NEW DELHI, October 4, 2012. “Internet does not require just governance, but needs transparency and accountability on the part of the user who should be free to express his opinion but at the same time be accountable for what is being said. Above all managing the internet needs consensus amongst stakeholders – Government, business, civil society, etc,” said Mr. Kapil Sibal, Union Minister for Communications & Information Technology, while inaugurating the India Internet Governance Conference (IIGC - 2012) organised by FICCI in association with the Ministry of Communications & IT and the Internet Society.

The two-day conference is India’s first comprehensive multistakeholder IIGC on ‘Internet for Social and Economic Development: Building the Future Together’. The conference aims to provide a platform for an open and inclusive policy dialogue that involves government, business, civil society, the technical community and academia. It will traverse a wide range of topics from network neutrality, to global internet governance models; from effective management of the transition to IPv6, to making broadband access available to all; from the challenges the internet poses to traditional media, to the challenges hate speech online poses for all. Bringing together multiple sources of knowledge and expertise from within India and outside, the IIGC aims to identify crucial emerging issues at a domestic and global level and flag these for the attention of relevant Indian bodies, as well as help expand India’s existing internet governance capacity.

“The world of internet is a very diverse place hence no one solution can be applicable to all stakeholders. A mechanism needs to be created with the consensus of all the stakeholders who can then address issues that will arise in the future. India’s stand on the issue is that freedom of expression is a must for every citizen which needs to be balanced with accountability. With right comes duty,” explained Mr. Sibal.

Mr. R Chandrashekhar, Secretary, Department of Telecommunications, Ministry for Communications & Information Technology, Government of India, pointed out, “There are two types of challenges when it comes to internet governance – hard and soft. The hard issues comprise infrastructure, connectivity and devices. The soft issues are the ones which are harder to deal with such as e-governance, making India e-literate and how to equip people to derive the full potential of the internet.”

Mr. J. Satyanarayana, Secretary, Department of Electronics and Information Technology, Ministry for Communications & Information Technology, Government of India, said, “The Government has launched numerous projects to make India e-literate and increase the penetration of internet. Some of the projects undertaken by the Government are National Knowledge Network, National Optical Fibre Network, programmes on e-health, e-education,
e-panchayats, citizen engagement programmes and open data policy where data is available to public except classified information and data on the negative list.”

Ms. Vijay Latha Reddy, Deputy National Security Advisor, Government of India, stated, “Internet governance have been addressed inadequately because of the complexity involved. One of the focus areas of internet governance is cyber security as India is amongst the topmost IT destinations in the world. Hence it becomes all the more important to secure our cyber space and protect data.”

The Government, she said, was working with private players and other stakeholders to devise a road map for cyber security through the PPP model. Enhanced international and domestic cooperation is needed which is effective, dynamic and transparent. Capacity building and cyber security professionals are needed in this regard, she added.

Speaking on ‘Internet Governance-Global Perspective’, Mr. Nitin Desai, Former Special Advisor to UN Secretary General on Internet Governance and Chairman of Multistakeholder Advisory Group for Internet Governance Forum, remarked, “Before we start fixing something, we must know whether it was broken in the first place. We need to protect the functionality of the internet and not just the physical infrastructure. Lack of a mechanism to handle cyber security is not an issue for India alone but is a global challenge. To address it, genuine cooperation is a must between the governments of various nations.”

Ms. Naina Lal Kidwai, Senior Vice President, FICCI, emphasized that FICCI had taken lead in hosting, along with government and ISOC, a multistakeholder conference because it believes that the issue of access and usage of internet across India to enhance digital citizenship, needs diverse but complementary groups of stakeholders working together by building consensus. FICCI will continue to extend support for such dialogue.

Mr. Rajnesh Singh, Regional Director - Asia Pacific Regional Bureau, ISOC, revealed that ISOC had signed a MoU with FICCI to collaborate on more such conferences to deal with the issues of internet governance. The profound impact of internet is experienced by all and the internet market in future will only grow bigger. Hence all stakeholders must work together to deal with the challenges ahead.

Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Secretary General, FICCI, proposed the vote of thanks. He said that one of the closest partnerships between the Government and industry on internet governance has been witnessed today which reflects that the industry is now taking on an effective leadership and execution role. Such cooperation is essential to bring about the necessary reforms.

Mr. Virat Bhatia, Chairman of FICCI’s Communications & Digital Economy Committee moderated the inaugural session.