Open Consultations and MAG Meeting

20-22 March 2018

Synthesis Paper

Contributions Taking Stock of IGF 2017 and Looking Forward to IGF 2018

I. Introduction

1. This paper summarizes inputs received from the IGF community in response to an invitation[1] from the IGF Secretariat for stakeholders to submit written contributions taking stock of the IGF 2017 meeting (12th IGF[2]) and looking forward to the IGF 2018 meeting (13th IGF).

2. This synthesis paper is intended to form an input for the first Open Consultations and Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) Meeting (20-22 March 2018) in the preparatory process for IGF 2018. This paper is a summary of the various contributions received by the IGF Secretariat. Some specific suggestions are included verbatim. A complete list of contributions received can be found here: https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-community-public-consultation-taking-stock-of-the-2017-work-programme-and-12th-igf-and and in the Annex of this document.

II. Taking Stock of the 12ᵗʰ IGF: General Comments on the IGF, the Twelfth IGF annual meeting and the 2017 community intersessional work and preparatory processes

3. Many contributions expressed deep thanks and appreciation to the Government of Switzerland and the IGF Secretariat for their hosting of the IGF. They noted the smooth, efficient organization of the meeting as well as the professionalism and excellent support from the Secretariat and team on the ground, especially given their small numbers. The host country website, a primary source for practical information, was praised, as well as the general support from host country and Secretariat staff members in the months leading up to the meeting.

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[1] https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-community-public-consultation-taking-stock-of-the-2017-work-programme-and-12th-igf-and

[2] https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2017-geneva-switzerland-18-21-december#overlay-context=content/igf-2017

4. Many also thanked the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) for their efforts in planning the IGF event and developing its programme, and the MAG Chair, Ms. Lynn St. Amour, for her leadership throughout the preparatory process.

5. Several stakeholders positively remarked on the facilities available at the UN Office at Geneva (UNOG), the venue for the 12th IGF. These included centrally located areas for coffee and food, whose extended hours were useful for accommodating different schedules; a wide selection of food options for different diets; and restaurant options that were affordable compared to external prices. It was noted that in general, workshop rooms were spacious and well appointed, were accessibility-friendly – an important aspect of any IGF meeting – and that they featured good audiovisual facilities. The reliable and strong Wifi throughout the venue was a highlight. Many also appreciated the host country's effort to bolster participation and inclusivity by providing interpretation in all six official UN languages during the daily main sessions. Bilateral rooms were said to have been well suited for closed meetings and in-depth conversations.

6. Stakeholders noted that the venue was well-connected to hotels and main transport hubs in the city of Geneva, and that Geneva's affordable and efficient transport system made for ease of mobility. The large and well-publicized reception dinner, hosted by the Government of Switzerland on Day 1 of the meeting and open to all IGF participants, was greatly appreciated.

7. Many inputs praised Geneva's role in improving the participation of stakeholders from Governments, intergovernmental and international organizations, and especially in improving their visibility at the meeting. The positive impact of the host city, as a base for permanent missions and a number of UN entities, was widely felt. Together with the increased number of Government and IGO-organized open forums, which were said to have had a further positive effect, participants at the meeting benefitted from the opportunity of cross-regional exchange and dialogue with policymakers, including with high-profile UN actors. Some also noted with appreciation the presence of parliamentarians and better Government participation through the high-level sessions.

8. While there were a number of benefits to holding the IGF in a UN venue, a few stakeholders cited challenges. The UN-required registration procedures in the mornings before the meeting were felt to be overly long, although the Secretariat's extension of the registration deadline was appreciated. It was also noted that the layout of the venue could be confusing and that meeting rooms, including bilateral meeting rooms, were hard to find. It was wished that more volunteers had been on hand to help orient participants as well as more space set aside for bilateral meetings, which many agreed were a valuable component of the IGF. A couple of inputs also noted the preference for having the Day 0 events in the same venue as the meeting, which would have facilitated registration and travel from hotels. Finally, it was said the accessibility into the venue for persons with disabilities was a logistical aspect that needed improvement and should be given more priority next year.

