IAMAI Position on Internet Governance

The Internet has emerged as a key source of information and knowledge for people across the globe. It has also made important contributions to the economy in this country, and now contributes 2.7% to the country's GDP, amounting to $ 60 billion. Internet-enabled SMEs post revenues and profits that are on average around 50% higher than their offline-only counterparts. It has also played a crucial role in giving voice to people who have previously remained largely unheard and, most importantly, has strengthened democratic processes by improving citizen participation and government accountability and transparency. India now has the world's third largest Internet user group.

Given the Internet's rapid proliferation, its ability to enable business innovation and contribute to political and socio-economic reforms, and its global reach, Internet governance needs to be discussed widely by all stakeholders. More so because the Internet has become such a huge success-story primarily due to the values that lie at its core: openness, universality, interoperability, innovation, freedom of expression, and access to knowledge. In the promotion and protecting of these core values, academia, the technical community, civil society, and business, along with governments have each played a distinct role. It is imperative they continue to do so.

Internet's growth till date is pivoted on the fact that it has been largely self-governed, going forward this would not be the case if we take into account Government of India's current stand in recent International fora for an Inter-governmental control of the Internet. Industry forms the crux of cyber-space. It engineers, build and operate the protocols, networks, services, and devices that make the Internet ecosystem possible. Without the full participation of industry a feasible policy cannot be conceived or implemented. The way forward is to take a consensual approach where all stakeholders including the government will have an equal say while deciding the institutional framework. We would like to ensure that government's Internet policy related decision-making activities are open and inclusive to all stakeholders.

The position taken by the Government of India are linked to its cyber security concerns. Mass surveillance by governments has assumed center stage in recent years and is driving the current international discourse. Multilateral/inter-governmental mechanisms will be inadequate to address the serious concerns of government surveillance and intrusion into the privacy of Internet users and citizens.

These positions would, if implemented, undermine the fundamental technical and operational security and resilience of the global Internet fabric – one aspect of which is its ability to dynamically reroute traffic as necessary in the event of any particular failure.

India's current position of multilateral/intergovernmental governance of the Internet cannot address these internal cyber security concerns. Rather, the industry, NGOs, and governments must work together in order to be effective in strengthening protection against malware, Bots, and cyber-security threats rather than vesting governance of these issues with any intergovernmental organization. There are complex issues of privacy, freedom of speech and expression, surveillance, transparency, which affect the civil society, industry

and communities using the internet. Such decisions have to be arrived at after consulting the various stakeholders affected. The Internet works not because of an inter-governmental mandate; rather it works because its governance structure is bottom up, participatory, open, inclusive, collaborative and transparent allowing innovation without permission and free flow of ideas.

Industry has been at the forefront of ensuring the growth of Internet, which serves billions of people across the globe, of which more than 300 million are in India. Any process that does not include Industry/civil society and academia in a formal discussion, where public policy decisions are concerned, is fraught with implementation challenges.

At the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis in 2005, the multi-stakeholder model was recognised as the global model for Internet governance. A working definition of Internet governance was adopted by the Summit and included in the agenda, which states that Internet Governance is "the development and application by governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programs that shape the evolution and use of the Internet".

Furthermore the Tunis Agenda states explicitly that a "multi-stakeholder approach should be adopted, as far as possible, at all levels". There are well established global processes reflecting these principles. The annual global IGF meetings, IETF and the IANA transition meetings are all structured according to these principles. We call upon the Government of India to participate in these consultations and institute open, transparent participatory domestic processes involving all stakeholder groups that allow for consistent and principles based policy making.

On behalf of the Internet Industry and members of the association, we are keen to have a model which has least amount of intervention and maximum engagement and we continue to support the current multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance and work to improve it.