

IGF 2021
MAG Meeting III – Open Consultation on Format & Design for IGF2021
9 February 2021

Summary report

Action items

- MAG to continue discussions on the format, design and content of IGF 2021 on the mailing list and at the upcoming MAG meeting.

1. The third virtual meeting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) in the IGF 2021 preparatory cycle was held in the form of an open consultation on the format and design of IGF 2021. The meeting was moderated by MAG Chair Ms. Anriette Esterhuysen.

Attached to this summary report are: the meeting agenda and input documents (Annex I) and the list of participants (Annex II).

Introductions

2. The Chair welcomed MAG members and other participants and noted that the meeting was dedicated to reviewing input received through stakeholder consultations on matters related to the format and design/structure of IGF 2021.

3. Mr. Krzysztof Szubert, Host Country Co-chair, thanked the community for their contributions into the IGF 2020 taking stock process and noted that these are to be considered when designing IGF 2021. He emphasised the importance that Poland – the host country for IGF 2021 – places on ensuring the engagement of stakeholders and communities in finding the most suitable way to organise and run the IGF meeting in December. Preparations in Poland – related to logistics, public relations, etc. – are progressing well.

Summary of input received to the stocktaking process

4. Mr. Chengetai Masango, representing the IGF Secretariat, gave an overview of contributions received as part of the IGF 2020 stocktaking process. The overview covered (a) [input received](https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/igf-2021-suggestions)¹ in response to the [call for stakeholders](https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/taking-stock-of-igf-2020-and-suggesting-improvements-for-igf-2021)² to submit written contributions taking stock of IGF 2020 and looking forward to IGF 2021 (open between December 2020 and January 2021) and (b)

¹ <https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/igf-2021-suggestions>

² <https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/taking-stock-of-igf-2020-and-suggesting-improvements-for-igf-2021>

suggestions made during the [open mic feedback session at IGF 2020](#)³. Mr. Masango reminded participants that a [synthesis paper](#)⁴ **summarising all this input** is available on the IGF website.

5. Commenting on the 50 written contributions received in response to the stocktaking process, Mr. Masango noted that some of them came from organisations that have not previously participated in IGF processes, demonstrating a growing interest in the IGF. He then moved on to present some of the elements outlined in the synthesis paper on issues such as the selection of IGF tracks; the workshop selection process; cooperation between the former, current and future IGF host; support for and cooperation between IGF intersessional work and NRIs; participation; and IGF outputs. On matters related to the IGF meeting structure, design and content, Mr. Masango noted that, while many submissions praised the success of the fully online IGF, some underlined that the meeting's duration was too long. Suggestions were made for a more concise and coherent programme, with fewer parallel tracks and sessions, and focused on a limited number of strategic issues. There were calls for the IGF 2021 programme to be action-oriented and facilitate dialogue on concrete, implementable solutions to specific Internet governance issues. The meeting outputs were seen as relevant, but some stakeholders called for a more systematic and better-structured approach to outputs; for instance, some noted that it was confusing to see multiple messages produced, such as the one emerged from the thematic track, high-level leaders' track and main sessions, in addition to the key-takeaways and session recommendations. Fewer, cleared outputs could be easier to digest, some advised.

Report on IGF process and design from the WG-strategy

6. Ms. Concettina Cassa presented a summary of the suggestions on IGF process and design put forward by the MAG Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy (WG-strategy). These suggestions are detailed in the [WG's report with proposals on strategic improvements to the IGF and operational measures in 2021](#)⁵.

7. Outlining the need for a more focused and interconnected IGF agenda, WG-strategy recommends that IGF 2021 should address no more than three focused policy issues or questions, defined by the MAG and based on community input. Pre- or side-events could cover other issues not related to the focused policy questions. This approach would allow for an IGF programme that is more comprehensively issue-driven. Once the MAG defines the key policy issues, an open call would be launched inviting participation in the organisation of workshops, which would be guided by the work of 'issue-teams'. Reducing the number of workshops and avoiding duplication of content was also recommended. Dynamic Coalitions (DCs), national and regional IGF initiatives (NRIs), and Youth IGF initiatives would be invited to address the issue-driven policy questions; links between these questions and Best Practice Forums (BPFs) are also welcome, but not mandatory.

³ <https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2020-open-mic-and-feedback-session>

⁴ https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/index.php?q=filedepot_download/11159/2432

⁵ https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/filedepot_download/11159/2418

8. WG-strategy also made several recommendations regarding the capturing and communication of IGF messages/outcomes, such as having independent rapporteurs for sessions, having the session messages read at the end of the session, and focusing on actionable outcomes.