9. Some stocktaking submissions made mention of the general timing and location of the meeting. Namely, it was said that the scheduling of the meeting late in December and close to what is a holiday period for many participants made travel more challenging, as well as post-IGF reporting for those who were organizing sessions. It was also remarked that Geneva is an expensive city, with prices of food and accommodation proving to be a financial burden, and that this created a potential barrier for participation for stakeholders from the Global South.

10. Remote participation, one of the tools for effectively transcending barriers and bringing in participants who cannot attend physically, was noted as having been generally excellent at the 2017 IGF. Although some expressed their preference for other conferencing tools over Webex, the IGF's tradition of giving complete access to the meeting via Webex continued to be appreciated, as well as the Secretariat's support to Webex users. The benefit of near-complete live captioning in the meeting and resulting transcriptions was further acknowledged, despite some scattered transcription inaccuracies.

11. The IGF Village, with its many exhibition booths in 2017, was said once again to have provided a valuable space for networking and informal exchanges. The booths were used by some as helpful 'drop-in' points for members of their communities, and as is traditional in the IGF Village, the area allowed participants to trade contacts and explore avenues for collaboration with other Internet governance-related organizations. Despite some limitations within the venue, such as restricted physical space for the Village and limited equipment for booths, a high degree of interaction was observed.

12. The full schedule of sessions on Day 0 was valued as an IGF tradition that continues to bring to light new and interesting proposals outside of the 'regular programme'. Its different status was said to contribute to more original session formats; despite their unofficial nature, the Day 0 discussions were seen as impactful, important to overall Internet governance debates and closely connected to many areas of the IGF's work. It was also noted as positive that a host country-led high-level segment was not held on this day, as in the past this has tended to duplicate the opening proceedings on Day 1.

13. Stakeholders noted with appreciation, for the second year running, the expansion of the programme to include shorter, more informal and dynamic sessions, such as lightning talks. Although the space where these were held was more restricted and less central than in 2016, the content was noticeably very good, in particular the talks that featured research findings. Many underlined that the impromptu sessions had worked well overall and that the concept should be carried forward in future years.

14. A number of inputs lauded improvements made to the workshops process, evident both during the preparatory phase and the meeting. Among these were the easier-to-navigate forms for workshop proposers; during the selection process, the MAG's emphasis of proposals that were not panel-oriented; the MAG's strong commitment to ensuring multistakeholder and regionally balanced lists of speakers; and the attention paid to first-time proposers. The stress on gender balance in the workshop sessions was also valued. The process itself was said to

have been well-organized and fair, with clear deadlines and instructions communicated to proposers. Organizers felt they had been allowed enough time to make their proposals and then refine them once the selection had been made. It was also remarked that the scheduling of workshops, though imperfect, was much improved and that significant overlaps of speakers and themes from previous years had been successfully avoided.

15. The work of IGF intersessional Best Practice Forums (BPFs), the initiative on 'Policy Options for Connecting and Enabling the Next Billion(s)' (CENB), and Dynamic Coalitions (DCs), was widely praised. It was said by many that CENB and the BPFs – dedicated in 2017 to Cybersecurity, Gender & Access and Local Content – were continuous, strong examples of the IGF's ability to make policy recommendations without being prescriptive, in a truly multistakeholder and bottom-up way. It was noted that the choice to limit the number of BPFs to three (as opposed to four in previous years) positively focused the work and that the outputs at the end of the cycle were of high calibre. Also important for the 2017 programme, stakeholders felt that BPF and CENB work was effectively integrated into and given visibility through the thematic main sessions. Positive remarks were similarly expressed on and by DCs, which once again appreciated the space at the global IGF for discussion and collaboration, as well as the productive coordination work throughout the year undertaken with Secretariat support. It was mentioned that all these groups continue to reflect the 'strength of the IGF process'.

