NATHALIE KOSCIUSKO-MORIZET

Minister of State for Forward Planning and Development of the Digital Economy

Ulysse GOSSET

Thank you to everyone. It's a matter of deciding which framework to use if, for example, we need to create an international Internet treaty. What role should the States play? The Internet is so diverse and has such a wealth of resources. You just used the word "chaotic". It's true that on continents like Africa, where we're witnessing considerable Internet growth, the governance situation is almost chaotic. Who should take charge of the governance process? During this conference, of course, we can only suggest possible avenues. But in your opinion, Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet, who should play the leadership role in this new governance? Should it be the States? In concrete terms, in a few weeks, France is going to begin a year of preparation for [hosting] the G20. Do you think that Internet governance should be a topic discussed by the leaders of the 20 largest nations in the world?

Nathalie KOSCIUSKO-MORIZET

We have to find venues where we can talk about it and it's absolutely necessary for States to participate. At present, we suffer from these two shortcomings. The only place that really exists, where we can talk about everything related to Internet governance is the Internet Governance Forum. That's an annual meeting that grew out of the World Summit on the Information Society. Last year, it took place at Sharm el-Sheikh, where we created the concept of a right to forget. This year, it was held in September in Vilna. It's very interesting.

But, firstly, it has absolutely no negotiating or formal structure. There isn't even really a theme. Secondly, Internet players are very well represented, while governments are poorly represented. In Vilna, there must have been three European ministers even though it was in Vilna. I mean it wasn't [held] far away. We were able to bring up issues, but not move forward into real discussions. I believe that real discussions must absolutely involve multiple partners. There really must be Internet players, but there must be government officials as well.

If not, considering the challenges that we all mentioned, this really wouldn't make sense. I believe that the G20 is a good forum, a good venue for talking about this issue, and the French president announced that he wanted to take advantage of France's year [hosting the G20] to introduce this topic. That doesn't mean it's necessarily the only venue and there are other forums where we're already working on Internet governance that remain relevant. I'm thinking about an organisation such as ICANN, which deals with domain names.

ICANN currently runs the Internet. But [the process] needs to be a little more multilateral because ICANN is a non-profit corporation under California law. It works well, but to manage domain names worldwide, the question arises as to "why"? But it works well. The ITU (International Telecommunications Union) organises the distribution of frequencies at global level and, to a certain extent, competition among major operators – infrastructure networks, in any case. That also works well. It seems to me that we shouldn't necessarily try to find a single venue for negotiating everything. On the other hand, having a forum where we can talk and conduct a certain number of negotiations, such as the G20 – now that's a good idea.

Ulysse GOSSET

And do you think we're moving toward an international Internet treaty?

Nathalie KOSCIUSKO-MORIZET

I think we need several international treaties, if there are to be any international treaties. Because an international Internet treaty wouldn't necessarily mean anything. Let me cite tax competition as an example. I believe we must be able to talk about tax competition. Tax competition is a real problem, you know. Today, VAT is paid instead of corporate registration. That's an aspect of sovereignty that's being lost. These are States that are bleeding to death to some extent due to downward tax competition. It's happening in Europe and all over the world. But it's problematic. One example is VAT. VAT is a tax on consumption. We should, however, be able to discuss the possibility of collecting VAT where consumption actually occurs. It's not necessarily a subject that we're going to be able to discuss. A major Internet treaty – I'm not convinced. But [we should] be able to speak about these subjects – each has its place.