

IGF-USA 2015 - Keynote remarks by Julie Zoller - Deputy Coordinator, International Communications and Information Policy, U.S. Department of State - @ZollerJN

<https://livestream.com/internetsociety/igfusa2015/videos/93402489>

(Applause.)

>> JULIE ZOLLER: Thank you so much, Susan, for that introduction. It's really great to be here at IGF USA, and to be on George Washington University's campus. I commute every day to Washington from Reston, and I take the metro to Foggy Bottom and walk through this campus every morning and afternoon. It's a wonderful place to be. I'm delighted to have this opportunity to speak to you here at IGF USA, but before I begin my remarks, I want to thank the many individuals who made up the planning committee today. You've provided a valuable platform for exchanging views on internet policy, and embodied the very approach we are collectively seeking to advance.

The continued evolution of the multi stakeholder method. In my role as Senior Deputy Coordinator for International Communication and Information Policy at the State Department, my primary responsibility is to formulate and coordinate communication and information policy relative to multilateral organizations. This includes the International Telecommunication Union, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation, and the Organization for American States. As ICTs have evolved, so have the interests and needs of the governments that participate in these multilateral institutions. The growth and spread of the internet brought with it economic and social benefits that have improved lives in every corner of the world.

And with it came a new set of public policy issues and challenges that also need to be addressed. In the United States, transparency and robust public participation is ingrained in our democratic processes and DNA. Having the expertise of those who are most knowledgeable and most keenly affected by policy is necessary in order to achieve the best results. We know that a wide range of public policy challenges requires the expertise

and efforts of the full community, and we are joined in that view by many countries around the world.

We recognize that the internet has flourished because of, and not despite, the consensus based process that embraces the private sector, civil society, academia, engineers, and governments to participate in its development and governance. But even as we have made progress in advancing the multi stakeholder approach to internet governance, there are still some countries that would rather discuss and decide public policy issues in institutions or settings where governments have the sole or dominant voice.

This has created an interesting set of questions and challenges for multilateral organizations in how they engage with the internet community. Those questions include, how can the internet community preserve and advance the multi stakeholder approach in light of some government's' drive to address interpret policy in multilateral settings? How can we shape institutions to better meet the needs of the 21st century society?

How do we make existing multi stakeholder institutions more accessible to all stakeholders, including governments from developing countries that are seeking assistance in addressing public policy issues? Can multilateral institutions aim to support the multi stakeholder approach in organizations, and if so, how? The answers to these questions are a work in progress, but I'm happy to note that we are making progress, and there are positive signs emerging. One standout achievement is the IGF. The connection to the United Nations provides the IGF legitimacy in the eyes of many participants from the developing world. And the multi stakeholder nature of the IGF gives it the expertise and vibrancy to address the critical issues of the day.

For the past decade, the IGF has served the community well as a valuable forum for timely, candid, and multi stakeholder dialogue on internet policy issues. As a community, we have matured and improved the IGF so that it better meets the needs of all stakeholders. The IGF provides participants with live webcasting and transcripts of the sessions, which provides transparency and expands participation, including participation by persons with disabilities and specific needs. Intersessional

work like the best practice forums and the growth of national and regional IGFs have deepened the forum's reach.

We've seen some multilateral institutions take steps to incorporate stakeholders outside their traditional membership in their proceedings on internet related issues. These steps are significant as well as symbolic when you consider the traditions of these organizations. U.N. entities like UNESCO and the U.N. commission on science and technology for development have wrestled with the issue of multi stakeholder versus traditional intergovernmental participation in their proceedings. CSTD, which has an important role in advising UNGA and the ECOSOC on science and technology issues, and served as the focal point on the implementation of outcomes has adopted a model that strives to use the multi stakeholder approach effectively while still preserving the intergovernmental nature of the CSTD.

UNESCO, which has historically had a stronger relationship with the nongovernmental organizations, has been more open to multi stakeholder participation, as well as participating as a stakeholder itself in other meetings and events. This was apparent at UNESCO WSIS+10 review event in 2013, and most recently in the Connecting the Dots Conference on the internet, including breakout sections comprised of a mix of representatives from government and the private sector to discuss the final outcome document.

This was also the case at the World Summit on the Information Society, organized by the ITU, UNESCO, and UNDP last June. It reviewed the progress made in the implementation of the WSIS. Six multi stakeholder preparatory meetings provided the basis for the two outcome documents, which were approved by the community. We viewed the culmination of the preparatory process as a positive development and an example of how multilateral institutions are opening to multi stakeholder participation, and the membership is increasingly recognizing the important role that nongovernment stakeholders can play.

