

UN 3rd Internet Governance Forum, Hyderabad, India

The Hyderabad Conference – Report Back

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) held its third annual conference from 3rd - 6th December, 2008, in Hyderabad, India. eNACSO was represented at it by John Carr, Dieter Carstensen, Kathleen Spencer-Chapman, Zoe Hilton, and Agnieszka Wrzesień. This is their report back.

The conference facilities, indeed all of the arrangements made by the Indian Government and the IGF Secretariat, were truly superb. However, the Mumbai terrorist attacks had a significant effect on the event. Many people who had planned to come simply stayed away. This included several with whom we were due to engage, most notably the Council of Europe. One of our planned meetings simply did not happen, and another was badly affected.

There can be little doubt that eNACSO played a key role in ensuring that child protection figured prominently on the agenda at Hyderabad. The eNACSO delegation believes the IGF will continue to be an important and influential forum. We must continue engage with and participate in the IGF processes. Much still needs to be done to ensure that children's rights and the case for better online child protection more generally are better understood at all levels within the IGF processes and across a broader range of IGF stakeholder groups.

eNACSO at the IGF

Hyderabad was eNACSO's first IGF conference, although several members had attended the previous one, in Rio, and had also been involved in the earlier WSIS processes via CHIS. CHIS, ECPAT International and the EU had lobbied around the Geneva and Tunis WSIS documents to ensure that references to child safety were included. In the initial drafts they were not, or such references as there were were so oblique or vague as to be essentially meaningless.

Lack of understanding of online child safety issues

Having raised the profile of the online child safety issue within the IGF we should anticipate that our views are going to come under sustained scrutiny. It is clear that within the IGF there is still a great deal of muddled thinking and misapprehension about what the children's lobby is about and what it wants to achieve. For example, in one plenary session a key leadership figure within the IGF processes seemed to think it was likely, or at any rate possible, that we might be opposed to young people being able to access information over the internet about sexual health. Naturally we disabused everyone of that idea but it gives us something of the flavour of what we need to do for and at the next IGF.

This wider lack of understanding is not entirely surprising. Children's organizations have only recently started to participate in any numbers within the IGF. Hitherto it

has largely been the preserve of Technology Ministers and civil servants, many of whom have clearly not previously been exposed to the discussions about child safety on the internet.

eNACSO activities at Hyderabad

eNACSO was very busy in Hyderabad. We:

- organized the pre-conference briefing for all the EU networks
- hosted a seminar on children and mobile phones
- co-hosted a seminar with ECPAT International on online child protection
- assisted with the organization of the Dynamic Coalition on Child Safety
- published an eNACSO press release and undertook media interviews
- ran an eNACSO stall
- participated in several plenary sessions either from the platform or the floor
- participated in the EU Best Practice Forum
- participated in the ITU Best Practice Forum and in the ITU's pre-conference Parliamentary briefing.
- participated in meetings organized by other Dynamic Coalitions
- participated in workshops organized by a range of organizations

Towards Sharm el Shaikh

For the next IGF at Sharm el Shaikh we need to have a comprehensive eNACSO statement of positions on a wide range of key children's rights and child protection issues in the online space. This is in preparation.

We ought also to look for an opportunity to share this statement with colleagues from other EU networks so that we each have a better understanding of the other's point of view. If done sufficiently far in advance it may be possible to respond to and incorporate comments from the other networks so there is a shared sense of ownership of the document and the policies it contains or reflects.

Beyond that there is potentially great value in having another pre-conference event. Much will depend on the geography of the conference venue at Sharm el Shaikh but, in principle, next time we ought to hold it at the main conference hotel, seeking to involve or invite MEPs, MPs and other influential figures from the IGF. There may be budgetary issues in doing this. Should we look for sponsorship?

As eNACSO we should undertake to organize one big meeting, on the mobile internet but this time make a greater effort to attract representatives from the handset manufacturers. We should aim for a top level industry personality or very senior executive, or to have a Commissioner present to give the event added lustre and create some media interest. We should also negotiate a favourable time slot for it i.e. avoid being first thing on the first day

As eNACSO we should also take on more responsibility for organizing and promoting the Dynamic Coalition meeting on children's rights and the free speech agenda, again thinking hard about who the speakers might be.

We will also want to participate in the EU Forum, an ITU event, a Council of Europe event and doubtless several of the other Dynamic Coalitions with whom we made contact will also want to engage with us.

Next time the role of the stall may be more important than it was last time, both as a meeting point and a focal point for activity, but also as a way of marketing eNACSO generally and our meetings at Sharm el Shaikh in particular.

Rather than putting out press releases, next time we should run a blog and promote the blog to the media. We could even use the blog in the run up to the event partly as an information tool and partly as a promotional tool directed at the media. To that end I have already secured two blog titles:

<http://www.igf4childrensrights.blogspot.com> and
<http://www.seschildrensrights.blogspot.com/>

These can be abandoned altogether and substituted for new ones if anyone can think of a better title.