The 8th Internet Governance Forum (IGF) was held in Bali, Indonesia, between 22-25 Oct 2013. This year's discussion theme was "Building Bridges - Enhancing Multistakeholder Cooperation for Growth and Sustainable Development". It was well-attended by nearly 1500 global representatives from Internet governance experts, civil society, government and intergovernmental organisations, academics and members of the technical community.

**What is the IGF?** The IGF is a discussion platform established by the United Nations Secretary-General in July 2006, bringing together interested parties in the Internet governance sphere on an annual basis. It offers a neutral space in which Internet issues can be surfaced and discussed in an open and inclusive process.

**Is it just another conference?** The IGF is founded on the principle of inclusion, and by design, all participants are involved with the Forum's agenda-setting process. Workshop proposals can be mooted by anyone in the community, and are consolidated with advice from the IGF’s Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG). As a result of this participative process, the IGF offers unique insight into the zeitgeist of cyberspace governance - a discussion of issues by users, for users.

**What was discussed?** This year's discussions fell into a number of categories: (1) principles of Internet governance and multistakeholder cooperation, (2) access to the Internet, especially as an engine for growth, diversity, and sustainable development, (3) frameworks for security issues such as spam, hacking and cybercrime, and finally (4) surveillance in the context of human rights, freedom of expression, and net neutrality.

Due to the NSA revelations which preceded the IGF by a week, *surveillance and privacy rights* discussions saw some of the most vocal audience participation. Observers noted the global trend towards cloud computing and big data is leading to the urgent need for further discussion on how to balance cyber security and intelligence-gathering with user rights and privacy, in line with net neutrality principles.

There was also a growing chorus of stakeholders who were calling for the Internet community and the IGF to prioritise work on fundamental *principles for Internet governance and multistakeholder participation*. As the Internet is a platform which converges issues, the challenge of ensuring representation from all Internet stakeholders, and how best to ensure participation across timezones, languages, culture etc will not be a small one.

**IGF and Future Plans** Discussions on the Internet tend towards the technical (engineering and programming), business (trade-driven), or government policy (geographically-delineated.) As a result, the IGF has become the default discussion forum for cross-disciplinary issues which are often orphaned as there is no established platform for their discussion or dispute resolution. Recognising that the Internet has grown to the point where new modes of discussions may be needed, a number of leaders from the Internet technical infrastructure community had earlier released the Montevideo Statement expressing concern that there was a need for a coherent effort to address Internet operations and governance. A further meeting hosted by Brazil in April 2014 has been planned.

**Asian Voices** Although the suggestion for an alternative form of Internet governance met with some controversy during the meeting, regional discussions amongst Asian Internet stakeholders were generally positive. Most are keen on developing a process by which they can have their voices heard amidst what has been a mostly Western/English-speaking–dominated discussion. Whatever form the next version of Internet governance and operations take, the IGF will continue to prove a useful consultative platform for the continued dialogue on Internet governance issues.

---

Lim May-Ann ([mayann@trpc.biz](mailto:mayann@trpc.biz)) is the Research Director of TRPC, ISOC IGF Ambassador 2013.