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*National and Regional Internet
Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs)*

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A special edition of GISWatch, "Internet governance from the edges: NRIs in their own words", is being published
as a companion edition to the 2017 GISWatch annual report. It looks at the history, challenges and achievements
of NRIs, as recounted by their organisers. It is available at https://www.giswatch.org

KOREA, REPUBLIC OF

HOW CAN THE NATIONAL IGF CONTRIBUTE TO THE COUNTRY'S INTERNET POLICY PROCESS?
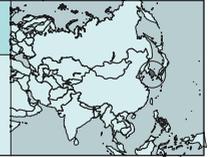
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Introduction

On 15 September 2017, the 6th South Korea Internet Governance Forum (KrIGF) was held at Sejong University.[1] The KrIGF is hosted by the Korea Internet Governance Alliance (KIGA),[2] a multistakeholder internet governance body. The KrIGF is planned by a multistakeholder programme committee, and co-organised by 19 organisations including public institutions, private companies, and civil society organisations.

While the KrIGF is prepared by a multistakeholder community including public institutions, it is not yet certain how much impact it has had on internet policies. Although the global IGF has been criticised as being only a talk show without any tangible results,[3] some argue that it has a soft power, the "power of bringing issues to the fore to be discussed by all stakeholders."[4] It has also been making an effort to strengthen intersessional work and produce outcomes through the Best Practice Forums,[5] Dynamic Coalitions[6] and Policy Options for Connecting and Enabling the Next Billion(s).[7] This sort of intersessional engagement by the KrIGF is absent – even though it is engagement that KIGA, as a multistakeholder body, is meant to encourage.

In this report, I examine the brief history of and challenges faced by KIGA and the KrIGF, and propose what should be done in order to create a space where multiple stakeholders can meaningfully participate in forming public policies on the internet.

Policy and political background

The governance of critical internet resources in South Korea was initially performed by an operation centre within the System Development Network, the first IPv4 network in South Korea, developed in May 1982. As it became necessary to create a formal structure on network governance, the Academic Network Council was established in 1991. It later evolved into the Korea Network Council (KNC) in 1995, as commercial internet service providers (ISPs) began their operations in the country. The Korea Network Information Centre (KRNIC)[8] was created in 1993 to handle IPv4 addresses and the country code top level domain ccTLD, .kr. The KRNIC, which had operated as part of the National Computerisation Agency, became an independent organisation in 1999, and the KNC was renamed the Names and Numbers Committee (NNC). Some members of civil society also began to participate in the governance of critical internet resources at this time.[9] The composition and operation of NNC was autonomous – although the government had some influence – and could be considered a multistakeholder model, though the term was not used then.

However, the internet governance structure in Korea was changed to a top-down model after the government enacted the Internet Address Resources Act in 2004.[10] The new law created a new governing body, the Internet Address Policy Deliberation Committee,[11] under the control of the Ministry of Information and Communication, to deliberate on policies to do with internet address resources. The members of the committee were appointed by the minister. The KRNIC was absorbed by a new government agency, the National Internet Development Agency, which later merged with other government agencies to become the Korea Internet and Security Agency (KISA) in 2009. From 2006 onward, a period

1   www.krigf.kr

2   www.kiga.or.kr

3   Kurbalija, J. (2016). *An Introduction to Internet Governance: 7th edition*. DiploFoundation. https://www.diplomacy.edu/resources/books/introduction-internet-governance

4   Masango, C. (2008). The Internet Governance Forum: Its Development, Function and Future. In W. Benedek, V. Bauer, & M. C. Kettemann (Eds.), *Internet Governance and the Information Society: Global Perspectives and European Dimensions*. Eleven International Publishing.

5   www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/best-practice-forums-6

6   www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/dynamic-coalitions-4

7   www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-policy-options-for-connecting-and-enabling-the-next-billions

8   The KRNIC is responsible for the management of address resources, while the KNC is a governance body that decides related policies.

9   https://sites.google.com/site/internethistoryasia/book3

10   www.law.go.kr/eng/engLsSc.do?menuId=1&query=internet+address&x=0&y=0#liBgcolor1

11   krnic.kr/jsp/notice/committee.jsp

which I call the "blank period" took hold – there was no space for the voluntary participation of non-governmental stakeholders, a phase which continued until around 2009.

Establishment of the KIGA

In 2009, when the government organised a consultative committee called the Internet Development Association, the past members of the NNC were also invited as members of a subcommittee, the Internet Address Policy Forum. In 2012, a new consultative committee, the KIGA, was organised with several subcommittees including the Address Infrastructure Subcommittee. As these consultative committees were not formed because of a legal prerequisite, they were created and disbanded according to the needs of government officials. Members were also in general appointed by the government.

