

Input from the Swiss Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM) to the stocktaking consultation conducted by the IGF Secretariat

OFCOM Switzerland thanks for the opportunity to take part in this stocktaking exercise and would like to share the following inputs:

A. General comments and suggestions for IGF 2022 preparations

Please allow us to share some general **suggestions for IGF 2022**, in the spirit of an “IGF+” as proposed by the **UNSG’s Roadmap on Digital Cooperation**, particularly the ideas outlined in Paragraph 93.

In this line, in January 2021 the **MAG Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy** (WG-strategy) developed concrete recommendations on strategic improvements to the IGF and operational measures in 2021. In our opinion, these recommendations are still very valuable and should be followed and implemented. Also, the WG-Strategy’s [Response to the paper on “Options for the Future of Digital Cooperation”](#) from September 2020 should be taken into account.

More specifically, we would like to share the following suggestions:

- We look forward to the appointment of a Tech Envoy by the UNSG, as outlined in Paragraph 74 of the UNSG’s Roadmap. A good collaboration between this position and the IGF community should energize the implementation of many recommendations from the UNSG Roadmap, while helping to raising the profile of the IGF. The Tech Envoy should closely liaise with the IGF, particularly the MAG and the IGF Secretariat.
- The personal participation of the UNSG (as in 2018 and 2019 – and virtually in 2017, 2020 and 2021) as well as the personal participation of the Host Country President of Head of Government should be further enshrined as a permanent good practice, as it strengthens the profile and visibility of the IGF and its outcomes.
- The IGF 2022, both as an event as well as its intersessional and preparatory process, should strive to serve as a key platform in the consultations to be held in relation with the “Global Digital Compact” envisaged in the UN-Secretary General’s “Our Common Agenda”. In addition, stronger synergies should be sought between the IGF activities and the implementation actions under the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. In this sense, we fully endorse the MAG Chair letter sent in November 2021 to the UNSG, available under https://www.intgovforum.org/en/filedepot_download/213/20526
- The program should be more “issue-based” than ever, with maximum three or four focus topics - all culminating in a maximum of four high-level main sessions
- In addition, it should be more integrated than ever: NRI, DC, BPF, PNE should be integral part of the high-level main sessions, providing for integration of the respective intersessional groups into the corresponding four preparatory issue-groups
- There should be a build-up during the year, with focused preparatory discussions leading to „draft messages“ to be put out for public comment and to be discussed in the high-level sessions

- The “messages” should be short, concise and to the point and be timely and widely distributed
- The IGF 2022 should be fully hybrid
- The high level (ministerial) track should be as well be an integral part of the program: two of the HI-main sessions could be explicitly targeted for ministers and parliamentarians
- There could be a small separate ministerial track: breakfast and dinner, while the rest of their program would be integral part of the IGF, in order to benefit from their participation in other sessions
- The MAG would be leading on all the program aspects, with the (still to be created) IGF-Leadership Panel providing strategic input on main focus topics, suggesting speakers, commenting on „draft messages“, and contributing to bringing final messages to other high-level fora
- The information sources at the disposal of the participants during the IGF (such as digital policy summaries, instant “session reporting”, “daily reports”, etc.) should be further developed, in particular through partnerships with, inter alia, the Geneva Internet Platform, GIPO, IG Schools, etc.
- The inclusiveness of the IGF can be further improved by including the voices and views of ordinary citizens – particularly from the global South – through citizens’ dialogues
- Strengthening the links and synergies between the IGF and existing observatories and helpdesks active in offering quality information and capacity building in the field of digital governance, such as the Geneva Internet Platform, GIPO, and the various schools for Internet Governance. As discussed in the MAG WG-Strategy, the IGF Secretariat could maintain a dedicated website linking to partners that provide such observatory and helpdesk functions.

B. Specific comments to the questionnaire

1. Taking Stock of the IGF 2021: What worked well? What worked not so well?

a. IGF 2021 Preparatory process (timeline, call for issues and session proposals, session selection, MAG meetings, preparatory and engagement phase, capacity development etc.)

