About the conference

Internet for Social and Economic Development: Building the Future Together

India's first comprehensive multi-stakeholder India Internet Governance Conference (IIGC 2012) – Internet for Social and Economic Development: Building the Future Together – was held in New Delhi on October 4 and 5, 2012. Following the format provided since 2006 by the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) – an annual global event – the conference provided a platform for an open and inclusive policy dialogue that involves government, business, civil society, the technical community and academia.

Over two days, the conference explored a wide range of topics: from network neutrality, to global internet governance models; from effective management of the transition to IPv6, to making broadband access available to all; from the challenges the internet poses to traditional media, to the challenges hate speech online poses for all. Bringing together multiple sources of knowledge and expertise from within India and beyond, the IIGC provided a platform to discuss the crucial issues at a domestic and global level and flag these for the attention of relevant Indian bodies, as well as to help expand India's existing internet governance capacity. The two-day conference was attended by 350 delegates.

The IIGC was jointly organized by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Ministry of Communications & Information Technology, Government of India (GoI) and Internet Society, in partnership with National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) and Internet Service Providers Association of India (ISPAI). A Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) was set up to guide the workings, planning and structure of the conference. A total of 14 sessions took place with over 70 speakers from 10 countries participating in the discussion.

The background to the conference was twofold. Firstly, with the release of the National Telecom Policy 2012 (NTP 2012), the internet and broadband had earned recognition as key drivers of economic and social development. The policy aims at delivering "broadband on demand" in the hope that this can become a platform for services such as e-commerce and e-governance and drive growth in social sectors such as education and agriculture. Acknowledging the importance of internet access for all, the policy seeks to deliver broadband access to all village panchayats by 2014 and progressively to all villages and habitations by 2020. The GoI has committed an investment of around INR200 billion by 2014 for the achievement of this target.

The timing of the conference also allowed for a discussion ahead of the IGF in Baku in November 2012 and the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT) in Dubai in December 2012. Among the range of vital issues that were discussed at these events was the future of the global internet governance architecture – a debate in which the Indian government has been closely involved. While GoI has taken a leadership position in these debates at a global level, the conference gave a platform to all stakeholders to discuss these proposals and decide on the direction global internet governance architecture should take in the future.

Against the backdrop of these two important evolutions, the IIGC provided a domestic flavor to the typical challenges that India faces as well as sufficient latitude for a robust discussion on globally relevant issues. In addition, the IIGC was the first attempt to build a multi-stakeholder dialogue in India that can provide systematic input into processes at the global IGF from which it draws inspiration.