16. Much appreciation was expressed for the contributions to the annual meeting by National and Regional IGFs (NRIs). First-time 'NRI collaborative sessions' were said to have been very valuable, along with NRIs' physical attendance at the meeting, as they continue to provide opportunities for exchange with, and input from, local, national and regional communities. Specifically highlighted was the Secretariat's role intersessionally in supporting the establishment of youth-related NRIs, as well as supporting documentation on those initiatives, which has proven a useful reference for youth engagement in the IGF.

17. Innovations in the 2017 meeting programme introduced by the Swiss host country, specifically a 'Davos' style high-level opening session on Day 1, and same-day 'Geneva Messages' distilling the significant points from the main sessions, were very much welcome. The new style of Day 1, which both opened up the usual high-level or 'ministerial' meeting by placing it on the first day of the programme and giving it a more dynamic, discussion-based format, was felt to be bold and interesting. Although the session could perhaps have been shortened to allow for more contributions from stakeholders in the audience, there was good interaction with the community and at the same time, Governments and other high-level Internet governance actors were given the space to communicate key messages. This was seen as a marked improvement from previous high-level sessions which were closed, held on Day 0, or both. The new 'Geneva Messages' were applauded as an incremental but desirable step toward producing quick, non-binding outcomes during the meeting and documenting results, as well as an effective response to the Working Group on IGF Improvements' recommendation to increase the IGF's tangible outputs.

18. Several submissions underscored the overall excellent content of the 2017 meeting, citing the wide and rich spectrum of issues presented, including an increasing number of timely and current 'hot topics' such as fakenews, online extremism and Internet of Things, as well as very good content delivery from interesting speakers. Although it was remarked that technical issues could be given more equal weight with other areas of discussion long popular at the IGF, such as human rights online, it was noticed that in many sessions there was a renewed emphasis and sense of urgency regarding cybersecurity, which sits at a crucial intersection of technical and policy debates. It was also said that the themes of the main sessions were highly relevant, and that the sessions themselves were strategically focused in such a way to facilitate positive and meaningful exchanges across stakeholder groups - although a suggestion was made to consider shortening them. With an agenda of issues that was said to be increasingly complex but ultimately successful in its growth year by year, inputs noted that the overarching theme, 'Shape Your Digital Future!', was appropriately broad, inclusive and effectively connected with areas of the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

19. Many observed a very good, energetic mix of stakeholders at the 2017 IGF, including youth, newcomers, and stakeholders from the Global South. The active and vibrant civil society contingent at the IGF was underlined as unique in a UN setting. It was also said that the IGF's ability to consistently attract new participants is a marker of its continued relevance. A few contributions noted that although the overall number of participants in the meeting was positive and stable, and that the attendance of Governments and IGOs in particular was stronger in 2017, private sector participation still seemed to be lagging.

20. Across all submissions the value of the IGF was repeatedly highlighted – as a catalyst for new partnerships and relationships, a capacity building opportunity for developing country and new stakeholders, a platform for presenting and getting feedback on research, and increasingly, as a destination for digital frontier issues. It continued to be seen as the premier global forum for multistakeholder dialogue on cross-cutting Internet policy issues and for sharing ideas and exchanging best practices on those issues. Furthermore, the IGF's preparatory process was widely praised as smooth and efficient. It was applauded in 2017 for its openness, inclusivity and commitment to drawing multistakeholder input at every stage, including improvements at the workshops submission stage. As such, it was said, supporting the IGF financially and ensuring its stakeholder participation is appropriately balanced remained as important as ever.