Participation in the Global Multistakeholder Meeting on the Future of Internet Governance (NETmundial), which was held on 23 and 24 April 2014 in São Paulo, Brazil,[12] and the case of CGI.br, the multistakeholder internet governance body of Brazil, served as momentum for Korean stakeholders to organise a new governance structure based on the bottom-up process and multistakeholder model. Several members from civil society and academia, as well as government officials, attended the NETmundial event, and after the meeting they discussed the need to organise an internet governance body in a different way from the past.

The members of the new KIGA were not appointed by the government, but were volunteers. After a few preparatory meetings, the new KIGA was launched on 13 November 2014. The steering committee was composed of different stakeholders drawn from public institutions, the private sector, academia, the technical community and civil society. Currently there are 29 steering committee members.[13]

KIGA hosts KrIGF

There was an event that was called the KrIGF, hosted by the former KIGA, in 2012 and 2013. However, it was led by the KISA, a government agency. The 2014 KrIGF – which had been proposed by civil society, academia and the private sector, with the KISA later joining as a co-host organisation – was different. The 2014 KrIGF was held on 4 July, soon after the NETmundial meeting. About 70 people attended. The purpose was to discuss how to establish a multistakeholder governance body in South Korea. The main theme of the event was "internet governance through participation and cooperation".[14]

Since 2015, and after its relaunch, the KIGA has been hosting the KrIGF every year. The KrIGF is co-organised by a lot of organisations including public institutions like the KISA, private companies and civil society organisations. The 2017 KrIGF (the 6th KrIGF since 2012) was held on 15 September at Sejong University. Nineteen organisations joined as co-organisers, and 11 organisations including the Ministry of Science and ICT, several private companies and community media organisations supported it as sponsors, not only politically, but also financially. The KrIGF is a one-day event at the moment, but has three or four simultaneous tracks dealing with various issues on ICT policy and internet governance, including cybersecurity, critical internet resources, human rights and net neutrality, making it similar to global and regional IGFs.

The KrIGF programme committee is set up every year as a subcommittee of the KIGA. It is composed of about 15 persons from different sectors that plan the overall programme of the event with the support of the KIGA secretariat and the KISA.

Several months before the event, a request for proposals for workshops is released to the public, and proposed workshops are evaluated in a similar way to the global IGF workshop selection process. Currently most of the workshops are proposed by members of the programme committee or KIGA steering committee – in other words, those who are well aware of the KrIGF. The programme committee is trying to hold workshops on emerging issues to attract a wider audience to the 2017 event, including "Google tax", fake news, and cybersecurity using blockchain technology. Other than workshops, there is an opening ceremony, where one representative from each stakeholder group delivers an opening speech, as well as tutorial or lecture sessions which deal with basic concepts and/or specific topics such as the IGF and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), or artificial intelligence and blockchain technology.

Challenges

How much impact does the KrIGF have on the policy-making process? Not so much, yet. Part of the reason is that there are many alternatives for discussing internet governance in South Korea. There are so many discussion forums and workshops other than the KrIGF, held all through the year on various ICT policy issues, and hosted by different

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12 netmundial.br

13 en.kiga.or.kr/en/front/content/contentViewer. do?contentId=CONTENT_0000315

14 igf.or.kr/krigf-2014

organisations. One can attend almost any workshop anytime if you have the interest and on almost any topic – especially in a small country like South Korea, where you can travel to the other side of the country in half a day. The KrIGF is also not the only forum for multistakeholder dialogue, as many other events also invite various stakeholders as panellists. Moreover, the global and regional IGFs have value as a space for participants from different countries to forge relationships and communicate with each other – a value lost in the national IGF, at least in the KrIGF.

So, if the KrIGF is to have sustainable impact, and not just be a one-off event held every year, it needs to be different from other events. In the same way that the global IGF is making efforts to foster intersessional activities, the KrIGF needs to be closely linked to the activities of the KIGA, allowing stakeholders an opportunity to engage in the policy-making process. For example, the outcomes of KIGA subcommittees and working groups during the intersessional period could be presented at one of the KrIGF workshops, to gather opinions from the public attending the IGF.

The premise of the scenario above is that the KIGA would perform its role as an internet governance body as it was intended to do from the start, and should be recognised by the government as such. However, the current status of the KIGA is not so stable in terms of its legal, political and financial profile. As mentioned above, provision for the KIGA is not made in law, similar to many other internet governance bodies in other countries. While a government official endorsed the KIGA at the time of its establishment, the official who is responsible for internet governance in the ministry changed, ushering in a shift in attention and support, which now varies depending on who is in that position. If the KIGA is not being recognised as a governance body by the government, limiting its role in the policy-making process, then we cannot expect active participation from non-governmental stakeholders. At present, the KIGA is having trouble getting more stakeholders involved. Although the government has provided some human and financial support to the KIGA through the KISA, its financial status is unstable and not independent.