Discussions

9. During the general discussions, suggestions were made to:

- Ensure that both the contributions received to the stocktaking process and the recommendations from WG-strategy are considered as a whole when the MAG makes decisions on the format, design and content of IGF 2021.
- Strengthen the communications around stocktaking processes, with the goal to attract more contributions and be more clear about how these contributions are then used by the MAG in the planning of the next IGF.
- Introduce an evaluation process immediately after the IGF, allowing participants to provide feedback.

10. Participants were then divided into five breakout groups to discuss inputs received on preparatory process; intersessional work and NRIs; annual meeting structure, design and content; participation; and communications and technical improvements. The reports presented by the groups are presented below.

Group 1: Preparatory process

- Based on the call for issues, the MAG would select ideally 3, max 4 themes for IGF 2021. In addition, the MAG would select 3 specific policy questions per theme and invite workshops to explore or respond to those 3 questions + reserve a space for "other" workshops. Finally, the MAG would allocate space on the agenda in advance for workshops on pre-selected questions and on "others".
- Remind MAG members not to be overzealous about merging proposals. To work with workshop proposers to clarify and narrow down their proposals first.
- On hybrid programme – putting together a WG. Design virtual meeting and expand into hybrid meeting. Consider how to design the hybrid meeting that allows greater interaction among participants. Those online should be able to participate equally, so there needs to be a remote participation manager.
- On the suggested mandatory requirement for youth inclusion: There is already a recommendation for gender balanced panels. Also need to ensure participants from elderly group, or disability group. May impose too many limits on workshop organisers. Nice to have a recommendation to make an effort to include youth, but shouldn't make it a requirement/obligation per se. Would also be time-consuming. Engaging youth is good but shouldn't be mandatory criteria as it may also be too artificial. Overall quality of panel based on diversity of expertise and knowledge should form the baseline criteria.

- Suggestion to improve regular communication with stakeholders. Comprehensive communication plan ahead of IGF 2021. Comms should be action-oriented; to inform and empower the target audience.
- Noted suggestion to increase transparency in our evaluation process. On the comments made during the stocktaking process on a perceived lack of clarity on deciding thematic tracks – Talking about IGF multi-year strategy; look to future and think how we can link or discuss similar topics over the span of several years. Whether specific topics emerge come to a conclusion or consensus that can be built up. Can be done better in intersessional activities because we can build the discussions over time. The group had a hard time agreeing with the comments on lack of clarity on how thematic tracks are decided. You can follow MAG calls and discussions, read exchanges based on input received. The choices made by MAG are discussed in a transparent manner. Goes back to communications; newsletter coming out after each MAG meeting to say where the transcripts are, and enable people to participate in the decision-making process. The process itself is quite transparent, perhaps can improve how we communicate that people are able to participate, find documents online, etc. Going back to the basics on what is needed, what will it be used for, explaining different roles, different types of sessions etc.
- MAG should take intellectual leadership to identify the topics for discussion.

Group 2: Intersessional work and NRIs

- Inputs from the community stressed the need for intersessional work being linked with other global processes and initiatives. The breakout group discussed the need to look at this from another angle also – i.e., making the IGF deliberations relevant to other UN bodies and serve as a repository of work and practices.
- There is a clear need for more coordination and communication among the various groups doing intersessional work. This becomes more challenging as there is a proliferation of new initiatives and ideas. It would be desirable to have a dedicated resource for this at the Secretariat. Such a step would, however, require additional resources as the Secretariat is already overstretched.
- If such a focal point is created, it could also assist in evaluating the work of the intersessional groups.
- Some concrete suggestions leading to better coordination: sharing of practices, schedules, outputs, partnerships in sessions, thematic organisation of topics shared by the groups.
- Intersessional groups need to be transparent and bottom up, as resonated from several community inputs. The group suggested to strengthen this regard in MAG's current discussions on reviewing the Best Practice Forum proposals. The BPFs must have a transparent and open governance structure.
- For NRIs, bringing the topics relevant at the regional level to the global agenda must be strengthened.
- Two work of the Secretariat in facilitating the intersessional work and the NRIs has been very much appreciated in the group.

Group 3: Annual meeting structure, design and content

- Strong support expressed for a hybrid meeting. The group agreed that:
 - Not knowing yet how the global health situation will evolve, we need to consider that not everyone will be able to travel and we cannot expect to be able to have an IGF as we're used to.
 - The IGF can become an early adopter of new ways of designing and running conferences.
 - Need to make sure that online participants are not treated as second class participants and ensure full engagement from everyone.
- Suggestions were raised for side-events and preparatory events to be held online (e.g. webinars to discuss in detail intersessional work or updates from NRIs) so that the in-person meeting can have a more focused agenda with participants having had the chance to be informed of the main issues in advance.
- It was noted that for those stakeholders who will be able to travel, it might be cumbersome to organize both online activities and in-person activities under a short period of time, if they are expected to travel in between.
- The group put strong emphasis on interaction and networking. We need to allocate sufficient time and opportunity for interaction between participants and between panelists and participants, within sessions but also outside sessions.
- The group also expressed support for a shorter, more focused agenda to allow time for time spent outside formal sessions and in smaller groups.