III. Suggestions and Recommendations Looking Forward to the 13th IGF

20. Looking ahead to the next IGF, several community members raised the issue of timing. It was clearly expressed that it would be preferable not to hold the 2018 meeting in late December and close to end-of-year holidays for many. According to inputs, the last quarter of the year was a good timeframe up until the first week of December. It was felt that this period would appropriately ensure the widest number of stakeholders could attend. For planning purposes, it was advised that the selection of the 2018 host country and venue be made as soon as possible and that it take into account the needs of participants from the Global South.

21. Some suggestions were made regarding rooms within the future venue and in particular, accessibility. For both accessibility purposes and for the overall convenience of participants, it was suggested all rooms have at least two monitors (one to display captions, the other for documents). In situations where rooms are too full and participants would still like to be able follow the sessions, it was recommended having 'overflow' rooms on standby. Many inputs also called for an increase in the number of bilateral meeting rooms and easy ways to access them. The designation of a special 'study hall' style room was proposed. This could act as a quiet space with plugs for participants to work in, especially for those with hotels not in the vicinity or when exiting and entering the venue takes a long time. It was said accessibility from the exterior of the venue should also be made a priority, in particular for persons with disabilities, and that instructions should clearly be provided on the IGF website for how to navigate entry. This was seen as especially important since IGF meetings will continue to operate in a UN security context, which can pose additional challenges or delays to venue access.

22. As a potential way of addressing issues related to accessibility and participants' general orientation within a venue, many contributions suggested a large body of volunteers – students or otherwise – who could be on hand to provide assistance as situations arise.

23. While remote participation was regarded as highly effective in the 2017 IGF, a few inputs stressed the need to continue to grow the number of online participants. Equally important, it was said the IGF Secretariat's electronic queuing technology, which creates an even playing field for interventions by onsite and online participants, should be supported over the coming year. For the benefit of the participants onsite and online as well as the captioners, it was advised that speakers always introduce themselves before intervening; a more thorough review of the quality of live and recorded transcripts could also take place.

24. Regarding IGF Village booths, suggestions were made to standardize their dimensions for planning purposes, as well as to provide more equipment, or options for equipment to the extent possible. It was noted some booths also usefully double as meeting spaces for their organisers, and that additional chairs and other materials are especially appreciated in those cases. A further recommendation was made to consider reducing the number of booths ahead of the next IGF.

25. While much progress was noted in the overall scheduling of sessions, a few suggestions for improvement were made. In particular it was said that organisers should be directed to update descriptions, agendas and lists of speakers in a more timely fashion. Similarly, all scheduling changes, including room changes, should be reflected as quickly as possible. To assure the schedule is accurate, it was also said categorization of sessions into their respective themes should take into account more information than the organisers' selected tags. Enhancements in the readability of the schedule should be built on in order to further minimize overlaps in related topics.

26. Stakeholders put forward various recommendations on the different session types in the programme. On main sessions specifically, they suggested that care be taken to ensure their themes have broad appeal, are non-duplicative with existing workshops and that over-large panels be avoided to allow sufficient time for participant interaction. Both their content and scheduling should be organized with a view to maximizing attendance. It was also suggested the MAG consider designating main sessions or 'plenaries' as spaces for synthesis and cross-cutting issues. Although the new format for the opening high-level session was appreciated, the comment was made that in the future a more diverse range of VIPs could be included. Regarding open forums, as they have worked well to increase Government engagement, a suggestion was made to deploy them in the same way to strengthen private sector participation. Some inputs mentioned they would like to see Day 0 sessions dedicated to capacity building, including specific technical training; some also remarked that an optimal space should be set aside for the much-supported lightning sessions.

27. In 2017, the programme featured a wider range of sessions dedicated to IGF community groups, including for the first time, topical sessions by NRIs alongside those organized by DCs and BPFs. Stakeholders reflected very positively on this, and their general suggestions centred around making all the intersessional and community-led sessions more visible in the programme, or even longer in length (at 90 minutes instead of 60). While supporting the continuation and enhancement of these sessions, some specific recommendations were: following their debut, to have a more formalized selection process for NRI sessions; raise awareness on BPFs and DCs during the meeting so participants better understand the context of their sessions; and invite DC sessions to explicitly collaborate with other session organisers on similar or related issues.