- At times, the preparatory process might have been difficult to understand for IGF “outsiders” or newcomers. Overall, meetings were well organized, but not all of them focused on specific issues as conversations often went into many different directions.
- The preparatory meetings for the hybrid sessions were not entirely as helpful as expected as a Q&A format was used. It would have been easier to follow if it was a presentation (which would make it easier to take notes) followed by a Q&A.

b. IGF 2021 Overall programme: thematic focus, structure, and flow

- The discussions proved to be politically relevant and in line with many of the world’s most pressing challenges when it comes to digitalization, such as digital inclusion, tech regulation, sustainability, digital rights, cybersecurity, AI, and more.

- However, probably the program may still be further streamlined, limiting the number of sessions and focusing on three or four well-defined priority areas, which would culminate in a maximum of e.g. four main high-level sessions.

c. IGF 2021 Hybrid format design and experience

- For the most part, the hybrid format design was a success, as it made the event more inclusive by letting people choose whether they wanted to participate physically or online.
- However, it was difficult to find and access the “3D venue” on the website, which was supposed to be a digital equivalent of the onsite venue, mainly because of the website, which did not work, or load properly in the first few days of the event. It was easier to access the sessions simply by having the Zoom link in advance.

d. IGF 2021 Logistics (website, mobile app, schedule, registration, access, use of online platform, bilateral meeting system, security)

- During the first two days of the IGF, accessing the website was rather difficult. Most pages did not load, including the schedule page, which prevented some online participants from accessing Zoom links. Thankfully, most sessions could be streamed live on the IGF’s YouTube channel, but the correct links were still rather hard to find, and watching events on YouTube prevented participation and interaction with the audience like on Zoom.
- However, once the Zoom links were available, the sessions were rather smooth, and there were little connectivity problems. Booking the physical bilateral meetings rooms at the IGF was an easy task, but getting approval for the bookings took a while.

2. Intersessional activities and NRIs at IGF 2021

a. Best Practice Forums and Policy Networks at IGF 2021: please comment on process, content, and in particular on how these intersessional activities were included in the IGF 2021 programme

- We would like to welcome the work of the newly established PNEs, especially the efforts undertaken by the “pilot policy network on environment and digitalisation”, which presented its draft report at the IGF 2021.

3. IGF 2021 programme: please comment on the content, speakers and quality of discussions

a. IGF 2021 Sessions

- The IGF 2021 had many different types of sessions, which were all suited for different purposes, such as open forums, town halls, lightning talks, and networking sessions. Most of them functioned well in a hybrid format, except for networking sessions, which are difficult to conduct online or in a hybrid format.

b. IGF 2021 High-level leaders track

- There was limited high-level political presence compared to previous editions, perhaps due to the hybrid format and the concern about the Omicron variant, which may have led many to cancel their in-person presence.

4. What are your suggestions for improvements for IGF 2022?

a. IGF 2022 Overall programme structure and flow

- Maintaining the IGF 2022 in a hybrid format would be a good idea as it allows those that cannot travel to participate and contribute for the dialogue. However, to ensure a smooth process, the issues with the website should be fixed so that it does not crash when its servers are overloaded. This should be the main priority.

b. IGF 2022 Programme content (thematic approach, session types, speakers profiles)

- While the participants to the IGF 2021 come from a diverse set of regions all around the world, Europeans and North Americans remain overrepresented in comparison to their counterparts in the Asia-Pacific, Latin American, or African regions. It would be beneficial to promote the IGF further in these regions to increase their participation and ensure a truly global dialogue for the next edition of the IGF.

c. IGF 2022 Participants: who to invite and how to inter-connect participants?

- It would be great to see more representation from the press/media, as well as the technical community. Many of the digital challenges that we are facing are difficult to understand from a technical perspective for people who are unfamiliar with them, so it would have been useful to have more “explanatory” sessions from experts in the fields, as well as more press/media spokespeople to cover the event outside of the host country.
- The gathering and active participation of high-level leaders from all stakeholder groups throughout the meeting and in high-level formats should be maintained and further developed. Also, the innovation represented by the parliamentarians track and meeting (since 2019) should be continued and enhanced.

d. Any other comments on the IGF 2022? Please be free to add suggestions for the overall IGF 2022 planning process, intersessional activities, cooperation mechanisms, annual meeting etc. You are welcome to comment on possible improvements of the IGF as it pertains to the IGF mandate, United Nations Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and Our Common Agenda.

See comments under A. and above.