Group 4: Participation

- Some improvements are needed in the process of attracting IGF participation, especially in terms of providing more information on why and how to participate. Navigating the website can be difficult.
- One priority should be to get the youth more engaged. Designing some mentorship/ambassadorship programmes for the youth would help guide them through the process. There should also be some follow-up and reporting process in place, as a way to encourage youth to stay engaged.
- To engage parliamentarians and the private sector more actively, communication with them needs to be improved (for instance, through newsletters).

Group 5: Communications and technical improvements

Comms

- There was a general sense that the comms strategy needs to be looked at; the strategy needs to cover the work during the entire year (including intersessional work).

- There seems to be a lack of formal comms and comms strategy during the year; in 2020, this was reflected in the fact that there was not much media coverage during the IGF. To consider: Have there been discussions on having media support during the year from a professional media team? What is the Secretariat considering in terms of comms strategy for the whole IGF work? The comms around the Roadmap for digital cooperation is a good example to try to follow.
- The Secretariat needs a professional lead on communications.
- Social-media-wise: there were a lot of efforts in 2020, but more could have been done (e.g. linking organisations to the tweets). Improve this for 2021.
- We need to communicate more effectively within the IGF community, the IG community, and other communities beyond IG.
- Post IGF comms also need to be strengthened. The post meeting report needs to cover all activities of the IGF (including BPFs, DCs), but it needs to synthesise key messages and be concise and accessible to various stakeholder groups.
- Potential confusion on the messages: There were high-level track and main track messages, and in addition there were key take-aways and session recommendations. Maybe fewer but clearer outcomes might be more valuable. Also, these different types of outcomes must be better integrated into a single outcome document. A professional approach to comms needed to really synthesize outputs into key issues to communicate more clearly.

Website & tech

- The website needs to better show the content that is produced by the several IGF work tracks. Make navigation clearer; ensure more interactivity; make the website more accessible for mainstream media, decision-makers, etc.
- The archive of materials going back to 2006 needs to be made searchable. References were made to friendsoftheigf.org website and a potential integration in the new IGF website.
- There were calls for more interactivity in the tech platform used during the IGF (e.g. see who is present, have more interaction functionalities). But some pointed out the need to also ensure a balance between interactive sessions and other types of sessions that might be just about reporting/presenting/etc. The overall feeling, however, was that sessions need to be outcome oriented, ideally. So workshops should be built with this in mind. For reporting and other purposes, there should be other types of sessions. The core programme should be designed to deliver concrete recommendations/proposals for actions/etc.
- Don't begin the discussion on tech, but on what we need and want; and then see how we make tech work.
- Objectives should drive the platform(s), the session design, and how everything is communicated. So we need to be clear on what the objectives are and get consensus on this.
 - Have clarity on the objectives for the sessions (not only policy questions/objectives, but also overall objectives of the session).

11. Commenting on the working groups reports, Ms. Esterhuysen noted that there seem to be two key issues standing out: (a) communications and technical improvements and (b) balancing the need to ensure a high level of participation and engagement in the IGF with the calls for a narrower focus of the meeting programme. Another important issue is to ensure that, if a hybrid meeting is put in place, there are opportunities for closer engagement, more networking and personal interactions.

12. Further comments from meeting participants included suggestions to:

- Be clear upfront if a decision is made to reduce the number of sessions in the IGF programme. Be mindful of the fact that such a decision might become less popular when more session proposals are rejected.
- Ensure that a potential hybrid meeting offers equal participation opportunities to those online and in situ.
- Make sure that decisions related to the design of IGF 2021 are not driven by technology choices. When designing the meeting, begin from the goal of creating an engaging and interactive event, and not from the expectations or limitations of a particular platform/technology.
- Develop a multi-year IGF plan with clear priorities, including in terms of developing conclusions at the end of an IGF meeting. Communicating this plan and the expected outcomes could help attract more participation and media attention.
- Ensure that the IGF outputs are clear, concise and well communicated.
- Consider whether enough is being done to strengthen participation in IGF processes.

13. In response to questions on the status of the IGF website redesign process, Mr. Masango explained that a vendor has been identified and the corresponding contract is now being processed. During the design process, user groups will be interviewed to determine their requirements and suggestions for improvements. The website will be implemented in multiple stages, but it is hoped to have it ready in time for the IGF 2021 meeting.

14. Concluding the meeting, Ms. Esterhuysen noted that the MAG will continue these discussions on the MAG list and at the next meeting to be held in the week of 22 February.

