WSIS+20 Messaging Framework:

Reinforcing What Works

Prepared as a reference document to support engagement and alignment around WSIS+20. This effort reflects our shared aim to communicate with coherence, amplify the strengths of the multistakeholder model, and coordinate messaging across the community in their outreach. It provides an overview of why the multistakeholder model matters, and is the best approach for global Internet governance at this milestone moment, and how ICANN's technical coordination role supports the Internet's global resilience.

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1 Introduction

Twenty Years Later—The Stakes Are Higher Than Ever

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) helped define the early principles of digital cooperation. Twenty years on, the Internet has become the backbone of global communication, commerce, and innovation. Yet the foundation that has kept it stable, secure, and unified is under pressure.

At WSIS+20, the global community has a choice: reinforce the proven multistakeholder model of Internet governance or risk fragmentation, slowed progress, and reduced trust. ICANN's experience shows what coordinated, technically grounded governance can achieve.

2 Why the Multistakeholder Model Matters

A Proven Model for a Global Internet

The Internet is a network of networks—not centrally owned or controlled, but coordinated by those who develop its protocols, operate its infrastructure, and rely on its stability. The multistakeholder model reflects that reality: it brings together governments, technical experts, business, civil society, and academia to shape policies through open, consensus-driven processes.

This model has kept the Internet stable and interoperable for over three decades. It delivers results by combining technical expertise with global participation—ensuring policies can be implemented and adapted across borders.

3 ICANN's Role

Coordination, Not Control

ICANN was created in 1998 to coordinate the Internet's unique identifiers, including the Domain Name System (DNS). It operates as part of the multistakeholder model—not above it. ICANN's work shows how global cooperation can protect core infrastructure, ensure secure and stable DNS operations, and support digital growth worldwide.

ICANN is one part of a broader ecosystem, working alongside partners like the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), Regional Internet Registries (RIRs), the Internet Society (ISOC), the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), and others. Its role is connective and technical—providing neutral coordination that enables the Internet to remain a single, interoperable space.

4 Strategic Messages and Proof Points

The following five messages distill the case for reinforcing the multistakeholder model at WSIS+20—each backed by strategic examples that show why the model works in practice.

Message 1: Internet Governance Must Be Broad-Based and Practical

The Internet thrives when governance reflects the shared responsibilities of those who run, use, and rely on it. The multistakeholder model enables that balance—producing practical outcomes through global input and technical realism.

Proof Points:

- The Domain Name System has operated without interruption for over 27 years—demonstrating that globally coordinated, technically grounded governance delivers sustained resilience at scale.
- The IANA transition showed that even functions once under sovereign oversight can shift to a globally accountable model—proving trust in open, consensus-driven governance.
- ICANN's Applicant Support Program illustrates how the model adapts to expand participation—lowering structural barriers for underserved regions in the next round of domain extensions.
- When policy is shaped through the model, it is enforceable and grounded in implementation reality—examples include WHOIS accuracy reforms and frameworks to mitigate DNS Abuse.

Message 2: The Technical Community Is a Pillar—Not a Subset

The Internet's infrastructure depends on those who build and maintain it. The technical community's role is foundational—not interchangeable with any other group. Their work underpins the Internet's security, stability, and interoperability.

Proof Points:

- Cross-organizational collaboration among the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), Regional Internet Registries (RIRs), ICANN, the Internet Society (ISOC), and the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) demonstrates that technical governance only succeeds when coordinated across protocols, identifiers, and infrastructure.
- Technical community input has enabled the deployment of innovations like DNS Security Extensions (DNSSEC), Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs), and Universal Acceptance—ensuring scalability and linguistic diversity.
- ICANN's Internet Coordination Policy documents—ICP-2 and ICP-3—illustrate how technical norms can become global standards, promoting stability without centralization.
- The technical community's unified presence at IGF 2024 reinforced its role in global Internet governance—not as a support actor, but as a peer in decision-making.

Message 3: The IGF Must Be Renewed—and Resourced

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is the only global platform where all stakeholders engage as peers. To remain effective, it requires stable resources, clearer mandates, and the ability to produce actionable outcomes.

Proof Points:

- Long-term support from organizations like ICANN has helped the IGF ecosystem grow—from global forums to national and regional IGFs that surface local priorities.
- The IGF's evolution—including intersessional work, policy networks, and dynamic coalitions—shows its potential to deliver relevance and outcomes.
- The Global Digital Compact recognizes the IGF's role in supporting inclusive, consensus-driven governance—underscoring why it needs stable, predictable funding.
- At IGF 2025, multistakeholder sessions on WSIS+20, technical interoperability, and global coordination will reflect the IGF's central function—not symbolic, but operational.

Message 4: Fragmentation Is the Real Threat

The real risk to the Internet is not speed—it is misalignment and the breakdown of coordination. Fragmentation leads to conflicting systems, reduced trust, and diminished global interoperability.

Proof Points:

- National resolver mandates, alternate naming systems, and parallel root proposals challenge the interoperability of the global DNS—proving the risks of siloed approaches.
- Inconsistent regulatory frameworks on privacy and abuse expose gaps that malicious actors can exploit—highlighting the need for shared technical alignment.
- ICANN's engagement with global policymakers underscores the importance of neutral, expert input to prevent fragmentation before it takes root.
- The Ukraine ccTLD case illustrated how politically driven disruption attempts were met with technically grounded restraint—reinforcing the model's credibility.

Message 5: Coordination Is What Keeps the Internet Working

The Internet runs on alignment—not control. Shared stewardship ensures security, scalability, and interoperability across borders and systems. No single entity can operate the Internet alone.

Proof Points:

- The success of multilingual domain and email access through Universal Acceptance and IDNs shows what coordinated implementation across the stack can achieve.

- The DNS's ability to withstand global surges in demand during the COVID-19 pandemic illustrated the resilience that comes from shared responsibility.
- Constructive engagement with policymakers on initiatives like GDPR, NIS2, and DNS Abuse shows how technical coordination guides policy—not the other way around.
- Global governance mechanisms—from RIR coordination to Root Server System evolution—demonstrate that multistakeholder stewardship delivers both stability and legitimacy.

5 How This Messaging Connects Across Audiences

This section is designed to help readers quickly connect the messaging to the audiences they work with, whether in meetings, events, written materials, or advocacy. It offers a starting point for tailoring engagement around WSIS+20 priorities:

- **Policymakers**: Highlight the importance of coordinated, consensus-based processes that deliver secure, stable infrastructure—and ensure policies are practical, implementable, and globally coherent.
- **Technical Community**: Reinforce that this model depends on those who run and evolve the Internet's core infrastructure. Technical voices aren't supporting players; they are central to global interoperability and trust.
- **Civil Society**: Emphasize how open, bottom-up engagement and transparency build accountability, promote access, and ensure a broad range of voices are reflected in governance.
- **Business and Industry**: Demonstrate how a unified, interoperable Internet lowers risk, reduces complexity, and enables growth. Stability, resilience, and regulatory predictability support innovation and global scale.

This document is intended as a shared reference. Use it to support alignment, inform your engagements, and strengthen collective messaging in the lead-up to WSIS+20. All language and examples are grounded in ICANN's technical role and the operational reality of the multistakeholder model. For further resources, visit ICANN's government engagement page.

To explore ICANN's global outreach and engagement around WSIS+20—including the Outreach Network, regional activities, and engagement opportunities—visit the WSIS+20 Outreach Network page.

Additional fact sheets, including overviews of the multistakeholder model and internet governance, can also be found in the WSIS+20 Knowledge Hub.