

Non-Paper (2nd Draft)

Building an Parliamentary Track in an IGF+

MAG IGF Strategy and Strengthening Working Group

To make the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) more responsive and relevant to current digital issues, the UN **Roadmap on Digital Cooperation** proposes in paragraph 93c the establishment of “a high-level segment and ministerial or parliamentary tracks, ensuring more actionable outcomes.”

The **Option Paper on Recommendation 5 A/B** of the HLP supports this idea. “There are already good practices at the IGF to ensure a high level of governmental engagement which should be expanded. These include a high-level leaders segment at the annual IGF+ and a parliamentary track. At the same time, it will remain important that leaders from all stakeholder groups and all geographical regions take part in any high-level leaders segment”.

So far, Parliamentarians are not seen as a special stakeholder group in the context of the IGF. Members of Parliaments (MPs) were treated - more or less - as part of the “government”. However, in a democratic society, the executive and legislative branch of the state as well as an independent judiciary are different constituencies.

MPs did participate in the IGF from the very beginning. As an example, the European Parliament always did send a delegation to the annual IGFs since 2006. However, only the 14th IGF in Berlin saw a number of dedicated parliamentary side events, which recognized the special role of law makers in the Internet Governance debate.

Digitalization takes place in every country. More and more legislative acts on public policy issues have a cyber or digital component. The Berlin IGF Parliamentary Roundtable encouraged MPs to become more involved in the global IGF processes. The **“Jimmy Schulz Call”** - named after a German MP, who was involved in many IGFs and promoted the idea of holding an IGF in Germany - adopted five recommendations for an enhanced engagement of MPs in the IGF process, inter alia by the establishment of an „Informal Parliamentary IGF Group” (IPIG). Sadly, Jimmy Schulz died just at the eve of the IGF 2019 Berlin and could not see how successful his idea was brought to life (see Annex 1).

Based on the experiences of the 1st IGF Parliamentary Roundtable in 2019, the virtual IGF in 2020 hosted a **2nd Parliamentary IGF Roundtable**, which was organized by UNDESA in cooperation with the Interparliamentary Union (IPU). The roundtable discussed the role of parliamentarians in the development of digital cooperation against the background of the special challenges coming with the Covid 19 pandemic. The 2020 IGF Parliamentary Roundtable adopted an **„Output Document“**, which reconfirmed the recommendations of the „Jimmy Schulz Call“ and specified a number of action lines. It also reconfirmed the proposal to establish an „Informal Parliamentary IGF Group (IPIG). Participants of the roundtable encouraged the host of the 2019 Roundtable and Chair of the Digital Committee of the German Parliament (Bundestag), Manuel Höferlin, to kick start a process to form such an informal group (see Annex 2).

National laws on Internet related public policy issues constitute an important part of the regulatory framework for the global Internet Governance Ecosystem. In a globalized world each country is confronted with similar digital challenges. Regardless of the special national circumstances, basic questions related to laws dealing with cybersecurity, Internet standards, data protection, telecommunication, social media, content moderation, intellectual property, artificial intelligence, platform economy, digital taxation, digital education, digital preservation of the national culture heritage and many others are similar. There is no need, that every country re-invents the wheel. To learn from “good practices” by enhancing communication among MPs via the IGF will allow

legislators to raise the efficiency of their work and to find the right balance between meeting the special national needs and contributing to an open and accessible Internet.

MPs can contribute to awareness raising, confidence building, capacity development and the emergence of a new cyber-hygiene by organizing debates or discussions among parliamentarian and stakeholders around legislative projects related to Internet issues.

Against this background, it makes sense to promote both

- a stronger involvement of legislators from national parliaments in the multistakeholder IGF dialogue and
- to establish a dedicated **„Informal Parliamentarian IGF Group” (IPIG)** to enhance communication and collaboration among MPs.

By participating in multistakeholder IGF discussions on Internet related public policy and technical issues, legislators will get insights into the different perspectives of stakeholders in a global context which will enable them to find balanced solutions for regulatory frameworks. On the other hand, stakeholders will benefit from getting a better insight into the special challenges and perspectives of parliamentarians, dealing with Internet related issues.

By establishing an “Informal Parliamentarian IGF Group” (IPIG), MPs could constitute themselves as a special “IGF-stakeholder group sui generis”. So far, the Internet Governance definition (Tunis Agenda from 2005) did explicitly mention only three stakeholder groups: government, business and civil society. In the meantime, both the “academic” and the “technical community” are treated as a special stakeholder group as well as the “Youth”.

The 2020 Parliamentarian Roundtable also encouraged inter-sessional work among MPs. The „Jimmy Schulz Call“ (2019) and the „Output Document“ (2020) included a number of concrete recommendations for such inter-sessional work. (see Annex 1 and 2).

„Parliamentarian IGF Roundtables“ should become a permanent element in the forthcoming IGFs from 2021 to 2025. National and regional IGFs should be encouraged to organize similar „Parliamentarian IGF Roundtables“ to deepen both the communication among parliamentarians with the regions as well as the dialogue between parliamentarians and stakeholders from business, civil society, the technical and academic community. The IPU could include into its General Assemblies an „Internet Governance Roundtable“, to stimulate discussion on digitalisation among its members.

The formation of an IPIG could facilitate such interactions. Such a platform should be open to all members of parliaments around the globe. It should foster as much as possible active participation in the IGF by individual MPs. It should avoid the creation of an over engineered structure which risks to hamper MPs to take action themselves. Communication among IPIG members could be facilitated through a mailing list and a website. A small IPIG-Leadership Team (LT), composed by two MPs from each of the five UN regions, should facilitate such communication, conversation and collaboration by making proposals for the annual IGF Parliamentarian Track as well as for issue based intersessional work. The IPIG-LT should be supported by a small secretariat (funded by voluntary contributions) which would manage also the website and the listserv and would collaborate closely both with the IGF secretariat, the IPU and UNDESA.

Prof. em. Wolfgang Kleinwächter, University of Aarhus, December 10, 27, 2020

Annex 1: Jimmy Schulz Call (2019)

Annex 2: Output Document of the Parliamentarian IGF Roundtable (2020)