

MAG Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy

Online Meeting

8 December 2022 at 14:00 UTC

Summary Report

The IGF MAG Working Group (WG) on IGF Strengthening and Strategy (WG-Strategy) met remotely on 8 December 2022 at 14:00 UTC. The meeting was moderated by Amrita Choudhury. The list of participants and the recording of the meeting is available upon request.

The co-chair opened the meeting by introducing the agenda:

Agenda:

1. *Taking Stock of the IGF 2022*
2. *AoB*

Discussion:

1. *Taking Stock of the IGF 2022*

Amrita opened the meeting with a discussion of the recent IGF. She noted that Anriette Esterhuysen had sent through some thoughts on the event: A good IGF, but not good taking stock session...not really serious. Hybrid not good enough. Still believe in the WG-Strategy proposals from 2020 on combined some broad space with deeper narrower focus. I think that agenda content of intersessional work must flow from this IGF and feed into the next one. But overall really good..and parliamentary sessions much stronger. WG-Strategy should think about how to consolidate, integrate into main programme and NRIs.

Adam Peake noted the article on CircleID regarding the challenges with remote participation: <https://circleid.com/posts/20221207-the-technical-problems-of-the-unas-internet-governance-forum-will-not-simply-solve-themselves>

Tulio Andrade felt the event should be celebrated, as Global South issues and perspectives were well echoed by the Ethiopian Presidency of the conference. The Brazilian multistakeholder delegation in Addis was the country's largest among all IGFs, apart from those Brazil hosted. The stakeholders he consulted indicated the focus on the Global South had not been the norm in other IGFs held in developed countries, so we need to keep that message strong, in particular with a view to next year's IGF event being hosted in Japan. He noted that there are still many areas for improvement, particularly in our intersessional work and in ensuring balanced representation between

developed and developing countries. He also highlighted the need to increase transparency in the MAG's overall procedures, including with regard to its selection process, as a means to protect the legitimacy of the MAG and the IGF.

Roz Kenny-Birch also praised the diversity of participation in the IGF, in terms of gender, geography, Global North/South balance etc. There were also issues logging into the IGF site at the beginning of the week, which was essential for participation.

Chris Buckridge commented that the Brazilian delegation can serve as a good example for others. He also agreed with Tulio that transparency in the MAG selection process is an important concern for many stakeholders, to the extent that it is driving people to disengage from the process. Finally, he noted that, given the prevalence of hybrid events now across a wide range of governance spaces (hybrid is now business-as-usual), the technical issues are a significant problem.

Poncelot Ileleji noted the impressive diversity in the youth sessions, particularly when compared to previous events. He noted that it was often difficult to reach secretariat staff, and security protocol was also challenging. On the website issues, he suggested it is time for the Secretariat to have a dedicated team looking after this, also as a first point of contact. Amrita noted that the WG-Hybrid had made several suggestions in the past, but these were not necessarily followed up.

Mark Carvell who attended in person felt that IGF 2022 had been a very positive event assisted by very helpful support by local volunteers on-site. The sessions which he attended had been commendably interactive, with very good quality speakers. He expressed some concern, however, with the site plan, in particular the separation of the IGF Village from the conference center while that had a largely under-used central space on the lower level. He also noted that the Speakers' Corner was on a different level to the main session rooms resulting in poor attendance of the informative lightning talks held there.

Mark thought that the closing statements on Day Four failed to acknowledge the importance of the ongoing intersessional activities undertaken by the IGF's dynamic coalitions, best practice fora and policy networks. He also criticised the general lack of media coverage of the IGF this year.

Jorge Cancio participated in the IGF remotely, and felt the quality of the sessions was quite high (he especially noted sessions on fragmentation, AI, and the Declaration on the Future of the Internet). He felt that the opening was less positive, which fell back to the old approach of disconnected speeches, instead of a more interactive roundtable format. The absence of the UNSG was also felt, which may have impacted the visibility of the meeting. He also noted that the high-level track was not aligned with the broader

IGF program - the IGF loses impact, when leaders are discussing issues in a different framing. He noted that it will be important to speak with the Japanese hosts for 2023 to address this misalignment. On the issue of the Global Digital Compact (GDC), Jorge noted that the IGF messages should be referenced in multiple responses to the GDC open consultation. The **WG-Strategy could also propose that the MAG or LP write a letter to the GDC co-facilitators (Sweden and Rwanda), sharing with them the IGF messages as an input to the GDC negotiations.** He also suggested that in the stocktaking process, the WG-Strategy could reflect on past recommendations and look at progress (or lack thereof), and submit a WG input.

Amrita noted that there was discussion in the chat about the IGF not having a high profile in the media.