Revision of the Internet Address Resources Act

The KIGA conducted a wide evaluation of past internet governance practices with regard to managing internet address resources and presented the report in a workshop at the 2016 KrIGF.[15] Based on the

evaluation, the KIGA is looking for a way to change the Internet Address Resources Act to promote multistakeholder internet governance. The KIGA set up a working group to discuss the matter, drafted a revised bill and presented it in a workshop at the 2017 KrIGF.[16] It will later propose the bill in the National Assembly.

The core change in the bill replaces the current Internet Address Policy Deliberation Committee with a new autonomous governance body on internet address resources – the so-called Internet Address Committee – whose members are elected through a bottom-up process. While the government will have the final responsibility for managing internet address resources in the public interest, policy making would be delegated to the governance body in which the government will also participate as a stakeholder. The KRNIC would also be separated from the KISA – as it was until 2004 – and operate according to the policy of the governance body. Yet it is not certain that the bill will be passed in the National Assembly. Government consent on the bill is critically important and the KIGA will consult with the government before proposing it.

Regional reflection

The format and preparation process of the KrIGF is very similar to that of regional and global IGFs, although there are some local adaptations. In that respect, regional and global IGFs have influenced the KrIGF. However, while the theme and topics of the KrIGF are not so different from those of the Asia Pacific Regional IGF (APrIGF) and global IGF, the national concerns of the KrIGF are not reflected in the regional or global agenda. The KrIGF has usually been held later than the APrIGF. Some members of the KIGA have attended and proposed workshops at the APrIGF and global IGF, but in general, Korean participants are not so active in the IGF community and other forums on internet public policy such as ICANN or the Global Conference on Cyberspace.[17] This is not just because of the language barrier, but because the pool of people voluntarily participating in internet governance is limited and therefore lacks experience, despite the fact that there are many who have capacity and expertise on internet policy. In the evaluation report mentioned above, the KIGA concluded that past top-down approaches dampened voluntary participation and reduced the pool of those who would be interested in internet governance. To address this, the KIGA has set up a working group and is trying to hold a school on

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15   igf.or.kr/849

16   igf.or.kr/1359
17   https://gccs2017.in

internet governance (KrSIG),[18] while the KISA runs a similar capacity-building event called the Asia Pacific Internet Governance Academy (APIGA)[19] in cooperation with ICANN to nurture the younger generation in the Asia Pacific region.

Conclusions

In the global policy space, where there is no global government, the role of the IGF as a space to raise critical issues between different stakeholders and create norms is very important. But in the national context, where there is a government and a National Assembly, and there are many other spaces to raise issues and exchange ideas, the role of the national IGF is different. The national IGF needs to find a way to link its outcomes to the national policy-making process or regional and global policy spaces. In the case of South Korea, the KrIGF is connected to the KIGA, and Korean stakeholders have been trying to make the KIGA a practical internet governance body.

Although the KIGA's main policy area is the management of internet addresses, its members hope that the multistakeholder model they have started will spread, not only to other internet policy processes, but to public policy in general. Koreans, including government officials, are not accustomed to the multistakeholder model and its principles, because the government has taken the initiative in policy making historically. There is not even a proper translation of "multistakeholder" in Korean. While it is true that there is a growing tendency to involve various stakeholders in the policy-making process, there are many limitations to the Korean system, such as selective appointment of consultative committee members by the government, as we can see from the history of internet governance in South Korea. In this regard, the success of the KIGA could be a best practice for other public policy areas to emulate.

Action steps

The following action steps are suggested for South Korea:

• Members from civil society have actively engaged in national internet governance since 2000, and need to continue their engagement. In particular, we need to stimulate the interest of young people from civil society and, through education and public awareness, encourage them to participate in internet governance.

• The revision of the Internet Address Resources Act is critical to promote multistakeholder internet governance in South Korea. We need to push for the revised bill to be passed in the National Assembly.

• There is a need to raise awareness of the benefits of the multistakeholder model among stakeholders, including government officials. Both the KrIGF and the KrSIG offer a good opportunity for this.

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18 https://sites.google.com/site/krsigkr/home
19 https://community.icann.org/display/GSEAPAC/
    Asia+Pacific+Internet+Governance+Academy+%28APIGA%29+2017

National and Regional Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs)

National and Regional Internet Governance Forum Initiatives (NRIs) are now widely recognised as a vital element of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) process. In fact, they are seen to be the key to the sustainability and ongoing evolution of collaborative, inclusive and multistakeholder approaches to internet policy development and implementation.

A total of 54 reports on NRIs are gathered in this year's Global Information Society Watch (GISWatch). These include 40 country reports from contexts as diverse as the United States, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Italy, Pakistan, the Republic of Korea and Colombia.

The country reports are rich in approach and style and highlight several challenges faced by activists organising and participating in national IGFs, including broadening stakeholder participation, capacity building, the unsettled role of governments, and impact.

Seven regional reports analyse the impact of regional IGFs, their evolution and challenges, and the risks they still need to take to shift governance to the next level, while seven thematic reports offer critical perspectives on NRIs as well as mapping initiatives globally.

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