I write this message while preparing to depart for Baku, Azerbaijan, to attend the 7th annual meeting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). Organized by the United Nations, IGF is an open, multistakeholder forum that brings together different parties interested in the governance of the Internet, such as Governments, Business, and Civil Society, which in turn includes groups such as the technical & academic communities. IGF traces its origins to the 2005 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) at Tunis. The first IGF meeting was held at Athens in 2006.

Although the recommendations of IGF Sessions are nonbinding on the participating Governments, the open and multistakeholder nature of IGF provides an effective platform for rich and diverse discussions. IGF has also been careful to promote participation in these discussions in several ways such as enhancing accessibility (using technologies such as real-time speech-to-text systems), and encouraging remote participation through different modes.

The theme of this year’s IGF is “Internet Governance for Sustainable Human, Economic, and Social Development”, which is appropriate considering the extraordinary strides that the Internet has made in the last two decades, across all sections of society. It is only fair that such a valuable and pervasive infrastructure as the Internet is governed in a fair, transparent, and participatory manner.

Internet Governance (IG) has been defined as “…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 programmes that shape the evolution and use of the Internet”. Although the Internet was originally created by the US Government, today it is a global infrastructure, used by citizens of almost all countries in the world. The globalization of the Internet has been a source of some amount of ambiguity about the role of other stakeholders, in particular the other Governments of the world, in its administration and governance, especially of the technological tools used such as Domain Names and IP addresses. This concern has given rise to one set of IG issues under the rubric of Management of Critical Internet Resources.

In addition, several other key themes have also been identified under which discussions on IG take place, such as Access and diversity; Security, openness and privacy; Internet governance for Development (IG4D); and Emerging issues. Each of these areas have several thematic clusters under them.

A key agency involved with Internet Governance is the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), which “…is responsible for the coordination of the global Internet’s systems of unique identifiers and, in particular, ensuring its stable and secure operation. This…includes coordination of the Internet Protocol address spaces (IPv4 and IPv6) and assignment of address blocks to regional Internet registries…maintaining registries of Internet protocol identifiers, and…the management of the top-level domain name space (DNS root zone), which includes the operation of root nameservers”.

As an agency that delivers a set of important services, the Governance of ICANN is important to IGF stakeholders. ICANN is structured as a nonprofit corporation governed by a 16-member Board, consisting of representatives of different constituencies, including administrators of Regional Internet Registries, Global Top Level domains (gTLDs), country code domains (ccTLDs), IP addresses (the Address Support Organization, ASO), and a representative of civil society organizations (At-Large organizations). The At-Large representative is elected from the At-Large Advisory Committee (ALAC), which is composed of representatives of organizations of individual Internet users from around the world.

CSI has not yet been involved with the process of Internet governance in any way, largely because this has been a development of the last decade. However, most members of the 95,000+ CSI community are users of the Internet, and CSI itself, as an organization of Internet users, is eligible to become an At-Large Structure.

In order to contribute to the governance of the Internet on behalf of its members, CSI had applied to become an At-Large Structure with ICANN. We have been informed by ICANN that CSI has been certified as an At-Large Structure (ALS) from 2nd October, 2012.

Over the next few months, CSI will be examining ways in which our members can contribute to Internet Governance through the ALS mechanism. I do hope that we will be able to use it to project our views and positions on different issues that come up in the realm of Internet Governance.

I take this opportunity to wish all members and their families on the forthcoming festive season.

With regards
Jai Hind
Satish Babu
President