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## **CIRA, the Canadian Internet Registration Authority**

# **CIRA consultation with Canadian technical community members on the future of internet governance**

### **Context**

Between January 24 and February 5, 2024, CIRA solicited the views of members of Canadian internet technical community (e.g., registries, registrars, Internet Exchange Points)<sup>1</sup> on the future of internet governance in the context of the Global Digital Compact and upcoming World Summit on the Information Society +20 Review.

Five members of the technical community, including CIRA, responded to a short questionnaire. Many organizations noted that they were relatively unfamiliar with the Global Digital Compact and other UN-led dialogues with implications for the future of internet governance and accordingly would not have the chance to develop informed policy positions within the timeframe of the questionnaire.

This document includes a summary of the key consensus points across the collected responses, including CIRA's. While not exhaustive, we hope this contribution can shed light on some of the shared views of the Canadian technical community on these issues.

### **Summary of collected responses**

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<sup>1</sup> We define the technical community as the organizations, groups, and actors that play a role in the day-to-day technical functioning of the internet.



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## **Broadly shared views<sup>2</sup>**

- 1. While the multistakeholder model (MSM) of internet governance<sup>3</sup> can and should be improved, it's better positioned than multilateral forms of governance to oversee the global operation of the internet.**

As Momentous Corporation notes, the multistakeholder model (MSM) of internet governance “allows various [diverse] communities and interests to collaboratively [govern]”. An “open multistakeholder approach ensures that everyone who has a sincere interest in the Internet can find a way to contribute” (Anonymous Respondent A).

CIRA outlines: “the technological success of the internet – the reason it works seamlessly across the globe – is the direct result of the [MSM] of internet governance”. While the Internet Society (ISOC) highlights: “[o]pen, multistakeholder spaces oriented to develop technical Internet standards and policies –such as the IETF, ICANN, and the Regional Internet Registries, among others – offer an ongoing testimony of the results that can be achieved by the Internet community [and] bottom-up decision-making processes”.

In contrast, multilateral institutions like the UN and its agencies are government-led and “authoritarian states and their like-minded peers have and continue to seek to use [these fora] to exercise influence over the management of the internet” (CIRA). While Anonymous Respondent B outlines that a lack of technical community input has meant the MSM hasn’t worked very well, others highlight that “the collective result [of MSM processes] will always be greater than having

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<sup>2</sup> The following sections highlight what CIRA understands to be the key points of consensus across most or all questionnaire respondents. We encourage all members of the Canadian technical community to engage independently on these issues.

<sup>3</sup> We define the multistakeholder model of internet governance as the participation of distinct stakeholders—governments, the private sector, civil society, the technical community and academia—in decisions about the management of the global internet.



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merely one discipline, or one organization attempt to regulate the global internet” (Momentous).

**2. The technical community’s input into decision-making about the global operation of the internet, on equal footing to other stakeholder groups including governments, is fundamental to the technological success of the internet.**

As Anonymous Respondent A notes, the technical community is involved in all facets of the internet’s operation, from its day-to-day operation, to its development, to its future. This community has unique expertise and real-life experience (Momentous). This insight and background contributes to the community’s “integral role in the stability, security, and reliability of the internet” (CIRA). ISOC outlines that “[i]nput from the technical community is crucial to help shape policies and outcomes that both advance societal needs while also ensuring that the Internet remains globally accessible, secure and technically viable”. Indeed, as Anonymous Respondent B highlights, the technical community reminds “the political people what’s actually possible.”

**3. There are extreme, negative risks to the everyday operation of the internet if the views of the technical community aren’t meaningfully considered in decision-making about the internet.**

The input of the technical community ensures that the development of internet-related policies, treaties and legislation don’t impede or undermine the everyday operation of the internet. Without the consideration of the technical community’s views, internet-related policies may not work — or could work in unintended ways with severe implications for the sound functioning of the internet (Momentous). Undesirable outcomes could include: “suboptimal decisions, unnecessary operational risks and issues, and possible stagnation should the technical



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community move on to other more interesting things” (Anonymous Respondent A).

Even if decisions made about the operation of the internet without the input of the technical community are well-intentioned, they “could hinder or undermine a free, open and interoperable global internet” (CIRA). ISOC notes that consultation with the technical community is critical “due diligence . . . to prevent decisions from harming the foundation the Internet”.