

Contributions Taking Stock of IGF 2022 and Looking Forward to IGF 2023 Synthesis Paper

This paper summarizes inputs received from the IGF community in response to an [invitation](#) from the IGF Secretariat for stakeholders to submit written contributions taking stock of the IGF 2022 meeting (17th IGF) and looking forward to the IGF 2023 meeting (17th IGF). In addition to asking for feedback on the programme components, the Call also invited comments on the IGF's role within, and contributions to, the UN Secretary-General's *Roadmap for Digital Cooperation* and the *Our Common Agenda* report.

This synthesis paper is intended to form input for the First Open Consultations and Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) Meeting (6-8 March 2023) in the preparatory process for IGF 2023. This paper is a summary of the fifty-four (54) [contributions](#) received by the IGF Secretariat, either through an online form or by email. Of the fifty-one (51) contributions by online form, the highest number came from countries in the African Group, followed by the Western Europe and Others Group, Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, and Intergovernmental Organizations. The Civil Society stakeholder group submitted the highest number of inputs, followed by Governments, the Private Sector, the Technical Community, and Intergovernmental Organizations.

The synthesis document outlines feedback submitted on IGF 2022 and suggestions for improvements of IGF 2023, structured around the following components:

- *Preparatory process*
- *Intersessional work and NRIs*
- *Programme structure and content*
- *Technical matters, including hybrid features, and communications*
- *Other logistics and host country role*
- *Participation and stakeholder engagement, including with UN processes*

I. Preparatory Process

Comments regarding the preparatory process, in general, were very positive, describing it as “smooth”, “well organized” and “to be repeated in 2023”. Emphasized were the timeliness of the announcement of the host country, Ethiopia, and, critically, the clarity surrounding the steps for session proposals submission. Likewise, it was said communications on the IGF website were prompt and instructive.

Some suggestions for improvement on specific areas of the process were as follows:

1. The suggestion was made for direct training and sensitization sessions, whether on IGF themes or mechanisms, and, in particular, for youth, newcomers and journalists.
2. Concerning the programme themes, it was felt these should be selected in a way that more explicitly involves the perspectives of National and Regional IGF initiatives (NRIs) and young people.
3. The need for more inclusion of Dynamic Coalitions (DCs) in programme building and MAG discussions was raised.
4. Holding “citizens’ dialogues” for collecting the views of everyday people around the world, especially from the Global South, was recommended as programmatic input.
5. There were several calls for greater transparency of the MAG’s decision-making approach and rationales.
6. Concerning MAG meetings, it was mentioned they should be held with more frequency and more frequently in person, and with more advance notice of their dates. The selection of themes, it was felt, merited a longer MAG discussion.
7. Further to the above, the MAG should be seen as taking more of a leading role in sessions.
8. The MAG and Secretariat were urged to take into account lessons from last year’s process in 2023.

II. Intersessional Work and NRIs

NRIs and their participation in annual meetings continue to be an important aspect of the IGF experience for many stakeholders. This was reflected in the numerous comments that praised the strong showing NRIs at IGF 2022, the quality of their main session, and the excellent opportunity for networking they afford to diverse participants across the world.

Similarly, intersessional policy activities – namely, Best Practice Forums (BPFs), Policy Networks (PNs) and DCs – were held up as important community pillars before and during the annual meeting, as avenues for stakeholder participation. It was said that the level of inclusion in their work and the quality of their outputs was high and had markedly improved since the establishment of such activities. In particular, the first-year PN on Internet Fragmentation (PNIF) was cited for its timely theme and good work.

Further to the above, there were comments overarching the different intersessional and/or NRI groups, as well as others that referred to specific areas of intersessional or NRI work. These are as follows:

1. Despite the impact of many NRIs present at IGF 2022, respondents asked for greater integration of the initiatives in the intersessional period and as actors in global IGF programme

building. Specifically, the MAG could “report in” to NRI coordinators on the progress of annual meeting preparations.

2. Given the high number of NRIs and their utility for making contacts that are both significant and informal, it was suggested an extended “NRI lunch fair” be held during the meeting to allow for more interaction among the initiatives and with other participants.

3. It was felt that the work of BPFs and DCs should be better promoted, particularly the outputs by DCs.

4. At a more detailed level, the suggestion was made that BPFs and DCs brief on their activities on Day 0 of the annual IGF for maximum visibility, and that their work clearly feed into the subsequent main and high-level sessions.

5. Continuity between different editions of intersessional work was requested, as a means to assess substantive progress on issues from the prior year. This could perhaps have a dedicated session.

III. Programme Structure and Content

The high caliber and dynamism of discussions were a highlight of IGF 2022. This was remarked upon in several inputs, and can be attributed to a session selection process managed by the MAG that continues to be effective, as well as the preparedness and enthusiasm of session organizers.

Inputs also raised disparate issues in connection with the programme, having to do with themes, session typologies, session dynamics, the conduct of sessions and structured tracks. These are synthesized as follows:

1. Several contributions converged on the need to make climate change issues a focus of the IGF programme, indicating that the 2022 climate-focused sessions were too few and that the theme was insufficiently explored.

2. The programme’s alignment with the Global Digital Compact (GDC) was widely lauded, with many insisting it should continue in 2023. One input underscored that the tie to the GDC could be made more complete with inclusion of an area on “Digital commons as a global public good”.

3. While the spotlight on GDC was appreciated, some inputs suggested constituent topics such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) or Human Rights were too broad, encouraging a narrower substantive focus for the programme.

4. Thematic foci suggested for 2023 include new developments in AI, quantum computing, green digitalisation, as well as data governance and the way it intersects with the Internet fragmentation risk.