28. While lauding the reforms that have taken place in the workshop selection process, particularly with regard to more balanced panels, a number of comments were made on further progressing the workshops approach. It was said more still could be done to ensure gender and stakeholder diversity among speakers, and that more types of non-panel workshop formats should be considered for approval. Some expressed interest in seeing workshops more clearly selected or classified on the basis of whether or not they were advancing discussions held in a prior year or venue, or if the organisers had held an IGF workshop before, whether or not they had implemented learnings from that workshop. In terms of process, it was said the forms and procedures for proposers could be further tweaked, with a focus on clarifying some customary and 'unwritten' selection parameters, as well as more consideration given to workshop proposers' time, especially in the post-meeting reporting phase. Several stakeholders commented that although the variety of issues represented by workshops lent richness to the programme, they recommended clustering workshops around a more limited number of pre-defined high-level issues. Many also agreed the overall number of workshops should be reduced.

29. In line with the comments made on the workshop selection process, suggestions were put forward for changing the structure of the programme in order to enhance coherence and focus. There was some support for dedicating each day of the programme to a different theme.

Similarly, it was said certain days could be reserved for workshops, and others for main sessions and roundtable or best practice sessions. Some inputs suggested more space be given over to capacity building, particularly for introductory or 'technical' sessions, as well as to open, unscheduled slots. And while the practice of selecting the programme's themes from the session submissions retains support, it was hoped that future IGF main sessions would more accurately reflect and anchor those themes. In order to better highlight discussions across the programme, it was suggested giving participants the option to sign up for thematic listservs during the meeting, as well as to consider presenting on the final day of the meeting, concise main messages stakeholders can easily take back to their countries and communities. The new 'Geneva Messages' were acknowledged as having already made a positive contribution in this respect.

30. Additional general comments on the programme focused on introducing more interactive session formats, regardless of the session type. Stakeholders expressed a wish to see more creative, collaborative and dynamic formats where the emphasis is on interaction, both among prepared participants and with wider IGF attendees.

31. Inputs regarding the IGF's intersessional activities - namely DCs, BPFs and CENB - and NRIs, praised their work to date and made various suggestions for strengthening their continuation and support. These focused on ensuring that there are open, consistent channels of communication across the groups and with the MAG, so areas for collaboration are identified and their work is structured in a synchronized way, particularly where the publication of outputs is concerned. Specifically on BPFs, it was said that to avoid delays, their themes should be selected by the MAG as soon as possible and the traditional support lent to them through consultants, arranged in a timely way. A few submissions agreed intersessional outputs should be made more visible on the IGF's website and better promoted outside the IGF community. More cross-fertilization between intersessional groups and NRIs, whose work and outreach potential are also seen as vital, was further recommended. Whether referring to BPFs, DCs, CENB, emerging youth initiatives or NRIs, inputs concurred on the need for extended Secretariat support and coordination of these activities, while noting that any expansion of the intersessional programme should first consider available resources.

32. Regarding the future themes of the meeting, a number of submissions commented that the programme should make a stronger connection with the 2030 Agenda and engage with development actors. Related to this, it was advised that the programme continue to be inclusive of issues that matter to under-represented groups and stakeholders from the Global South. It was also suggested that a closer link to UN themes and processes could be made by reporting the IGF's year-by-year progress on the challenges outlined in the WSIS+10 outcome document. A number of other theme suggestions included cross-cutting issues associated with digital culture; the Internet of Things and ethics; blockchain; education and digital training; Internet taxonomy; online abuse; and Internet standards. In addition, it was recommended ensuring high-visibility main session topics are identified early and that a clearer connection is made between the overarching theme and the sessions in the programme.