Annex I

Meeting agenda and input documents

Agenda

1. Adoption of Agenda (2.5 minutes)
2. Chair and Co-chair introduction and welcome and overview of tasks for the call (2.5 minutes)
3. Taking stock of IGF 2020 (while setting expectations for 2021)
 - i. IGF Secretariat's summary of inputs received to the stocktaking process concerning the format and structure. (15 minutes)
 - ii. Report on IGF format and structure from the WG-strategy (10 minutes)
 - iii. GENERAL DISCUSSION (10 minutes)
 - iv. Strategic discussion on inputs received in breakout groups following the structure of the synthesis paper (35)

Participants will be randomly sorted into groups 5 groups. Each group should appoint a chair and a rapporteur. Reports can be in bullet point form and should ideally be shared with the Secretariat after the call.

Groups will have 35 minutes for discussion and recommendations on how the MAG can follow up on suggestions received.

 - Group 1: Preparatory Process (section 1 in the document)
 - Group 2: Intersessional work and NRIs (section 1)
 - Group 3: Annual Meeting Structure, Design and Content (section 3)
 - Group 4: Participation (section 4)
 - Group 5: Communications and Technical Improvements (section 5)
 - Group 6: IGF Improvements (section 6)
 - v. Group reports 5 minutes per group (30 minutes)
 - vi. Discussion (20 minutes)
3. Next steps for finalising IGF 2021 programme structure format and design (10 minutes)
4. A.O.B (5 minutes)

Input documents

1. Synthesis paper: Contributions taking stock of IGF 2020 and looking forward to IGF 2021
https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/index.php?q=filedepot_download/11159/2432
(Full list of received input:
<https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/igf-2021-suggestions>)
2. MAG Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy (WG-strategy) proposals on strategic improvements to the IGF and operational measures in 2021
https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/filedepot_download/11159/2418
3. WG-strategy presentation for the meeting
https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/filedepot_download/10447/2439

Annex II Participants

| Last name | First name |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| MAG Chair | |
| Esterhuysen | Anriette |
| Host Country Co-chair | |
| Krzysztof | Szubert |
| MAG members | |
| Afonso | Carlos Alberto |
| Castex | Lucien |
| Chalmers | Susan |
| Charlton | Paul |
| Chen | Joyce |
| Choudhury | Amrita |
| Chukov | Roman |
| Espinosa | Amado |
| Fantinati | Mattia |
| Hariniombonana | Andriamampionona |
| Harsianti | Juliana |
| Hazar | Alzaki |
| Horejsova | Tereza |
| Karim | Attoumani Mohamed |
| Koubaa | Khaled |
| Ofianga | Mary Rose |
| Peake | Adam |

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|--|-----------------|
| Peresson | Sophie |
| Radsch | Courtney |
| Tauchnitz | Evelyne |
| Tungali | Arsene |
| Zambrana | Roberto |
| Zhaoyu | Ji |
| Representatives of former IGF host countries | |
| Santhosh | Shri T. |
| Walpen | Livia |
| UN DESA | |
| Kwok | Wai Min |
| Representatives of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and European Commission | |
| Frank | Nicola |
| Hu | Xianhong |
| Sanz | Esteve |
| Other participants | |
| Adriko | Innocent |
| Afia | Faith |
| Amessinou | Kossi |
| Bachar Bong | Abdeldjalil |
| Carvell | Mark |
| Cassa | Concettina |
| Corrales | Beatriz |
| Croll | Jutta |
| Degezelle | Wim |
| Emejulu | Daniel Akinmade |

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|-------------|------------|
| Gatto | Raquel |
| Heaver | Alisa |
| Hoferichter | Sandra |
| Ivankovic | Aleksandra |
| Kasprzyk | Ewelina |
| Kummer | Markus |
| Łukasiewicz | Piotr |
| Major | Vera |
| Mazzone | Giacomo |
| Moisander | Juuso |
| Munyan | Jason |
| Nardy | Gabriela |
| Nelson | Michael |
| Oliveira | Marcelo |
| Palladino | Nicola |
| Parris | June |
| Podgorska | Anna |
| Prendergast | Jim |
| Prieto | Luis |
| Przemysław | Typiak |
| Radu | Roxana |
| Ramos | Herman |
| Rodrigues | Everton |
| Roy | Chrystiane |
| Salyou | Fanny |
| Sanoussi | Rachad |

| | |
|------------------------|-------------|
| Santos | Bruna |
| Santos | Vinicius |
| Shehu | Mustapha |
| Skwarek | Wiktor |
| Suto | Timea |
| Taylor | Suzanne |
| Tchonang Linze | Michel |
| Teleanu | Sorina |
| Velasquez | Juan Pajaro |
| Wagner | Flavio |
| Wallis | Ben |
| Weinzieher | Aleksandra |
| Wildner | Heiko |
| Yang | Xiaobo |
| Żelaznowski | Julian |
| IGF Secretariat | |
| Bobo Garcia | Luis |
| Gengo | Anja |
| Masango | Chengetai |