



**Press release**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**UN INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM “IRRELEVANT” – AUSTRALIAN SCHOLAR  
Forum created to increase participation in Internet governance yet to make a mark**

**Perth, Australia, May 28, 2008** – A United Nations body created in 2006 to discuss the governance of the Internet so far has failed to deliver, according to an Australian scholar who this week published the first book on that body. “The IGF (Internet Governance Forum) was meant to bring governments from around the world together with non-profits and companies to deliberate on global policies for the Internet,” the author, Jeremy Malcolm, said today. “But after two expensive meetings in Athens and Rio de Janeiro, the IGF is no closer to being able to develop any policy recommendations. Half-way through its five-year mandate from the UN, the IGF remains irrelevant to Internet users and policy-makers alike.”

Malcolm's book, which is based on his PhD thesis and published this week by Terminus Press, also criticises the IGF's failure to involve ordinary Internet users in its activities, in that discussions are held at annual meetings held around the world, rather than in an open online forum.

The IGF was established by the UN World Summit on the Information Society in 2005, and has divided those who support the status quo, in which governance of the Internet is shared by governments and the private sector, from those pushing for reforms to allow broader public participation in decisions on Internet governance. Chairman of the Internet Governance Forum, Indian diplomat Nitin Desai, insists that the IGF is “not a decision-making body. It cannot be a decision-making body. It does not have a membership, so who is going to author a decision? So there's no way it can ever become a decision-making body.”<sup>1</sup>

But according to Malcolm's book, the IGF's mandate from the United Nations requires it to be able to make recommendations on emerging issues. “This doesn't mean making binding decisions,” Malcolm states. “But it does mean allowing ordinary Internet users to contribute to government policy making on issues that concern them, such as spam, cyber-terrorism, privacy and the distribution of child pornography.”

Malcolm's book, titled *Multi-Stakeholder Governance and the Internet Governance Forum*, contains a range of recommendations for the reform of the IGF and similar bodies. The Internet Governance Forum will meet for the third time in December 2008 in Hyderabad, India. The final meeting of its initial term is to be held in 2010.

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**About the Internet Governance Forum**

The Internet Governance Forum, or IGF, is a forum formed under the auspices of the United Nations, to

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1 [Not for publication:] This quote is taken from Desai's speech at a pre-IGF meeting held by Nominet on 9 October 2006, not transcribed but available at <http://kierenmccarthy.co.uk/mp3s/nominet-igf-9oct06/nitin-desai-combined.mp3>.

provide "a transparent, democratic, and multilateral process, with the participation of governments, private sector, civil society and international organisations, in their respective roles" for dialogue on Internet Governance policy. The IGF's formation was agreed at the UN's World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in November 2005. Visit <http://www.intgovforum.org>.

#### **About Jeremy Malcolm**

Jeremy Malcolm is an Australian scholar and lawyer specialising in Internet governance, IT and communications law, intellectual property and licensing. He is a Director of the Internet Society of Australia and an Executive Committee member of the Western Australian Internet Association. Visit <http://igfwatch.org>.

#### **About Terminus Press**

*Multi-Stakeholder Governance and the Internet Governance Forum* by Jeremy Malcolm is the maiden publication of Terminus Press, a new publisher specialising on short runs of academic and technical texts. Visit <http://press.terminus.net.au>.