President's Message

From : president@csi-india.org
Subject : President's Desk
Date : 1st January, 2013

Dear Members

At the outset, I wish you the very best for 2013!

As we enter the last quarter of the year, it’s perhaps time to take stock of our progress so far, and take corrective action, if necessary, to achieve our targets. It is also a time to plan for the major events of the next financial year.

We have had a very successful CSI Annual Convention last month at Kolkata. It is my pleasure to inform you that the 2013 Annual Convention has been awarded to CSI Vishakhapatnam Chapter. Since it is the first time that the Chapter will be organizing the Annual Convention, I wish the chapter leaders success in this endeavor and also commit that all the necessary assistance from the CSI HQ will be forthcoming.

I had the pleasure of attending the 9th International Conference on e-Governance (ICEG 2012) co-organized by the Special Interest Group on e-Governance (CSI-SIG-eGov) at SCMS, Kochi, during 29-30 Dec. The Conference brought out the challenges facing e-Governance today in different parts of the country after over a decade of focused efforts. I would like to congratulate the host institution as well as the organizers, in particular the leaders of CSI-SIG-eGov, for organizing an excellent event.

At the international level, December was a much-awaited month on account of the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT 2012), organized by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) at Dubai. The conference had the objective of reviewing the International Telecommunication Regulations (ITRs), which serve as the binding global legal instrument designed to facilitate international inter-operations of information and communication services. With the last review of ITRs taking place in 1988, and the intervening years have seen a revolution in ICTs, the conference attracted a significant amount of attention.

However, the most compelling reason why civil society groups across the world were anxiously awaiting the event was related to the efforts by some Governments to bring in new regulations that would impose Governmental controls over the Internet. There were protests and widespread debates in different parts of the world on what was commonly perceived to be threats to the freedom of the Internet by this move. On the other hand, some also perceived the control of some of the Critical Internet Resources—a name applied to a set of resources such as the Domain Name System, IP addresses and root servers—by the US Government, as unnecessary and inequitable, especially as Internet evolves into a global information infrastructure of utility to all countries.

As the dust settles on the event, it is far from clear as to what it has achieved. Some countries, over 50 countries, including India and the US, have not signed the conference outcome document. The proposals to bring in more controls over the functioning of the Internet have been shelved (at least temporarily), much to the relief of civil society organizations across the world.

An important consideration in the governance of a global infrastructure such as the Internet is that there are multiple stakeholders, such as civil society, business, the technical & engineering community, as well as Governments, who need to be consulted. For this, a multistakeholder consultative approach, as promoted by the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) for the last 6 years, seems to be most appropriate, in comparison with purely legalistic approaches.

This brings us to another related question that has already been raised earlier in this column: is it time to think of a brand new, out-of-the-box piece of legislation such as a Universal Declaration of Internet Rights? Although it sounds somewhat far-fetched at this time, it is important for the international community to attempt a consensus on this matter.

Interestingly, I am back in the great city of Kolkata again, a month after the CSI Annual Convention, to deliver the Platinum Jubilee Keynote of the ICT track at the 100th Indian Science Congress. I will be speaking on “Innovation and Open Source: Future Directions for India”, wherein I propose to present the need for an innovation-friendly approach for the future, and how Open Source can stimulate and support innovation, both in computational technologies as well for broader social innovation. I believe that a uniquely Indian model of innovation-driven, socially responsible enterprise can be developed by leveraging the power of Open Source thinking. I believe this to be an important component of an equitable employment model for India in the 21st Century.

Jai Hind!

Satish Babu
President

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