

**Opening Remarks**  
**by**  
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***Remarks on Internet Governance***

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Thank you for inviting me to speak here today. I am honored to be in the presence of so many distinguished figures in the Indian Internet community.

The Internet is the greatest collaborative effort in history, and its governance is key to its future and to the success of the new Generic Top-Level Domain program that ICANN is in the process of implementing.

ICANN is just one part of the broader Internet ecosystem. To understand its place, it might be helpful to start by asking some basic questions: what is the Internet? Who controls it? Who decides where it is and where it's not?

Though we tend to think of it as one virtual space, the Internet at its core is an interconnection of networks. How many? Millions. And they plug together to form one Internet. What makes it hang together?

Each time you buy a new device – a smartphone, a tablet or a laptop - you extend the edge of the network. The reason the Internet won the war of competing networks in its early years is because it wasn't centralized. The others required a central administrator but with the Internet, any organization or individual could get online without having to coordinate with anyone. You - the user - were in charge.

Why did it work? Because of the uniqueness of the Internet's identifiers: domain names, IP addresses, and protocols and parameters.

Why does it matter to be unique? Imagine what would be in your inbox if ten other people shared your email address. How would you keep track? How would you protect your privacy? The Internet wouldn't operate as an integrated whole.

So how do we as human beings coordinate this massive effort? We've chosen to do it with a technology called the multistakeholder model.

ICANN works alongside several other organizations such as the Internet Engineering Task Force, which writes standards for the domain name system, or DNS. The DNS is what you use when you click on something online; it converts the domain name to the Internet address to retrieve information.

An inclusive international volunteer community develops policies related to the domain name system. This multistakeholder model is organized around a community of specialists who bring their knowledge and expertise to the development of Internet policy. My role as ICANN's CEO is to implement the policies developed by this volunteer global community, not to set them.

The policy development process is based on collaborative, trust-based relationships. In fact, the system works because of that strong base of trust, collaboration and cooperation.

So, although ICANN looks centralized, everything about it is extremely decentralized.

ICANN's structures are set up to be truly international. Though many people think it is an American organization, it is global in many important respects.

Our public meetings take place throughout the world on a regional rotation basis, and that allows widespread participation from every region. Anyone interested is welcome to take part.

Our board of directors is elected from all five continents. And our staff is international as well. Over 30 countries are represented in our staff of only 150 people, and they work in over 19 countries – a highly distributed architecture.

ICANN's oversight is also international. In 2009 its previous contract with the US government expired, and the Affirmation of Commitments was agreed. That agreement shifted oversight of ICANN from one country to the world.

The New Generic Top-Level Domain Program was developed through this international and multistakeholder model, and ICANN's global community worked for years to develop the policies that underlie it. Over 150 meetings were held, thousands of papers were written and governments were heavily involved, including a major consultation with ICANN's Governmental Advisory Committee last March in Brussels that produced a number of significant changes to the program.

So what's the alternative to the multistakeholder model? The top-down model – with governments alone making the decisions - would be a threat to the system. The Internet has grown dynamically; it thrives on openness and inclusion. Governments have an important role to play, but allowing the private sector

globally to continue to lead the evolution of the Internet is very much to the benefit of mankind.

We believe the multistakeholder model is a technology in itself, and it reflects the technology of the Internet. Together they produce a communications miracle that unites billions around the world.

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