Session title: Influencing Internet Governance

Session organiser/s
Name of organisation/s: ARTICLE 19
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Issues to be covered

This session will explore key internet governance issues, both policy and technical, related to internet freedom and in particular freedom of expression, right to information and privacy. Panelists will clearly lay out how different internet governance bodies are approaching these issues, and the risks and opportunities inherent in this, including whether or not these bodies are really suited to address the complex problems facing the internet. And if not them, how do we go about building the institutions that embrace multistakeholderism to address the challenges? In discussing some specific key issues at internet governance fora and standard setting bodies[1], panelists will also address the opportunities and threats to multistakeholder governance, in particular the inclusion of civil society and public interest voices.

Session synopsis (1-3 paragraphs)

Will the future of the internet be shaped by existing internet governance bodies or despite them?

The development, coordination and management of the internet is complex. "The internet" is a globally distributed network of interconnected autonomous networks that interoperate through protocols, hardware and software as well as a broad range of principles and policies that have evolved over time. Internet governance is messy, but it is also largely open, with a role for civil society and public interest voices.

At all layers of the internet (infrastructure, network, content and social) there are advocacy efforts to ensure the internet remain open, namely that it is accessible, privacy respecting and enables access to information. Intervention in internet governance takes three major forms: technical standards, policy norms and multistakeholder inclusion. Each forum in the global internet governance landscape has particular excellence or shortcomings across these three axes. This raises a key question: is this complexity and messiness the key to ensuring the protection of human rights online, or will it be its Achilles heel?

Additionally an important consideration is how global internet governance influences or is influenced by regional and local processes. What should be the interaction between national legislation, regional bodies and multi-stakeholder internet governance? This session will lay out the key challenges to address if we are truly going to get the rights-based internet governance that we want, including ways in which more partners can join the work of civil society advocates in internet governance fora.

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1 such as ICANN, IETF, ITU, IEEE and the IGF

In, brief how do the session relate to the SIF theme of Shrinking Democratic Space Online?

We have an opportunity to deeply embed respect for human rights principles in the infrastructure and standards that determine how the internet works, but the window of opportunity is shrinking. Illiberal actors are diligently working to ensure the balance tips in the opposite direction, to create an internet that erodes privacy, provides for easier surveillance and inhibits the free-flow of information. The governing bodies of the internet have generally made a commitment to multistakeholder models, which can be an important front of struggle for civil society to address these threats at a more fundamental level than looking at content alone.

Expected outcome of the session

Session attendees will be given the chance to offer their expertise and views on issues raised by the panel. The discussion will move towards a greater understanding of both the policy and technical opportunities and challenges for multistakeholder internet governance. Finally attendees will come away with an understanding of the key issues related to their own advocacy efforts and concrete ways to get involved with ongoing advocacy efforts in internet governance fora.

Panelists / speakers

First name	Last name	Organisation	Title	Country	Needs Financing (ODA/nonODA)
Sylvie	Coudray	UNESCO	Chief of Section for Freedom of Expression	France	NonODA, no
Grace	Githaiga	Kictanet	Director	Kenya	ODA, yes
J. Carlos	Lara	Derechos Digitales	Research and Policy Director	Chile	ODA, yes
Charles	Bradley	GPD	Director	UK	NonODA, no
Gurshabad	Grover	CIS	Programme Officer	India	ODA, yes
Mallory	Knodel	A19 (moderator)	Head of Digital	US	NonODA, no

Format

Each panelist will have seven minutes of opening remarks, focused on one of the internet governance bodies or related issues each. Then there will be a discussion lead interview-style by the moderator, on the key questions taken from the session description. This can be expanded or contracted based on the time we will have available. Then we go to Q&A, and a summary of the issues and a call to forward action by the moderator to wrap up the panel.

Equipment request *(Technical, furniture etc.):*Furniture for the panellists. Possibly video projection.