

## **Suggestion for a creation of the MAG Working Group on Hybrid Meetings**

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**Rationale:** The IGF has always had a strong commitment to remote participation, it has been an important characteristic of the forum since the first meeting in 2006. A legacy of the pandemic and the very successful 2020 IGF held only online has emphasized both the importance to remote participation and the IGF's ability to deliver more inclusive ways of working.

We all hope to return to holding face-to-face meetings again during 2021, and to experience IGF 2021 *in situ* (6-10 December, Katowice, Poland). However, in the spirit of this year's theme "Internet United", we propose to begin discussions about how to ensure all future IGFs enable inclusive, peer-to-peer, multistakeholder dialogues whether the participant is accessing from a remote location or on site. We propose to begin such discussions in the MAG and with our respective stakeholder communities.

IGF 2020 provided a quick and successful fix to an imminent problem, but also resurfaced many missed opportunities and gaps, that – with sufficient and timely attention – can be improved before the event later this year and in the future. The WG on Hybrid Meetings should not look only at the 2021 solution, but to modalities for more inclusive formats for future IGF meetings.

### **Objectives:**

- To organise IGFs in 2021 and beyond in a format that brings as meaningful participation and experience to both participants joining the event remotely as to those meeting at the venue. The meeting experience must be comparable for both groups. The set-up needs to be flexible enough to give the option of going hundred percent virtual if necessary<sup>1</sup>.
- To bring attention to the IGF as a global event on Internet-related issues that also fully encompasses virtual tools to provide a meaningful experience to all stakeholders involved.

### **WG questions and issues to tackle:**

- To review what worked well and less well for IGF2020, what lessons can we learn from our experience?
  - Early feedback suggests the MAG should ensure the overall experience is equal for all wherever they participate from; i.e. virtual participants must not be treated as "second class".
- Reviewing the IGF meeting platform and adjusting it to organizing IGFs as a hybrid event, not vice versa. It will be essential to define the needs of the event and then consider the suitable platform and any supporting technologies and services.
- Review how have other global and regional events adjusted to holding meetings online, particularly lessons from NRIs, IGF partner and supporting organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> note. This draft does not in anyway intend to suggest that it is the role of the MAG to make decisions about possible cancellation – this is the role of the Host government and United Nations. The MAG shall support any decision and advise on the convening of the IGF in support of the Host and UN SG.

- What technologies and services have other organizations used to enhance participation in their events during the global pandemic?
- Interactivity of the event – the role of session hosts and chat moderators, informal meeting elements for virtual participants, interactions among the participants.
- Building capacity of session organisers and moderators – well ahead of the event – to provide an engaging experience to IGF participants.
- Visual identity of the event and improved website functionality.
- Technical support issues; the need to ensure that all online aspects of the IGF have adequate technical support.
- Discussion of potential additional costs of enhancing online participation and exploring ways for new funding support.

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