

## **Session 2:**

**Panel:** Lessons on the development and implementation of strategies for facilitating access and legal initiatives related to net neutrality: Next steps for guaranteeing an open and interoperable Internet in the region

**Date and time:** 27 July 2016 - 16:00 hs. - 18:00 hs.

### **Panelists:**

- Flávia Lefevre – CGI.br Brasil
- Carlos Humberto Ruiz – CRC Colombia
- Andres Sastre – ASIET
- Gonzalo Navarro - ALAI
- Javier Pallero - Access Now
- Ariel Graizer– CABASE Argentina

### **Summary**

Various access and net neutrality issues were discussed both from a national/regional perspective as well as from a universal, more theoretical point of view. The case of Brazil was mentioned, including the existence of a gap between the country's growing demand for information and existing infrastructure, which is still insufficient. Other aspects that were discussed included the geographic limitations affecting network investments and mobile data offerings, which are quite small, especially considering that the only way that a significant number of Brazilians access the Internet is through their mobile devices.

The case of Colombia was also noted, a country where, after four years of efforts aimed at expanding telecommunications infrastructure, thought is now being given to quality of service and regulating applications. As to network neutrality, in 2011 it was decided that the country's regulatory body would be tasked with defining rules, and this has brought about much debate.

There was also mention of an initiative of the Argentine Internet Chamber, which established the net neutrality principle in 2012. According to one of the panelists, it was not possible to reach consensus and the conclusion was the establishment of two related principles: (1) networks must be open and interoperable, and (2) content cannot be filtered based on source or destination.

On a more general level, the panel highlighted the need for the debate on access and net neutrality to be guided by fundamental and user rights. In this sense, participants questioned the boundary between the rights of companies and those of users. In the same context, panelists stressed the imperative need for users not to be seen as mere consumers but as individuals who now depend on the Internet.

More than one panelist made a strong call to continue to work on the regulatory models adopted by several countries in the region. In this context, the so-called “regulatory dogmatism” was criticized as, according to one of the panelists, its most direct consequence was the series of application shutdowns that have occurred in the region. There was a strong call for the countries of the LAC region to renew their “regulatory suite”. Regarding shutdowns, attention was also brought to the fact that, when an application is blocked, not only is the service interrupted but there is also an obstruction of the flow of opinions.