Tereza Horesjova noted that she has met with the Swedish ambassador (GDC co-facilitator), and encouraged her to consult with the MAG and IGF community on the GDC planning. **Looking ahead to the next MAG/Open Consultation meeting, there may be an opportunity to further engage.** On the issue of hybrid events, she noted that there are issues, many of which have been discussed already, and we have not seen much improvement over the past year (even with pressure from the WG-Hybrid): we need to find practical solutions to propose and promote.

Christina Arida participated remotely and noted that it was a great event. She noted the need for resources to address the issues with the website, the calendar etc. She noted that the Parliamentary sessions are still closed, and this is an odd decision - we should look at integrating their participation more publicly.

Raul Echeberria agreed it was a positive meeting, pleasantly surprised by the number of on-site participants. He noted that the agenda is evolving in the right direction, addressing major issues in digital society, including regulation, human rights, the future of the Internet and AI. He also observed some key absences; it was noted that the Secretary-General of the UN was in Ethiopia at the time of the IGF but did not attend, and some others that have previously attended, but did not this time - this could be seen as a lack of trust in the IGF, and it is important to demonstrate commitment to this mechanism. He noted that the number of workshops is still very high, with a complicated schedule and overlap/duplication of content - we don't necessarily need this many sessions. In reference to Mark's point about the media, Raul agreed there was a lack of media presence. Finally, in relation to the Leadership Panel, their role is still very vague and it is not clear what they will bring to the IGF in the coming year.

Amrita noted that in the chat, Adam Peake had asked about whether this was just the MAG-selected workshops, or whether it is across all sessions (many of which are not selected by the MAG). This complication may be part of the problem.

Wolfgang Kleinwächter noted in the chat “You need a concrete project: Easy to understand, easy to explain, close to the day to day problems of the six billion Smartphone (Internet) users. My proposal is that we discuss in 2023 a (Multistakeholder) Digital Kyoto Protocol, based on the outcome of the ministerial meeting (September 2023) and preparing the GDC (September 2024) as part of the UN Summit of the Future.”

Titti Cassa commented that the Leadership Panel’s (LP) open hour with the community was very interesting, particularly on issues such as how to make IGF recommendations more actionable for policymakers. She noted that many of the LP processes and plans are not yet in place. Amrita noted that the MAG had had a meeting with the LP as well, but felt that there was a lack of clarity about their role. However, the MAG has suggested a quarterly meeting with the LP, and that they may wish to join WG-Strategy calls.

Adam Peake noted that the MAG held its meeting with the LP, but did not follow an agenda, and it was a missed opportunity to consider some of the points made by the Expert Group Meeting that took place in March 2022. He also noted that this was not held as a closed meeting, which was regrettable as there is a need to build trust and relationships between the MAG and the LP. He commented that this year had been clearly very difficult for the Secretariat.

Anja Gengo thanked all for their feedback, and suggested that all should provide this feedback via the formal channel: <https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/taking-stock-of-igf-2022-and-suggesting-improvements-for-igf-2023>

Anja noted that the tone had changed from previous IGFs, with more calls for action and outcomes; there was increased diversity; all of this is reflected in the draft messages, which are currently open for review:

https://www.intgovforum.org/en/filedepot_download/249/24066

The Secretariat has noted that there is a need for more reliable back-up in relation to technical services; there is also a need for more capacity building for the organisers and the technical staff. One example: there needs to be a stronger link between the technical team in the room and the organisers. Anja also noted that the host organisers for next year’s IGF event in Japan (including staff from the Kyoto International Convention Center) were in attendance and taking note of issues and requirements. She also believed that the multiple channels for registration in Addis were unnecessary so the Secretariat is looking at a number of procedural areas that can be easily improved.

Tulio intervened to recognise the efforts of the Secretariat, particularly given the small size of the team. He asked about the process for commenting on the draft messages. Anja noted that the Secretariat is working with their consultant to identify any misalignment between the messages and what was discussed in the sessions (not just the Main Sessions). Deadlines will be shared soon.

Chris noted that it is important to make the publication of the finalised messages an event and to utilise the media to promote awareness of them. This could be feedback from the WG-Strategy to the MAG, the Secretariat and the LP.

Adam noted that it will be important early in the new year to review the IGF messages with the LP, who will be responsible for taking those messages and socialising them at the highest levels. Mark expressed concern in the chat that the process for the LP to select IGF outcomes for directing to government policymakers and decision-takers in industry worldwide, was still unclear. Adam also noted that the MAG should meet early in the new year.

2. *AoB*

The next meeting of the WG-Strategy will be held on 12 January at 14:00 UTC.