We also saw incremental progress in the ITU's conference in 2014. Their member states agreed to establish mechanisms to enable multi stakeholder input to the government only council working group on internet public policy issues. This agreement fell short of the United States' proposal to open the council

working group entirely and allow all stakeholders to participate fully, however, it signifies progress and helps to further the view that discussions of internet related issues require stakeholder participation, which is a step in the right direction.

Every meeting that is enriched by multi stakeholder participation serves as an example and a precedent that opens doors for multi stakeholder participation in future meetings and fora. Despite the progress that we have made, we recognize that some scenarios call for governments to play predominant roles. This is the nature of multilateral institutions, and why the mandates of such institutions must remain focused on their core competencies and not expand into the area of internet governance. This is also why we find it essential to incorporate multi stakeholder participation in our domestic processes, and in the delegations that we bring to multilateral meetings.

At the 2014 Conference, we had a delegation of more than 130 members, over half of whom were nongovernmental stakeholders. The situation is lining up to be much the same for the World Radio Communication Conference that will take place at the end of this year. I don't have sufficient words to express how valuable we find your participation and your expertise, and your contributions to our delegations. I believe it's because of you that we have the success that we have, and the outcomes we achieve. Looking ahead, the United States is pleased that the international community will conclude the ten year review of WSIS at the general assembly in December 2015.

The growth and development of the information society has been remarkable, and the WSIS framework continues to demonstrate that it is flexible enough to adapt to rapidly evolving technologies. The WSIS outcomes recognize the role of the multi stakeholder community, which has been integral to the WSIS implementation the past decade. We believe that the WSIS+10 review should reaffirm the principles agreed at the world summit, including promotion of the multi stakeholder approach. To that end, the United States worked closely with our allies over eight months to negotiate the modalities for the high level meeting and its preparatory process.

One of the most difficult issues during those discussions was the reluctance of a few countries to include nongovernment stakeholders in a process held according to general assembly rules, but we continued to push for full and open participation for all. And we will persist at every opportunity to make sure the voices of nongovernmental stakeholders are heard and taken into consideration during WSIS+10. We are pleased to see that the President of the General Assembly, and the two co facilitators have recognized the role of the nongovernment stakeholders outlined in the modalities resolution, and appear committed to making the process as inclusive as possible.

Not every country agrees with this approach, so we'll need to maintain vigilance to make sure it remains as open as possible. Now it's time for all of us to take advantage of those opportunities and to participate in the WSIS+10 process. There are important meetings in October and November, and most urgently, the U.N. Secretariat is accepting written inputs towards the WSIS+10 outcome documents until the end of July. I encourage you to provide input. We continue to work these issues on other fronts, as well.

We are working with the OECD to shape an upcoming meeting on the digital economy, innovation growth and social prosperity, scheduled for next June in Cancun, Mexico. An ambassador will be a vice chair of that ministerial meeting. One of the themes focuses on the internet as a platform for growth and inclusiveness. We look forward to discussing the benefits of an open internet for investment, trade, innovation, economic growth, and social wellbeing, and reaffirming the OECD's internet policy principles.

We have a strong U.S. government team working on engagements with international institutions, and we will continue to work with the broader stakeholder community, informing our positions and approaches on these important issues. As we know, there are those who do not support the multi stakeholder system, and seek to replace it with a centralized top down approach where governments and intergovernmental institutions have more control. Let me say that we in the U.S. government believe that such policies are misguided and would actually stunt the growth of the internet and impede its effectiveness.

We live in an age where the key ingredients for innovation and economic growth are cooperation and collaboration, flexibility and ingenuity, and we need the community's support, because you bear the largest share of the burden on developing and implementing solutions that keep the internet robust and growing. The fact is that in the global governance of the internet, intergovernmental authority has never been the prevailing power, and it shouldn't be going forward.

The innovation and transformative effect for human empowerment the internet has produced are proof positive that the multi stakeholder approach not only should continue, but deserves praise and recognition, reaffirmation, and further investment. We in the U.S. government are working steadfastly with our international partners and global stakeholders to preserve the multi stakeholder approach wherever it is challenged, and we need your help to do this. That is why I'm particularly pleased to be here at the IGF USA to ask for your continuing engagement. Thank you very much, and I look forward to working with all of you.

(Applause.)