

## Geneva Forecast On Internet Governance: 2015 Expected To Be A Decisive Year

Posted By [James Cote](#) On 30/01/2015 @ 9:48 am In [Access to Knowledge](#), [Copyright Policy](#), [English](#), [Information and Communications Technology](#)/ [Broadcasting](#), [IP Policies](#), [ITU/ICANN](#), [Language](#), [Lobbying](#), [Subscribers](#), [Themes](#), [Trademarks](#)/[Geographical Indications](#)/[Domains](#), [Venues](#) | [No Comments](#)

A Geneva expert has offered a view on the top internet governance issues likely to come up in 2015. These include: cybersecurity, privacy, internet neutrality, and the proposed transition of control over a key underlying aspect of the internet.

Jovan Kurbalija, director of the DiploFoundation, led a briefing on what internet governance developments to expect in 2015. Aided by having the month of January to draw from, the briefing's predictions suggest an overall trend of dealing with the fact that cyberspace is becoming more and more integrated with all aspects of the real world.

*Intellectual Property Watch* recently outlined the year ahead in detail ([IPW, ICTs/Broadcasting, 25 January 2015](#) <sup>[1]</sup>).

Kurbalija will continue to give updates on the group's predictions on the last Tuesday of every month. A webcast of this briefing and more information can be found [here](#) <sup>[2]</sup>.

### Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity topped the group's list of what to watch for in 2015. With events such as Sony Pictures Entertainment being hacked and the Charlie Hebdo attacks, securing the internet from terrorist activities is high on policy agendas. Vladimir Radunović, also at Diplo, pointed out that "cybersecurity is moving from the level of engineers and technicians to the level of leaders of companies and states."

The international peace and security aspect of cyberspace is now emerging. There are increasing efforts to prevent "misuse" of the internet. Kurbalija pointed to the high presence of this topic at the World Economic Forum earlier this month as confirmation that we can expect this topic to continue to grow in importance. He expects the global security summit in Washington next month to address cybersecurity.

### General Internet Governance and Privacy

As offline rules are increasingly considered to apply online, there is a growing "need to strengthen existing bodies [...] to address cyber-aspects," says Kurbalija. For example, the UN Human Rights Council will be considering creating a Special Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy. The position – if created – is expected to have online privacy as a key mandate. Kurbalija thinks this trend could continue. We may see other specialist agencies developing their policies further into the online space, such as to deal with organised crime, he said.

The more issues such as crime and privacy are dealt with online, governments will need to make key decisions on how to address the question of jurisdiction. Should countries have their citizen's data hosted physically on servers in their home territories so they can personally look after it? Kurbalija believes there are two possibilities: either there will be international regulation that will protect on agreed rules of privacy; or there could be a "localization" of data, with more requests by countries to host it domestically. Brazil and Russia have already made efforts to pursue the latter.

### Net Neutrality, ICANN, and IANA

Internet neutrality is expected to receive a lot of attention this year. Because so many key companies reside in the US, the US Federal Communications Commission's vote on new internet regulations (26 February) will be "most likely one of the major developments," said Kurbalija. The vote could influence the European Union to re-examine its stance and possibly lead to more questions of jurisdiction on the internet.

The US government's agreement to transfer its stewardship of the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA) to the global stakeholder community is another development to watch. IANA oversees essential aspects of the internet's architecture, such as translating domain names to IP addresses.

Kurbalija said he is unsure whether there will be an agreement before the current stewardship contract expires on 30 September 2015, and what would happen if the contract expires. There is a timetable involved in this transition, with the first discussions to happen at ICANN52 in Singapore this February. A comprehensive proposal will not be expected before March, a participant said.

Another continuing issue is the expansion of domain names (such as .com, .net, and .org). There have been disputes in this area since the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the oversight body for domain names, began allowing for their expansion. Examples of past disputes include the use of generic words ([IPW, ICTs/Broadcasting, 15 July 2013](#) <sup>[3]</sup>) and of geographic locations ([IPW, ICTs/Broadcasting, 3 November 2012](#) <sup>[4]</sup>).

### Multi-Stakeholder Model: Stay Tuned

Questions about the multi-stakeholder model of internet governance permeated discussion on several of the issues mentioned above, which suggests that we may see it permeate several areas in the future.

Net neutrality issues draw corporations and governments more closely together to regulate the internet. This could mean that the corporate sector opts more for the multi-stakeholder model. In a world where both corporate and government work to regulate the internet, users would have to trust corporations to be more responsible for the public interest, according to Kurbalija.

The situation gets further complicated when, as Kurbalija's observation that the WEF is considering the internet as a "global public resource" and not a "good" suggests, internet issues could continue to move into international trade negotiations (also raised in the *IP-Watch* Year Ahead story ([IPW, ICTs/Broadcasting, 25 January 2015](#) <sup>[1]</sup>)).

There were also suggestions that the multi-stakeholder model is failing when it comes to the developing world. Arguably, the model was not build to address it. Drawing on his earlier comments about strengthening existing bodies, Kurbalija said the UN "can and should play an important role" in bridging the persistent digital divide.

In closing, Kurbalija said he expects it will be a busy spring and, undoubtedly, "there will be some surprises" during the year, as there have been the past two years.

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[1] *IPW, ICTs/Broadcasting, 25 January 2015*: <http://www.ip-watch.org/2015/01/25/the-year-ahead-in-internet-governance-of-competing-institutions-iana-transition-and-a-new-crypto-war/>

[2] here: <http://www.diplomacy.edu/blog/internet-governance-forecast-2015-unsettled-weather-fresh-winds-stormy-times>

[3] *IPW*, ICTs/Broadcasting, 15 July 2013: <http://www.ip-watch.org/2013/07/15/generic-terms-in-domain-names-proving-difficult-to-defend-as-trademarks/>

[4] *IPW*, ICTs/Broadcasting, 3 November 2012: <http://www.ip-watch.org/2012/11/03/top-level-domain-africa-becomes-object-of-bitter-fight/>

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[7] Year Ahead: Internet Governance After Snowden: Cacophony Of Conferences (24): <http://www.ip-watch.org/2014/01/30/year-ahead-internet-governance-after-snowden-cacophony-of-conferences/>

[8] Geneva Internet Platform Launches: Neutral Ground For Net Governance (22.9): <http://www.ip-watch.org/2014/04/09/geneva-internet-platform-launches-neutral-ground-for-net-governance/>