January 22, 2014

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Global Commission on Internet Governance?

The Global Commission on Internet Governance is a two-year initiative that will present a comprehensive stand on the future of multi-stakeholder Internet governance. Chaired by Sweden's Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, the commission will include about 25 members drawn from various fields and from around the world, including policy and government, academia and civil society. All commissioners are listed at the commission's website, www.ourinternet.org

The commission will address four key themes, within which are a number of sub-themes:

- Enhancing governance legitimacy — including regulatory approaches and standards;
- Preserving innovation — including critical Internet resources, infrastructure and competition policy;
- Ensuring rights online — including establishing the principle of technological neutrality for human rights, privacy, cyber-crime and free expression;
- Avoiding systemic risk — including establishing norms regarding state conduct, cybercrime cooperation, and proliferation and disarmament issues.

2. Why is the commission important?

The current mechanism of Internet governance, colloquially called the "multi-stakeholder" model, is under threat. This threat to a free, open, and universal Internet comes from two principal sources. First, a number of authoritarian states are waging a campaign to exert greater state control over critical Internet resources. Second, revelations about the nature and extent of online surveillance have led to a loss of trust. Collectively, these circumstances have created a need to update legacy mechanisms for Internet governance; but deadlocks in international dialogue means the potential exists for the fragmentation of the Internet. Accordingly, a significant and timely opportunity exists to feed innovative new ideas into these negotiations through the establishment of the Global Commission on Internet Governance.

Partners:

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3. **What is Internet governance and the multi-stakeholder model?**

The Internet's architecture is constantly changing. The content and computing devices which end users see are only the surface of a massive underlying infrastructure of networks, services, and institutions that keep the Internet operational. This architecture comprises private information intermediaries such as network operators, exchange points, search engines, hosting services, e-commerce platforms, and social media providers.

Despite the privatized and somewhat autonomous nature of these network components, global coordination is necessary to keep the Internet operational. For example, global technical standardization ensures interoperability; cybersecurity governance maintains stability and authentication; and centralized coordination ensures that each Internet name and number is globally unique. These, and other, tasks necessary to keep the Internet operational, are collectively referred to as "global Internet governance." As the Internet becomes increasingly enmeshed with vital aspects of everyday life, actors that perform these various Internet governance functions are also being called upon to provide expert knowledge on the governance of human behaviour online. This trend complicates an already difficult governance terrain.

For the majority of its history, the Internet has been governed in an organic and piecemeal fashion by a variety of standard-setting and other technical bodies and by private companies performing key roles as network operators and information intermediaries. Multi-stakeholder governance means governance involving more than one of the four categories of participants: firms, states, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society (including technical experts acting in their individual capacities). It typically utilizes relatively non-hierarchical procedural rules. Rather than hard law and regulatory enforcement, governance is accomplished by means of voluntary compliance with technical standards, codes of conduct, and industry best practices.

4. **How will the Global Commission on Internet Governance influence the debate on Internet governance?**

The Global Commission's goal is two-fold. First, it will encourage globally inclusive public discussions on the future of Internet governance. It will do this through public outreach activities, including accessible research as well as public consultation. Second, through its comprehensive policy-oriented report, and the subsequent promotion of this report, the Commission will communicate its findings with senior stakeholders at key Internet governance events, including, for example, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)+10 review process, the Global Multistakeholder Meeting on the Future of Internet Governance in spring 2014, and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Plenipotentiary Meeting in fall 2014.

Although the commission will formally begin its program of work at the conclusion of ICANN's High Level Panel on Internet Cooperation, which concludes its work in May 2014, planning and research are well underway. The commission will tackle a broad range of issues through an intensive program of research and consultation over an extended, two-year period.

5. **How will the Global Commission on Internet Governance conduct its work?**

During its two-year time span, the commission will conduct broad based and targeted consultations with stakeholders interested and involved in Internet governance, including the general public, Internet Service Providers and network operators, online service providers, multinational enterprises, civil society organizations and copyright holders. Research conducted by the commission will explore Internet governance through a multidisciplinary lens, including political science, economics, law, engineering, computer science and international business.

The commission's work will culminate in a report on Internet governance and multi-stakeholder governance. The commission's policy-relevant research findings will be rolled out on an ongoing basis, on its website and at high-profile Internet governance meetings and events.

6. **How is the Global Commission on Internet Governance supported?**

The commission is an initiative between two partners:

- **The Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI)**, an independent, non-partisan think tank on international governance, located in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada: www.cigionline.org.

- **Chatham House, the Royal Institute of International Affairs,** based in London, UK, is a world-leading source of independent analysis, informed debate and influential ideas on how to build a prosperous and secure world for all: www.chathamhouse.org.

The commission will be supported by a CIGI–Chatham House Secretariat, as well as by a broader Steering Committee comprised of the Chair, the Secretariat, and a small number of officials from interested governments. It will also be supported by a Research Advisory Network and by a Business Advisory Network. These groups will support the work of the Secretariat in providing the Chair and the Commission with a full range of research and stakeholder views.

7. **How does someone learn more about, and get involved with, the Global Commission on Internet Governance?**

The commission will be conducting broad based consultations, which, over time, will include soliciting feedback on Internet governance from members of the general public. For the latest information, please visit: www.ourinternet.org.