

INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM EXPERT GROUP MEETING “Implementing the IGF permanent mandate”

New York, 14-15 April 2026

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE MEETING

Introduction

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) convened an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on the Internet Governance Forum on 14–15 April 2026 in New York. The meeting was hosted at the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations.

The meeting took place in the context of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/80/173 on the twenty-year review of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS+20), which established the IGF as a permanent forum of the United Nations and reaffirmed its central role in global digital governance.

The EGM was convened to consider:

- how the IGF can effectively implement its permanent mandate;
- how it can strengthen its contribution to global digital governance and cooperation; and
- how to strengthen and improve its structures, outputs, participation and impact in an increasingly complex and evolving digital governance landscape.

The meeting brought together a diverse group of experts from both developing and developed countries, from all stakeholder groups, including governments, international organizations, the private sector, civil society, the technical community and academia, alongside representatives of the United Nations system and past and prospective IGF host countries.

The agenda was structured through a series of sessions exploring key aspects of the IGF’s permanent mandate and its role in the evolving digital governance landscape. These began on Day 1 with discussions on governance, structures, and operational frameworks, including implementing the permanent mandate, developing metrics and indicators, and strengthening coherence with the WSIS framework, the Global Digital Compact, and other relevant processes.

Discussions continued on Day 2, building on the previous exchanges, with a focus on intersessional work and national, regional, sub-regional, and youth IGF initiatives (NRIs), capacity development, outputs and contributions to other processes, as well as funding and sustainability of the IGF and its Secretariat.

This report presents the observations and suggestions that emerged from the discussions on which there was broad convergence among participants.

Overview of discussions

Participants recognized that the IGF is entering a new phase following the adoption of its permanent mandate. The evolving digital environment, characterized by rapid technological change, increasing complexity and fragmentation of governance processes, requires stronger, more strategic cooperation, responsiveness and inclusiveness.

There was broad agreement that the IGF's multistakeholder model remains highly relevant and continues to provide a unique platform for dialogue across communities. At the same time, participants emphasized the need for the IGF to further evolve on its strong foundations to enhance its impact, coherence and contribution to global policy processes.

Observations and suggestions

I. Governance, structures and operational frameworks

1. Implementation of the permanent mandate should build on the IGF's established principles of openness, inclusiveness, transparency and bottom-up participation.
2. The IGF should develop a more strategic and coherent framework to guide its work, including a multi-year perspective that aligns its various components across the ecosystem. Such a framework should be based on a function-first review of IGF structures before institutional redesign.
3. The role of the IGF Secretariat as the central coordinating body across the IGF ecosystem should be further strengthened, including through enhanced capacity and strategic foresight.
4. Greater clarity should be provided regarding the roles and responsibilities of IGF structures, including the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG), the Leadership Panel, the Global Advocate and other mechanisms, while maintaining their complementary functions.
5. The UN Global Advocate for Human-centric Digital Governance could be leveraged, as appropriate, to enhance the IGF's visibility and broaden outreach across regions and stakeholder communities.
6. The Leadership Panel should continue as part of the IGF structure, with a particular focus on raising visibility, engaging high-level stakeholders, and strengthening linkages between high-level engagement and the broader IGF community supporting resource mobilization efforts.
7. The composition, working methods and level of engagement of the Leadership Panel should be reviewed, with a view to ensuring active participation, appropriate renewal mechanisms, including increased Global South membership, and overall effectiveness.

8. The Leadership Panel should complement, and not duplicate, the work of the MAG, with clearer modalities and terms of reference established for interaction and cooperation between the two bodies.
9. In light of the upcoming transition of the United Nations Secretary-General, the Leadership Panel should continue at least through 2026, with future arrangements to be considered thereafter.

