

Global Agenda Council on the Future of the Internet 2012-2014



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Understanding/Context

Awareness concerning the impact of the Internet on a range of areas, including consumer rights, human rights, business models and political security, is increasing. The number of devices that can connect to the Internet continues to grow, as does the breadth of access and volume of data involved in online interactions.

Despite this increase in awareness, traffic and use, the public discourse on Internet governance remains unclear; as a result, there is a risk that the benefits and opportunities offered by the Internet could be eclipsed. The lack of clarity has been heightened during recent debates over regulation and security, demonstrating that key leaders and decision-makers are not well acquainted with the technology and its effects. Perhaps most notably, revelations of wide-scale state surveillance, via the Internet, have significantly underscored the need to address longstanding questions of Internet governance.

Technical and academic discussions on the Internet are often difficult to understand or communicate, making them inaccessible to the general public, while there is a deficiency in "Internet literacy", even among business and political leaders. The challenges surrounding this issue reveal that, although the value of the Internet is clear to many, its future is uncertain. This has been complicated by the plethora of organizations that claim responsibility for different areas of the Internet, and by the private companies that supply the infrastructure to maintain it.

Shaping the Agenda

Over the past year, the Global Agenda Council on the Future of the Internet has opened a discussion on how to most effectively communicate the opportunities and pitfalls of different models of Internet governance. In developing a clear

and neutral framework for this conversation, the Council produced an infographic outlining the issue, accompanied by a preliminary set of recommendations for world leaders that was distributed during a cross-industry session of chief executives at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2013, and in a workshop on hyperconnectivity organized by the Forum in June 2013.

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In the coming months, the Council intends to further develop its initial recommendations and make them more relevant and actionable for the target audience. The key priority for the Council is to ensure that the benefits and advantages of the Internet are properly understood, at both the legislative and public level, through a series of relevant infographics. After initiating this conversation in 2012-2013, the Council will continue to engage the relevant stakeholders in discussions during the coming year. There will be a particular focus on surveillance and Internet literacy within the wider umbrella of Internet governance.

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