Non-Paper (2nd Draft)
Building an Parliamentarian 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  parliamentarian  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 parliamentarian 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 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 parliamentarian 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 oder digital component. The Berlin IGF Parliamentarian
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 engagements of MPs in the IGF process, inter alia by the establishment of an
„Informal Parliamentarian 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 Parliamentarian Roundtable in 2019, the virtual
IGF in 2020 hosted a 2nd Parliamentarian IGF Roundtable, which was organized by
UNDESA in cooperation with the Interparliamentarian 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 Parliamentarian 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 Parliamentarin 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 parliamentarians 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 fostering 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 hampers 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.

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Annex 1: Jimmy Schulz Call (2019)

Annjex 2: Output Document oft he Parliamentarian IGF Roundtable (2020)