II. The IGF ecosystem and its intersessional work components

1. Greater coherence should be strengthened across the IGF ecosystem, including the annual meeting, intersessional work, national, regional, sub-regional and youth IGF initiatives (NRIs), and capacity development activities.
2. Clarity on the purpose and specific role of the existing intersessional work components is needed. Furthermore, the IGF should enhance alignment and integration across its various components in order to improve its overall effectiveness, impact and predictability, including by streamlining mechanisms such as Best Practice Forums and Policy Networks. Dynamic Coalitions, while retaining their independent, bottom-up nature, could provide substantive input into the shaping of the IGF programme .
3. The secretariat, with the inputs and support of MAG and intersessional work leads, should develop mechanisms to better connect community inputs, intersessional work and annual meeting outcomes, including by strengthening feedback loops and ensuring that IGF outputs are systematically synthesized and fed into both the annual meeting and external policy processes.
4. The IGF's intersessional work could be planned over a three-year cycle, allowing for greater continuity and predictability.
5. As part of the IGF ecosystem, intersessional work should be made more visible and better connected to the broader IGF community throughout the year, including through more regular and accessible engagement with NRIs and wider stakeholder communities, in order to reinforce the IGF as a continuous process rather than a once-a-year event.
6. The IGF should develop more actionable and policy-relevant outputs, while maintaining its non-negotiating nature. In this regard, it could consider introducing more agile, flexible formats, such as “policy labs”, as light, issue-driven and multistakeholder spaces to generate timely insights on emerging issues. Such formats could support the development of a shared understanding of risks related to emerging technologies, including their potential impact on the Internet and its resilience, and provide concise outputs with practical follow-up options. They could complement existing intersessional work while fostering greater coherence across the IGF ecosystem and attracting new voices, including by building on and adapting existing IGF mechanisms rather than creating new standalone structures, and by aligning with relevant regional and policy processes where appropriate. The “policy labs” could be piloted for an initial one-year period, with continuous monitoring of their implementation to inform

their assessment and possible continuation.

7. The IGF should strengthen the role of national, regional, sub-regional, and youth IGF initiatives (NRIs) as substantive multistakeholder spaces that can test ideas and support implementation at the local level, including by fostering stronger partnerships with national Internet governance institutions and relevant stakeholders.
8. Greater coherence should be established between intersessional work and NRIs, including by developing mechanisms for collaboration, such as the preparation of concise background and framing materials on complex or politically sensitive issues for use and adaptation by NRIs, as well as improving the predictability and coordination of funding from IGF and external partners. This could also include the development of an agile mechanism through which NRI may request participation in, and/or support from intersessional work, with a view to integrating its outputs into NRI agendas and vice versa, thereby enhancing NRI programmes and further strengthen linkages across the IGF ecosystem.
9. Improved collaboration with UN regional commissions and local UN offices at regional and national levels could support NRI development, capacity building and policy impact.

III. Annual IGF meeting

1. The IGF should consider options for the organization and hosting of its annual meeting, including the use of United Nations regional headquarters as a fallback option where no host country is identified.
2. At the same time, the IGF should maintain the practice of rotating the annual meeting across regions, recognizing its value in strengthening local ecosystems and broadening participation. Co-hosting options should be further explored, including between countries with different levels of experience, capacity and resources, and supported by other institutions, initiatives and organizations.
3. When the annual meeting is hosted in a given region, stronger coordination with relevant NRIs should be ensured to maximize local participation and long-term impact.
4. A more structured, multi-year approach to programme planning should be considered, including initiating preparatory work ahead of the formal appointment of the MAG. This could include issuing early calls for thematic inputs and enabling continuity through the engagement of continuing MAG members and supporting continuity through the early onboarding of incoming MAG members, including through mentoring and knowledge transfer from returning or continuing MAG members.
5. The IGF could introduce the 'office hours' for the stakeholders to be able to approach and ask questions about engagement and participation, including during the annual IGF meeting.

6. A mechanism should be developed to map participation, including the number, frequency, and diversity of speaking roles, with a view to encouraging the inclusion of new voices and profiles and broadening the range of perspectives and policy discussions within the IGF.
7. The IGF should facilitate greater exchange of expertise across the ecosystem, including by enabling NRIs and DCs to provide lists of experts from their communities as a resource for IGF programme development, and by supporting the reciprocal sharing of expert networks between the global IGF and NRIs.

