and public authorities, such as the widespread use of online voting in Estonia. However, as connectivity continues to increase, with more than 35% of people in developing countries using the Internet, we see these services spreading quickly, e.g. tax administration in Kenya. In addition, new services and applications have also been developed and designed for local challenges, such as Qlue, a government sponsored mobile app used in Jakarta where residents crowd-source real time information about traffic conditions, weather and threat alerts – all for the purpose to monitor public service performance and more efficient governance.

\\As representatives of the Internet’s technical community, we have been closely involved in the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society, also called the WSIS-process, which links to the 2030 Agenda and strives to leverage the benefits of technology to promote development and human empowerment through the creation of a global information society.

One of the most important outcomes of the WSIS-process is the widely recognized insight that the inclusion of all stakeholders in any governance process is important to shape sustainable solutions. This so-called multistakeholder approach is aimed at achieving good public governance in an area of multiple governance regimes that all have a significant impact on the Internet's sustainable development. This has led to an emerging culture of collaboration, and the development of new fora, such as the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), where all stakeholders address challenges as a community.

ISOC has long embraced this collaborative approach to its own work. We operate collaboratively and inclusively to pursue public policy objectives, working with governments, national and regional intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, civil society groups, the private sector and other parties to help them shape policies and reach decisions about the Internet that are consistent with our core values, experience and expertise. One concrete example of enriched international cooperation is ISOC's participation in CITELE, the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission of the Organization of American States (OAS).

Such collaboration between stakeholders has become an essential approach to addressing issues affecting the Internet. In particular, a more cohesive and representative Internet community has emerged. Stakeholders from all sectors and countries have learned to work together in many fora, and at the local level, a bottom-up movement has spread around the world to create locally designed and run Internet governance dialogues and forums where communities can share ideas and recommend action to ensure that the Internet remains open, secure, and responsive to local concerns.

The collaborative approach has also resulted in significant progress in addressing concrete policy issues. For example, recent reports have shown that, worldwide, spam is now at its lowest levels since 2003, due to concerted efforts to take legal action against spammers themselves and technical actions against "botnets" (robot networks) that are used to send spam. Progress in addressing Internet related issues such as this is the result of the efforts of all stakeholders, not least visible in recent developments of the IGF and the community's ambition to generate more tangible outcomes through the so-called Best Practice Forums. Together, private sector investment, end user creativity, open exchange of ideas among communities, the technical community's vision, and a policy environment that enables growth form stronger, more robust, sustainable and people-oriented solutions than any one stakeholder group alone could have achieved.

Challenges we experience

Although the multistakeholder approach has gained much traction over the last decade, there are still many areas that some governments see as a their exclusive domain, resulting in uninformed, national solutions to trans-border challenges. These perceptions pose a significant threat to the Internet's global nature, where unilateral solutions or the exclusion of other stakeholders undermines the collaborative efforts that are vital to the system as a whole.

From the perspective of the technical community these developments are of great concern as it undermines the fundamental properties of the Internet, which will lead to a closed and fragmented Internet that will not be able to support the continued expansion of connectivity and innovative solutions that constitute the basis for the Internet's potential to support the 2030 Agenda – including the transformation of public governance.

Similar challenges are equally present in the broader governance system that is required to address the 2030 Agenda. All stakeholders, whether businesses, governments, academia, civil society or the technical community, must act in an inclusive, open and transparent manner to ensure informed decisions that work towards the common goal of realizing the Agenda.

In the Internet domain, there is also a need for increasing awareness of the existing mechanisms and processes that perform and shapes its governance. Many newcomers to the discussions can find the

number of parallel processes and different modes of participation unsettling, and a barrier to full participation - not least for developing countries that have limited resources to engage at all levels. This is why the Internet Society is working continuously to make governance processes easier to understand and engage with, and to work for direct exchanges between different stakeholder fora. For example, the Internet Society has developed a fellowship program to assist technical Internet community and policy practitioners to better understand how the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), one of the Internet's largest standard setting bodies, and the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) processes work. Our experience shows that this is an efficient way to share information across the various stakeholders' activities, and to build consensus for common solutions.

\\This challenge, of policy silos for common challenges, will be equally present in the broader SDG process. To map out the different processes at the international and local level, whether driven by governments or private actors, and to design and clearly inform about participatory mechanisms, will be very important. These challenges are big, but the solutions are sometimes small. Clear and efficient communications, ranging from advance announcements and accurately updated websites, to well functioning remote participation are crucial components of a global process that involves a diverse set of actors with varying resources. Our experience is clear – these seemingly small components of global governance should not be considered as an added bonus, but an intrinsic determinant of its success.

\\It is our strong belief that the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda is an effort that requires the input from all stakeholders. To transform public institutions and processes towards inclusiveness of all stakeholders will be important for an efficient and sustainable strategy to bridge the global economic and social divides. Governance comes in many shapes and forms, including governance performed by the private sector, which is why their global interoperability must be ensured to effectively address the goals of the Agenda 2030 for a Sustainable Development.