

Cuba Builds the Internet It Needs

01/07/2019



Professionals from several sectors, representatives of the civil society and local governments debated in Cuba on an Internet to be better.

The international panorama is today, as it almost always is, very complex; the digital panorama is also complex, a reflection, although mediatized, of the first one.

Amid such varied and difficult scenario, Cubans meet since June 25th until today to come up with an Internet with social justice and for the sustainable human development.

Consistent with the slogan of the meeting, that was the exhortation made by María Esther Alfonso Suárez, First vice-president of the Cuban Group of Computer Experts (UIC for its acronym in Spanish) and Executive President of the organizing committee of the I National Forum for Internet Governance, during its opening, at the Conventions Palace of the Cuban capital.

"This event –said also the official from UIC - has become an opportunity to bring together government, academic and research communities, managerial and non- state sectors, technical community and the civil society, to meditate on the best use in this strategic resource".

Alfonso Suárez added that the use of Internet must be fully compatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with the International Right.

Sponsored by the Cuban Association of the United Nations, the UIC, the Cuban Group of Journalists, the Cuban Association of Social Communicators, the Union of Jurists from Cuba, the National Association of Economists and Accountants from and the Association of Educators from Cuba, this is the first time Cuba organizes a National Forum of this type.

Since 2006 have taken place international meetings on the governance of Internet as a result of the summoning made by the General Secretary of the United Nations to create a platform that every year welcomed several debates regarding good policies and practices related to Internet.

Putting within everyone's reach good guidelines that help steer the navigation and any other interaction with Internet aimed at the human and social growth, always accompanied by ethics and culture. This is the ultimate purpose of this meeting which had as introduction similar events in all domestic provinces.

Just in the same way in which the Cuban society is unique - in a world ruled by selfishness, individualism and the lack of civility -, its behavior in and ways of acting in cyberspace must be also unique.

In a world where globalization blurs at times the identities, feelings of belonging and many other features that tells apart each country and each individual from the other, it's not a simple objective to also reaffirm the course in the so-called highway of information, and disinformation too.

Therefore, the adviser for the Ministry of Communications, Juan Alfonso Fernández González, was clear during the conference he delivered at the National Forum what was the Governance of Internet.

Fernández González specified that "It's the development and the application on behalf of governments, private sector and the civil society, in the functions concerning them respectively, of principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures and common programs that configure the evolution and use of Internet."

He next asserted that the Internet we wish for and need must be built with everyone's help.

On the other hand, the Minister of Communications, Jorge Luis Perdomo, quoted that Internet is influenced by cultural trends that cannot be ignored and urged to keep on developing Cuban projects, platforms of services and domestic contents, while raising the culture of citizens on cyber security.

"Each country is entitled to be proactive in the development of the computer science society, focused on the individual, but with responsibility. Cuba will continue increasing the Internet access to citizens and institutions to maximize the opportunities it brings and guarantee the rights of Cubans to enjoy that environment, deal with the risks and challenges", he said.

There are many challenges, especially if we understand that Internet is also the arena of a thousand battles where are made more than evident the blunt attempts of the U.S. for blurring each of our conquests and suffocate us with shortages.

Let's just remember that the U.S. has just approved more than 32 million dollars for the subversion in Cuba. This is the new budget for those goals during fiscal year 2020 that goes from October 1st, 2019 until September 30th, 2020. Undoubtedly, part of them will finance many unhealthy attempts in the cyberspace, probably lead by the Cuba Internet Task Force of the North American Department of State.

Nevertheless, while this happens and amid a blockade that tightens every time, next with the coming into force of the Title III and IV of the Helms-Burton Act, Cuba has already a history in Internet since in year 2000 started the access to it, prioritized sectors in our economic and social panorama came first.

At present, 60% of Cubans have Internet access; they do this for free from jobs and schools centers. Also, the possibility of Internet access from mobiles has increased connectivity since last December. Connectivity has increased so much that out of the 5, 5 million mobile lines in Cuba, 2, 5 millions of them have access to mobile data.

On top of the above we must say that other ways of navigation like Wi-Fi areas have also increased, with a total of 1042 Internet access areas.

There are also more than two million permanent Nauta accounts and more than 87 000 houses connected by Nauta Hogar.

The peculiarities that distinguish Cuba's actions in Internet ratify that it has been followed the goal present in the slogan of this I National Forum of Cyber Space Governance: **Internet: Social Justice and the Sustainable Human Development.**