

NETmundial Initiative

for Internet Governance Cooperation & Development

FAQ

What is the purpose of the NETmundial Initiative?

The animating purpose of the Initiative is to contribute to the broader international effort to advance multistakeholder Internet governance on the basis of the NETmundial principles articulated by an unprecedented multistakeholder conference convened by the government of Brazil in April, 2014.

As summarized in the NETmundial Initiative briefing document prepared for the Initiative's launch, the Initiative will seek to make a contribution to the positive evolution of multistakeholder Internet governance in two concrete respects:

- First, taking advantage of the World Economic Forum's uniquely interdisciplinary, leader-level multistakeholder communities, it aims to support a broader policy dialogue on issues that would benefit from the engagement of additional relevant ministries, industries and academic and civil society expertise beyond those specializing in the ICT sector and participating regularly in traditional Internet governance fora. There are a range of non-technical policy challenges that increasingly occupy the attention of political, business and civil society leaders which would benefit from the participation of economic, security, human rights and other institutions and experts in a multistakeholder setting in order to strengthen understanding, enhance trust and identify potential areas of common ground.
- Second, it will serve as a platform for galvanizing support for capacity building in two respects: a) to support developing countries which wish to enhance their access to the Internet and build their own multistakeholder governance frameworks; and b) to explore ways to strengthen the capacity of the decentralized Internet governance ecosystem to respond through distributed governance groups to specific issues or problems that arise, including those encountered by developing countries which may not be in a position to readily identify relevant expertise and resources.

These are the specific terms of reference for the Initiative as initially conceived. They will be discussed and shaped further during a scoping workshop at the Initiative's initial meeting and announcement on August 28 in Geneva. In addition, there will be a six month period of consultations with a broad range of stakeholders and experts regarding whether and how to establish a dedicated organizational structure to support these activities going forward, whether or not connected to the Forum.

The initiative is intended to complement and provide additional value in these specific respects to the broader, bottom-up Internet governance dialogue processes and communities that are working to advance progress based on the NETmundial principles, including particularly the Internet Governance Forum. The aim is to add a further dimension to the global dialogue on these issues and to the capacity of the decentralized Internet governance ecosystem to respond effectively to challenges. The World Economic Forum is an independent international institution dedicated to advancing public-private cooperation through multistakeholder dialogue and action. It serves as a platform for specific, time-limited initiatives that engage its communities of leaders in informal dialogue or collective action on particular global, regional or industry challenges.

How did the Initiative originate?

The Initiative evolved out of informal discussions among multiple stakeholders in the months since the NETmundial conference and following the report of the Panel on Global Internet Cooperation and Governance Mechanisms. The view that emerged from these discussions was that international cooperation ought to be strengthened to build on the important accomplishments of the NETmundial conference and the extraordinary leadership of the government of Brazil. For example, it was thought that there would be a useful purpose served by creating an interdisciplinary, leader-level dialogue on how the NETmundial principles could best be applied to various emerging economic, social, security and other broad policy issues, and that the World Economic Forum would be a conducive platform on which to organize such discussions in light of the regular participation in its global activities of ministers of many portfolios and governments as well as chief executives of international organizations, companies and civil society institutions from many sectors. There was also strong interest in such an initiative serving as a basis for finding cooperative ways to strengthen the capacity of developing countries wishing to develop their own multistakeholder frameworks or address specific Internet governance issues as well as the capacity of the highly distributed internet governance ecosystem to coalesce around other challenges consistent with the vision articulated in the NETmundial principles.

What is the relationship of this Initiative to the recent NETmundial conference in Sao Paulo, Brazil?

There is no formal relationship. This informal Initiative, among others that may emerge, seeks to carry forward the collaborative spirit of Sao Paulo and build on the principles articulated there in the two specific ways cited above --- interdisciplinary dialogue and capacity building --- in a multistakeholder setting for the purpose of supporting the evolution of a more open, participatory, stable, and effective distributed governance ecosystem that both enhances trust and reflects the velocity and transnational nature of the Internet.

What is the relationship of this Initiative to the Internet Governance Forum?

The Initiative seeks to complement the activities of the IGF by helping to engage a more interdisciplinary and cross-sector array of ministries, industries, academic disciplines and others in discussion on specific policy challenges that would benefit from additional leader-level conversations. These discussions are not intended to replace but rather to supplement the highly inclusive, grass-roots discussions taking place in IGF venues. The Undersecretary General of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs as well as the Chairman of the Internet Governance Forum have been invited to the Initiative's initial scoping discussions and announcement on August 28. The former will be sending a representative and the latter has confirmed his participation. There will also be a session on and consultations about the Initiative at the upcoming IGF meeting in Istanbul. The goal is to ensure close cooperation and sharing of information with IGF, and this will be one of the items for discussion and guidance during the initial scoping workshop on August 28.

How will the Initiative be structured and governed?

The Initiative is being catalysed by the World Economic Forum in partnership with ICANN and a number of governments and non-state actors. The Forum will serve as a platform for a number of the foreseen dialogue activities, including at its next Annual Meeting in Davos in January 2015, as well the initiation of specific capacity building partnerships. It is in consultation with Founding Partners to form a transitional steering committee reflecting the Initiative's stakeholder and regional diversity for the purpose of helping to shape the Initiative's activities and in particular a six-month

process of consultations with a wide range of stakeholders and experts on the question of whether and how to establish a dedicated organizational structure, whether within or outside the Forum, to support these activities going forward. In the spirit of Sao Paulo, any such structure would have to be fully transparent, multistakeholder and open to the participation of a wide range of governments and stakeholders on an equal footing. The Forum has served as the launch platform for a number of major independent international initiatives on different issues over the years. It is not, nor does it seek to become, an ongoing operational agency on Internet governance or any other issue. Rather, it is an informal platform for engaging leaders from governments, companies, civil society, academia, media and other communities in strategic dialogue and concrete collaboration on issues of shared concern. As such, it is pleased and honoured to serve as an informal platform for the first steps toward what might become a new international cooperative framework of some sort in this field.

Given that Forum meetings are not open to all participants, how will society at large have an opportunity to follow and provide input into the activities of the Initiative?

The Initiative plans to maintain an active virtual presence for the purpose of enabling citizens to follow the dialogue and provide comments and suggestions on the main agenda points. How best to do so will be a specific item for discussion and guidance at the Initiative's initial scoping workshop on August 28. Both working sessions and the press conference will be webcast live, and there will be an active blog and discussion board established to facilitate a two-way flow of information with the public.

What next steps are envisioned after the Initiative's launch on August 28?

These will be discussed and formulated during the scoping workshop and other consultations that will take place on August 28. However, Initiative dialogue sessions and consultations are already foreseen at the upcoming IGF meeting in Istanbul in early September, the Forum's Annual Meeting of New Champions in Tianjin, China in mid-September, India Economic Summit in New Delhi in early November and Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland in late January. A few initial capacity building projects will be discussed on the 28th for possible development thereafter. And the transitional steering committee is expected to be formed on or shortly after August 28 based on the consultations held at that time.