IETF 119 Policy Roundtable

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In collaboration with the Internet Architecture Board (IAB), the Internet Society held a second experimental roundtable during IETF 119. On 18 April 2024, APNIC hosted a roundtable with about 30 regional policymakers and invitees from the IETF leadership in their Brisbane offices. The conversation meandered through a few topics, as free flowing conversations do. Here are some salient points:

- Policymakers and IETF technologists benefit from sustained relationships in a global environment where multilateralism is ever more prevalent. In particular, we explored how to shift to a more sustained and resilient systematic relation to defend the Internet.
- Both communities can learn from each other, yet at times speak very specifically to their disciplines. There is an opportunity to build out common languages and understanding further.
- It is not easy for technical community members to participate in multilateral meetings, although there are some that the Internet Society can participate in. In partnership with policymakers, the Internet Society can provide greater insights to the technical community on the multilateral environment.
- It is also important, but challenging, for the technical community to understand when their work is relevant for policymakers and to involve them early. Those who engage in other standards organizations, such as the ITU-T, must quickly identify if work might have an impact on the Internet and share that information with other stakeholders.
- On the question of a sustained and resilient relationship, we did not reach a conclusion, but it seemed understood that the Internet Society has a mediating and translating role. Everyone was amenable to being contacted when issues arose.
- The argument was made that the technical community is a stakeholder for the Internet. An Internet that is "for everyone" (from the Internet Society mission statement) and an Internet "for the end users" (RFC 8890) express having a very particular stake in what the Internet should be. On the other hand, the argument continued that in policy consultations, it may be more appropriate to treat the tech community as experts rather than stakeholders.

As expected, the roundtable helped to build relations and understanding between government officials and IETF participants. From the two experimental roundtables we have organized so far, we learned that they contribute to establishing trust between participants.