IV. Outputs, outcomes and impact

1. The IGF should enhance the quality, clarity, and reach of its outputs to better inform policy processes and decision-makers.
2. Outputs from the IGF ecosystem should be better leveraged to inform broader global processes, including WSIS follow-up and the Global Digital Compact.
3. The IGF should enhance the clarity of its outputs by distinguishing between those produced by the Secretariat and those developed by the broader community, supported by clear guidance on categorization, attribution, and the use of the IGF logo and the United Nations emblem.
4. The presentation and positioning of key outputs, including IGF Messages and Summary Reports, should be strengthened to reflect their primary role.
5. The IGF Secretariat should continue to ensure quality control of outputs, maintaining consistency and credibility across publications.
6. Outputs should be concise, accessible and tailored to different audiences, supported by strengthened dissemination and outreach across digital platforms and policy fora.
7. Stronger linkages should be established between IGF outputs and broader UN processes, while NRIs could be further leveraged to translate outputs into regional, sub-regional, and national contexts.

V. Metrics and indicators

1. The IGF should develop clear metrics and indicators to assess its effectiveness and impact, including, where appropriate, through alignment with existing datasets and data frameworks.
2. Consideration should be given to developing a common or shared framework for measuring contributions to digital governance. The IGF should map and exchange practices with other initiatives that have already developed indicators, in order to inform its own approaches.
3. These metrics, monitored continuously, should combine quantitative and qualitative approaches, including capturing the IGF's convening power, its

contribution to policy dialogue, level of stakeholder engagement, and capacity development

4. Metrics and indicators should contribute both to internal learning and external communication.

VI. Engagement with global processes and the UN system

1. The IGF should more clearly define and operationalize its role within the broader digital governance landscape.
2. The IGF should strengthen coherence and collaboration with relevant processes and institutions, including the WSIS follow-up processes, UNGIS, the Global Digital Compact, UN entities and other related initiatives. Of particular importance is strengthening cooperation with the UN regional commissions starting by having the IGF granting recognition status to them.
3. IGF sessions could be more closely aligned with the WSIS Action Lines to foster greater awareness and understanding within the IGF community.
4. The IGF should leverage its position to act as a bridge between multistakeholder and intergovernmental processes. In doing so, it could support efforts within the United Nations system to improve coherence, including by helping to consolidate overlapping or duplicative discussions and events.

VII. Broadening government engagement and overall stakeholder participation

1. Participation from developing countries and underrepresented stakeholders should be further strengthened across IGF activities. This includes addressing barriers to participation across the IGF ecosystem, including travel, language interpretation, connectivity and institutional capacity
2. The IGF should support governments and other stakeholders from developing countries to participate in all activities, including enhanced government engagement, through more structured and continuous dialogue mechanisms, including by strengthening their capacity to engage on issues of relevance. Such engagement should remain embedded within the multistakeholder model and avoid the creation of parallel or isolated processes.
3. Rather than a new track, enhanced government engagement, termed 'Government Dialogue', could be an adaptation of existing formats, such as the high-level track and Day 0 ministerial-style engagements organized by IGF host countries.
4. The Government Dialogue should be planned in a bottom-up manner, with Governments advising on their needs and demands, including on the capacity-building and policy front.
5. It is also encouraged to follow a successful practice from 2025 when the host country, Norway, co-designed a meeting between governments and private

sector companies. including stakeholder participation in the planning of the engagement.