5. The further development of the high-level and parliamentary tracks was positively highlighted, including their integration of women and different regions. However, it was asked that the high-level track be given more session time and that the parliamentary track have more open sessions. Both should also engage communities more widely and slot their speakers sooner, wherever possible.
6. A separate ministerial track could enhance the two tracks above.
7. The open session with members of the IGF Leadership Panel was a welcome addition and described as “very interesting”, specifically its discussion on how to make IGF recommendations more actionable for policymakers.
8. More time was requested for the open mic session, as well as the potential for open mic segments per day or per theme.
9. Although the variety of session types within the programme could be viewed as an advantage, it was also said that these had proliferated in a way that made the agenda dense and confusing. Similarly, some suggested fewer tracks, for an overall more streamlined programme.

IV. Technical Matters, including Hybrid Features, and Communications

The hybrid nature of IGF, specifically its extensive virtual access to programme sessions and even to side or social events, continues to be highly appreciated by respondents. Even for those participating onsite, the hybrid modality, which builds on the IGF’s strong commitment to open and virtually accessible discussions, allowed for attendance in multiple sessions at once. The 3-D rendered venue of the annual IGF, in 2022 used for the third year running, was described as “awesome”. Nevertheless, some challenges related to technical aspects of the meeting were mentioned.

Communications surrounding the event were viewed positively, with respondents noting improvements as compared to previous years, including in the run-up to the annual meeting. The rich outputs of the IGF and the IGF Messages were singled out as areas of significant improvement, with respondents wishing to see these appropriately disseminated and promoted.

On technical matters and communications, suggestions for further improvement are summarized as follows:

1. There were audiovisual difficulties inside meeting rooms, also in connection with the virtual participation platform, Zoom. Capacity building of the technical staff at the venue would be advisable.
2. Similarly, the issue of “Zoom bombings”, though complex, would require advance security solutions.

3. The unreliability of the IGF website on the first day prevented access to sessions for some respondents. Slow loading times and, in some places, unintuitive navigation made using the website complicated.
4. The IGF mobile app is an excellent feature and could be better promoted.
5. The access to remote links and to the schedule should be far simpler and more direct.
6. The importance of multilingualism, particularly among francophone respondents, was underscored. It was requested that general communications, whether in promoting the IGF or in its intersessional work, be expressed in more languages.
7. Communication to participants and session organizers should be strengthened to better prepare them for the annual meeting and orient them on the programme.
8. More effort should be made to secure the presence of international media at the annual meeting.
9. An additional press conference on the final day of the meeting to present the IGF Messages was suggested.

V. Other Logistics and Host Country Role

The approachability and helpfulness of volunteers, the very good security arrangements on the premises of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and the outstanding social and cultural events organized by the host country, Ethiopia, were among the most memorable and enjoyed aspects of the 17th IGF. The holding itself of the Forum in Ethiopia was cited numerous times as having facilitated high levels of participation from Africa and invaluable discussions relevant to African stakeholders.

A few comments also pointed to some logistical matters that could be handled differently in 2023. These are as follows:

1. Some concerns were expressed at the foreseen cost of travel to Japan and urged more extensive financing options for Global South participants.
2. Acquiring a visa to travel to Ethiopia was not straightforward for all. Steps for obtaining a visa to Japan should be clear and communicated as early as possible, especially for participants from the Global South.
3. The meeting registration process was said to have been onerous, with too many steps involved. A streamlined procedure should be put in place.

4. Signage to rooms at the venue was lacking, and scheduling or room changes posted to digital signs were not promptly updated. This should be better managed at the Kyoto IGF to prevent participants getting lost.

5. The placement of the IGF Village was suboptimal. Its distance from the main venue meant there was little natural flow of participants to the Village area and relatively low attendance at booths as a result. However, the Village's dedicated zones spotlighting traditional Ethiopian crafts were interesting and well executed.

6. The location of the lightning sessions at a remove from other meeting rooms similarly inhibited the expected level of participation. This should be carefully identified at the venue in Kyoto.

VI. Participation and Stakeholder Engagement, including with UN Processes

Many inputs underscored the excellent participation of youth and much improved participation of women at the 17th IGF. And as noted in reflections on the overall programme, the alignment with the GDC was a specific and critical sign of the IGF's stronger engagement with UN processes.

Looking ahead to the 18th IGF, respondents sought a furthering of the above and made a few new suggestions as follows:

1. The notable presence of youth could be improved and built upon in a few important ways, including: ensuring their visibility and participation across the programme, without silo-ing them in a youth track; selecting young people as the "banner speakers" or chairs of sessions, especially youth-oriented sessions; including adolescents in youth activities and, specifically, young people from the Asia Pacific region ahead of the IGF in Kyoto.

2. It was felt there should be much wider outreach to legislators to encompass "regional, national, sub-national and city parliaments and assemblies".

3. Business leaders, in particular those from big tech companies, must, as a priority, be engaged in IGF processes and at the annual meeting.

4. It was urged that the MAG and IGF Leadership Panel work closely together intersessionally to ensure continued congruence of the IGF with the GDC, Our Common Agenda more broadly, and the WSIS+20 process in 2025. Closer cooperation of the IGF with the UN Tech Envoy's Office was also recommended.

5. To prepare for the Summit of the Future in 2024, and the GDC, in particular, it was said the IGF should seriously weigh how it can respond to the outcomes of the GDC Ministerial meeting in September 2023, incorporating this as a major point of discussion at the annual meeting.

6. It was suggested that the IGF 2023 schedule include a “session for reviewing progress with implementation of the ‘IGF Plus’ recommendations of the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and the Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on the IGF hosted in March 2022.

7. Finally, in the context of the above, some comments advised using, and closer adherence to, the outputs on IGF improvements produced by the MAG’s Working Group on Strengthening and Strategy.