WSIS+20: Our Vision & Contribution

The Internet as Global Infrastructure

To understand the Internet, we highlight two core concepts it is built upon. One is protocol standardisation, which defines how devices communicate over network infrastructure using a common set of protocols and formats. This ensures interoperability across the thousands of interconnected networks that comprise the Internet. Organisations like the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) play a crucial role in maintaining the Internet's technical stability, global interoperability, and security.

The second concept is the registration of names and addresses, or Internet identifiers, including IP address blocks, Autonomous System Numbers (ASNs), domain names, and port numbers. These are managed through globally coordinated processes led by organisations such as the five Regional Internet Registries (RIRs), Public Technical Identifiers (PTI), and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) that are fundamentally open and non-commercial. Unlike most proprietary platforms and applications built on top of the Internet's core functions, these systems are designed to serve the public interest, meaning the interest of everyone using the Internet.

Together, these core elements of protocols, parameters, and unique identifiers have established the Internet as a permissionless, global platform for innovation.

Technical Coordination and Internet Governance

The Internet is a general-purpose network of interconnected networks that underpins digital innovation and inclusion. In that sense, it is a global resource that requires a multistakeholder approach to run most effectively. The key operational tasks, coordination, insights, and expertise from the technical community are instrumental to keeping the Internet's core infrastructure stable, resilient, secure, and interoperable worldwide.

RIRs play a key role in maintaining core technical functions of the global Internet and so contribute to the multistakeholder approach in Internet governance discussions with the perspectives of the technical community. The RIPE NCC, one of the five RIRs, allocates Internet number resources (IP addresses and ASNs) in Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia. It fulfils an essential technical and administrative role by registering number resources to ensure their uniqueness and shaping policies governing and facilitating global Internet routing. This work enables the foundational environment on which digital services operate, including new technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics and quantum computing.[1]

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[1] The RIPE NCC's contributions to external consultations, including to the ITU WSIS+20 Review, are available at: https://www.ripe.net/community/internet-governance/multi-stakeholder-engagement/ripe-ncc-contributions-to-external-consultations/

This coordination role is essential to maintaining the Internet protocols and open standards enabling global interoperability, decentralised management and a single distributed routing system, and registration services that ensure the uniqueness of Internet identifiers.

Alongside our key technical community partners including other RIRs, ICANN and the IETF, we promote the stability, security, and neutrality of the Internet's core infrastructure through a bottom-up and open policy development process, and through coordination with all relevant stakeholders across governments, academia, civil society, and the private sector.

Maintaining an Open, Inclusive and Secure Internet

As a membership-based organisation and secretariat for the RIPE community, the RIPE NCC operates as an open, inclusive, and community-driven organisation. In addition, we aim to strengthen collaboration with international and regional partners with a view to promote evidence-based and well-informed public policy and governance mechanisms.

For example, the RIPE NCC recently signed a Joint Declaration with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to support capacity-building in Internet infrastructure development and accelerate the transition towards latest-generation Internet protocols. As an active member of the ITU-D and ITU-T sectors, we strongly support the Internet's long-term scalability through the allocation, registration and promotion of IPv6 deployment, which vastly increases the available address space as demand grows.

We also aim to foster secure connectivity through Internet routing security and the implementation of Resource Public Key Infrastructure (RPKI), which allows network operators to mitigate risks of routing incidents. Resilience is also further enhanced by the allocation and registration of ASNs, which enable redundancy through multihoming, peering, and the creation of robust interconnection between networks.

Together, these activities ensure that the Internet remains globally interoperable, secure, and resilient, evolving to meet the needs of a digital future built on continuous innovation. Finally, we provide capacity-building programmes in our service region covering 76 countries. In addition, we are an active contributor to the ITU's USD 73 billion Partner2Connect Digital Coalition and to the IGF Trust Fund.

In conclusion, WSIS+20 provides the opportunity to reflect on and reinforce the foundational principles of the Internet: its open, distributed, and globally interoperable architecture, which has enabled innovation and connectivity for billions of users. To safeguard these principles, Internet governance must be truly inclusive, integrate bottom-up processes, and guarantee the impartiality and interoperability necessary to ensure a well-functioning Internet globally.

Call to Action

1. **Safeguard the interoperability, availability, and integrity of the global Internet:** As the backbone of digital transformation, the Internet must remain a stable and unified platform. Preserving its core architectural elements is essential to achieving the WSIS Action Lines and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2. **Recognise the role of Internet coordination structures like the IETF, ICANN, and the RIRs:** These are fundamental to the technical coordination that underpins a secure and globally interoperable Internet. Supporting their open, transparent, and inclusive processes is critical to the Internet's long-term viability.

3. **Strengthen the technical community's role and collaboration with governments:** Deepening ties between technical experts and policymakers will foster evidence-based governance and informed decision-making, ensuring digital policies are technically sound and future-proof. This can be achieved by improving information-sharing and direct collaboration, particularly between the technical community, government, and public sector entities.

4. **Understand the capacity-building efforts of upscaling network connectivity:** Investments in training, infrastructure, and knowledge-sharing, especially in underserved regions, will help close connectivity gaps and support inclusive and equitable Internet access for all.

5. **Re-focus global attention on closing the digital divide while preparing for tomorrow's emerging technologies:** The Internet must evolve to support not just current users but also future innovation in AI, quantum computing, and robotics. Bridging digital divides today ensures readiness for tomorrow.

6. **Ensure the Internet continues to serve as a catalyst for innovation, growth, and empowerment:** A resilient, secure, and open Internet is essential for progress across all SDGs and one digital agenda. Coordinated governance, from Internet Coordination, to Internet Governance, to broader Digital Governance, is key to a digital future that empowers everyone.

7. **Recognise the Internet's layered nature in digital governance:** Effective digital governance must respect the boundaries between the Internet's technical functions and the regulation of the application and content layers above it. While these layers are interdependent, they serve different purposes and require distinct approaches. Aligning policy interventions with the appropriate layer helps avoid unintended consequences and supports the global interoperability and resilience that make the Internet a global resource.