VIII. Capacity development

1. Capacity development should be strengthened as a core element of the IGF's mandate and more systematically integrated across the programme, including through stronger linkages between global, regional and local initiatives.
2. The IGF should scale its existing capacity development activities and strengthen partnerships with different organizations and initiatives, including Regional Internet Registries (RIRs), ICANN, ISOC and its chapters, Schools on Internet Governance, and other relevant initiatives.
3. The effort to support small numbers of journalists from the Global South, piloted at IGF 2024 and successfully repeated at IGF 2025, should be formalized as a capacity development activity and built on to further sensitize and engage media professionals, with continued emphasis on the Global South while not being limited to it.
4. Session organizers should be encouraged to design sessions that are accessible to different levels of expertise, including introductory and more accessible formats that can serve as capacity development exercises. These could be clearly indicated through level-based labelling (e.g. introductory, intermediate, advanced).
5. The visibility of the IGF's capacity development activities should be enhanced, including through improved presentation on the IGF website and better showcasing of outcomes and impact.
6. The IGF should further leverage the role of national, regional, sub-regional, and youth IGF initiatives (NRIs) as key actors in capacity development, including by recognizing and promoting their work and strengthening exchanges among them, inter alia through improved use of existing digital spaces and tools for sharing practices, resources and outputs..
7. The integration of intersessional work (such as Best Practice Forums, Policy Networks and Dynamic Coalitions) into capacity development efforts should be strengthened, including through clearer communication of their roles and outputs.
8. Modalities should be developed to facilitate the participation of IGF experts, including leaders of intersessional activities, in external capacity development initiatives, including within the technical community and other stakeholder groups.
9. The IGF should make clearer to the community the opportunities for demand-driven capacity development, including responding to specific requests from

communities and regions.

10. New formats for capacity development should be considered, including virtual fellowships and hybrid approaches, in order to broaden participation and accessibility.
11. Capacity development efforts should place greater emphasis on inclusion, including targeted engagement of persons with disabilities and underrepresented groups.
12. Capacity development activities should be further extended to subnational and local levels, where appropriate, in order to broaden impact and reach un/under-represented communities and groups.
13. Greater attention should be given to continuity in capacity development pathways, including identifying follow-up opportunities for participants beyond initial or introductory sessions.
14. Follow-up mechanisms should be strengthened across supported participation programmes, including the Fellows programme, to better understand longer-term outcomes, such as subsequent engagement, local initiatives, and continued contributions within communities and regions. This could help demonstrate impact, inform future capacity development efforts and identify pathways for sustained participation.
15. A more structured and multi-year approach to programme planning should be considered, in order to support sustained capacity development efforts and continuity across IGF cycles.

IX. Communications and visibility

1. The visibility of the IGF's work, including its impact and capacity development contributions, should be enhanced, building on the IGF's strong communications outreach, particularly through social media outreach.
2. The IGF should improve its website display and functionality, communications strategy and dissemination of outputs, including through more user-centred design and the use of appropriate new digital tools, in order to strengthen awareness and outreach.
3. A strengthening of the IGF communications and outreach strategy should ensure that Internet governance concepts are presented in clear and accessible language, positioning the IGF as a straightforward entry point for cross-sectoral dialogue on the governance of digital technologies. The permanent mandate provides an opportunity to refresh the IGF's positioning, which could help attract broader engagement, partnerships and support, including in-kind and financial contributions from a wider range of stakeholders, including the private sector.

X. Funding and sustainability

1. Sustainable and predictable funding should be secured to enable the IGF to deliver on its expanded mandate.
2. The IGF should develop a more diversified funding model, including a combination of regular budget support, voluntary contributions and partnerships, while ensuring continued support for participation from developing countries.
3. In particular, deeper engagement with private sector donors, including telecommunications operators and tech companies, could support resource mobilization.
4. Clear communication should be provided to the community regarding the scope of regular budget support following the WSIS+20 resolution, noting that such support is expected to be partial, and that the majority of costs related to staffing, premises and IGF activities will continue to be covered through extra-budgetary resources.

XI. Follow-up and next steps

1. The IGF Secretariat should prepare a comprehensive, action-oriented report of the meeting for community consultation.
2. Based on these consultations, a strategic work plan, including the identified implementing actors and a timeline, should be developed to support the implementation of the permanent mandate.

Conclusion

Participants agreed that the IGF's permanent mandate represents a significant milestone and provides a strong foundation for its future development.

There was a shared understanding that the Forum should continue to evolve on its established multistakeholder foundations, enhancing its responsiveness, inclusiveness and impact in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex digital governance landscape.

Participants expressed confidence that, through strengthened coherence across its ecosystem, clearer and more actionable outputs, and enhanced engagement with global, regional and national processes, the IGF can continue to play a central role in advancing inclusive and effective digital cooperation within the United Nations system and beyond.