33. Although considerable improvement was observed in Government participation compared to previous IGFs, several stakeholders highlighted the need to build on those gains. To sustain the interest of Governments, it was suggested they be consulted proactively and intersessionally, including through Geneva-based permanent missions, on the topics important to them. Contributions stressed that private sector participation should also be increased. This was seen as particularly important in light of the digitization phenomenon and its deep effects on economies and societies. A number of inputs also called for more engagement of youth, including as organisers of IGF sessions, and for supporting them to the extent possible through sponsorship programmes offered by various organsations in the IGF community.

34. A few inputs touched on the interlinked issues of better outreach and communication, outputs and outcomes of the IGF. It was generally noted that more could be done to raise the political profile of the IGF and increase awareness of its work, including through: stronger promotion of outputs; re-orientation of the intersessional and annual meeting activity toward more tangible outcomes; and increasing cooperation with other organisations and policy experts in various fields. Some recommendations regarding tangible outcomes outlined the need for the MAG and IGF community to, above all else, prioritise specific issues, select enabling work or discussion formats, and partner with specialised communities. It was said existing outputs should be showcased more regularly and could benefit from better presentation and translation into languages other than English. Media presence at IGFs, which has steadily improved, should also be prioritised.

35. Related to the above, contributions mentioned that the re-appointment of the traditional role of 'Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Internet Governance', which has long been vacant, as well as the presence of the UN Secretary-General at the annual meetings, would help strengthen the IGF's political relevance.

36. A small number of inputs commented on MAG practices, and specifically the process of MAG renewal and appointment of the chair. On the latter, it was said that over time, ideally the chairmanship should rotate among the different stakeholder groups; the overall renewal of membership, it was suggested, should take place with maximum procedural openness and the list of nominees should be made public. It was also said that accountability relationships between UNDESA, the IGF Secretariat and the MAG should be clarified, and that decision-making within the MAG itself should always strive to be consensus-driven among existing members.

Annex

List of Contributions (*listed in order as received by IGF Secretariat***)**

-Avis Momeni

-Maureen Hilyard - Asia Pacific regional IGF (APrIGF)

-Gustavo Cervantes Montero - Universidad de Oriente, Cuba

-Shredeep Rayamajhi - RayZ News

-Maarten Botterman - IGF Dynamic Coalition on Internet of Things (DC-IoT)

-Jorge Cancio - Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM), Switzerland

-Dominic Bellone - Counterpart International

-Ginger (Virginia) Paque

-Amrita Choudhury - Cyber Café Association of India (CCAOI)

-Nadira Al-Araj

-N. Sudha Bhuvaneswari

-Rizki Ameliah H. Cawidu - Ministry of Information and Communication Technology of Indonesia

-Joash Ntenga Moitui - Centre for Human Rights and Policy Studies

-Morgan Frost - Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) / National Democratic Institute (NDI) / Center for International Media Assistance (CIMA)

-Wout De Natris [Summary] [Full Report]

-Vanessa Berning - Netherlands IGF

-Markus Kummer

-Susan Chalmers - United States Government

-Luca Belli - Center for Technology and Society of Fundação Getulio Vargas Law School (CTS/FGV)

-Kenta Mochizuki

-Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT), Mexico

-Andrea Saks, Kaoru Mizuno - IGF Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability (DCAD)

-Krishna Kumar - IGF Youth Coalition on Internet Governance (YCIG)

-Peter Koch - Deutsches Network Information Center (DENIC) eG

-Nigel Hickson - Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)

-Esmeralda Moscatelli - IGF Dynamic Coalition on Public Access in Libraries (DC-PAL)

-Raquel Gatto - Internet Society (ISOC)

-Mariam Barata - Indonesia IGF

-Jong Hyuk Ro - Microsoft

-Timea Suto - International Chamber of Commerce-Business Action to Support the Information Society (ICC-BASIS)

-Anriette Esterhuysen - Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

-Peter Stentzler - Federal Foreign Office of Germany