RIPE NCC Response to the Consultation on Paragraph 93(a) of the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation

8/3/2021

1. **What do you consider should be priority functions of this multi-stakeholder high-level body, should it be established? And what would be the relationship between this body and the existing Multistakeholder Advisory Group of the IGF?**

These responses are submitted on behalf of the RIPE NCC, the Regional Internet Registry for Europe, the Middle East and parts of Central Asia.

The activities of the MHLB, as outlined in paragraph 93(a), can be summarised as effecting action and change based on the output of the IGF. Such a role must be clearly distinct from and complementary to the roles of the IGF itself and of the MAG.

The activities of the MHLB should be informed and guided by the IGF, with clear reporting, feedback and communication protocols established at the outset to ensure accountability and transparency.

We believe the MHLB should not add an additional layer of hierarchy in the existing model. Instead, it should operate adjacent to, rather than above, the MAG, though they may have personnel in common. The priority must be open and effective communication channels between the different bodies to ensure each can best fulfil its mandate, along with transparent, accessible reporting.

2. **What suggestions do you have on the governance structure and composition of this body (e.g., number of members, representation of stakeholder groups, regional balance, rotation of members)?**

A clear distinction between the roles of the MAG and the MHLB should inform the structure and composition of the MHLB. While the MAG is a larger group, ensuring that the full range of stakeholder views can be brought to bear on decisions about the IGF's programme, content and schedule, the MHLB, as outlined in the Secretary-General's Roadmap, should have a more targeted approach, with a focus on actualising outcomes of the IGF in various ways. As such, the MHLB should be a smaller group (likely no more than 10 people). Selection of MHLB members should focus on demonstrated ability to effect change and drive agendas in various venues.

As participants in the community processes that have been established to provide nominees to the MAG, we note that there have at times been concerns in relation to the transparency and openness of this process. Acknowledging the complexity and challenge of conducting such selection processes at a global scale as well as the need to ensure geographical, gender and stakeholder balance, we would strongly urge that transparency and openness be enshrined at the centre of any process to select members of the MHLB.

3. How could this body be supported and funded?

Through the Number Resource Organisation (NRO), the RIPE NCC has been a significant financial contributor to the IGF. We recognise that sustainable funding for the IGF has been a long-standing concern, along with the negative effects this has on long-term planning and strategy development. Secure, sustainable funding for the operation and activities of the MHLB, preferably via the IGF Trust Fund, must be ensured up front as a prerequisite to such a body being established. Reimbursements made to members should be reasonable, transparent and subject to the same terms as those for MAG members.

4. Any other comments on paragraph 93 (a)?

The RIPE NCC welcomes ongoing efforts to improve and evolve approaches to Internet governance. While we believe that the IGF has evolved into an important and effective venue to bring together key actors and facilitate discussion of Internet governance issues, it is clear that significant challenges remain unresolved. In that context, structural innovations like the MHLB represent positive steps towards ensuring that a multistakeholder approach to Internet governance can effectively address those challenges.

In taking those steps, particularly in empowering a new high-level body, it is essential that the IGF's foundational principles - transparency, openness, inclusiveness - be reflected in the structures and processes through which the MHLB is established and maintained.