

IGF 2020 Taking Stock and Suggest Improvements for 2021

Input from the IGF Dynamic Coalitions Coordination Group

19 January 2021

The following note is a response of the IGF Dynamic Coalitions Coordination Group (DCCG) to the *Call for Taking Stock of IGF 2020 and Suggesting Improvements for IGF 2021*, issued by the IGF Secretariat.

This response emerged from the DCs' collective participation at the IGF 2020 and does not necessarily reflect the position of all stakeholders involved in the so-far recognized DCs.

The DCs participated in the IGF 2020 through their main session and 18 individual sessions.

This document is structured across several elements of the IGF process the DCs see as priorities.

1. Annual IGF Meeting

The 2020 programme was well-balanced thematically. A reduced number of parallel sessions and extended duration of the meeting with reduced hours per day, helped to better organize and participate in a more effective manner.

It is recommended that the in-person IGF 2021 aims for fewer parallel sessions which are well-balanced across a limited number of focused, strategic policy issues. This helps to better strengthen the stakeholder engagement and focus on

substantive issues of priority. This could be underscored by asking two additional questions in the submission process: 1) What question would you like answered? and 2) What challenge would you like to receive recommendations towards a solution for?

The DC network successfully contributed to the IGF bottom-up thematic approach, showing the potential to inform and enrich discussions from an expert point of view. DCs thematic integration in the programme should continue. DC wider communities will be encouraged to respond to the public call for thematic inputs to ensure its relevance to the network.

The IGF 2021 programme should be action-oriented, to allow for an exchange of ideas on concrete, implementable solutions for particular problems. The Call for Voluntary Contributions is a good initial idea that requires further advancements.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced people to host meetings online and has proven that these can be effective just as in-person setup.

The IGF 2020 annual meeting was successful in the context of the format. Improvements that could be made for 2021 relate to:

- Need to simplify access to the platform with the security and safety being the priority;
- More media outreach.

The legacy of the pandemic could be the hybrid meetings. It is important to ensure that online participants are treated equally as the onsite ones. 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 of remote participation and the IGF's ability to deliver this more inclusive way of working. We suggest a continuation of the online component which needs to be strengthened in the future and that a hybrid meeting format should be adopted as the way forward. To achieve this, it is advised to put together good practices on how hybrid meetings could be hosted. Even within the online component of the hybrid meeting model, the online component could be further separated into two, one for “listeners” and another for “participants” by a process whereby webinar links are propagated to a larger audience through social media and other forms of mass communication for general, rather sessions in rather paraphrased terminology, and Zoom/WebEx links for ‘well known’ participants, well-known implying an arbitrary class of regular participants, newcomers with a certain background (for instance a newcomer who has been an IETF regular), for MAG members present and past, etc. For these “well known” participants, webinar model is sub-optimal. For IGF 2021, it is recommended that session moderators are trained to allow for equal attention to interventions coming from onsite

participants as those present physically in the room or that there is a remote moderator on the same footing and not as an addition.

One aspect of the hybrid meeting could be used better: the chat function. In the chat sometimes alternative discussions develop, quite often working towards answers, solutions, existing best practices or ways forward that are not discussed in the virtual room. This aspect was unknown before 2020 or totally went by the moderator as (s)he was not active on the chat.

What if an agreed-upon topic gets two sessions? One to set the stage, discuss actively, pose solutions/answers and one in which recommendations, etc. are discussed and agreed upon to become the outcome of the session and hence a tangible outcome for the IGF? This provides an instant focus for every workshop. It would also allow integrating the workshop with the expertise shared in the chat function from, until then, perhaps, less known experts, less usual suspects.

2. IGF Outcomes

The IGF's intersessional work, including the DCs, is outcome-oriented. The IGF 2020 produced a number of good outputs. DCs, as well, produced several outputs, collectively and individually. However, improvements are needed regarding visibility and utilization of those. IGF Secretariat is encouraged to explore ways to have all outputs, including the DC outputs, endorsed through a particular IGF process and then broadly disseminated to stakeholders that could benefit from these. Summary outputs, without attributing opinions or recommendations to individuals or workshops or specific DCs, could be prepared by the Chair of the MAG, not necessarily on all workshop / DC topics, but on the overall theme, to narrate rough consensus, and also list recommendations, and the paper so drafted could be circulated among workshop, DC and BPF leaders for substantial and significant objections if any, and then shared in a presentable, paraphrased format with leaders of key stakeholder organizations, heads of states and heads of governments.

3. Intersessional work

The Roadmap for Digital Cooperation calls for better integration of the intersessional work in the IGF annual meeting, which reflects the DCs, as well. This is a suggestion that requires more investment to ensure all intersessional work activities receive enough attention and to better engage with other local and global processes.

The DCs need continuous support from the IGF Secretariat for the individual and collective work through a dedicated focal point, such as the one the BPFs or NRIs are receiving.

Particular improvements could be made in regard to:

- NRIs: national IGFs meet once a year locally, while the regional IGFs usually gather the national IGFs of a corresponding region.
 - The global IGF could also encourage a cross-national / cross-regional IGF based on present understanding of the cross continental relevance of some of the IG issues, or in anticipation of increased utility for such a format that might encourage relatively ad-hoc partnerships between one or more NRIs from one geography to convene a joint cross-regional IGF together with one or more NRIs from one or more regions;
 - Similarly, inter-regional IGFs could also be thought of;
 - The global IGF could also consider an intersessional global IGF which might serve the purpose of accommodating a larger number of discussion topics, and from the deliberations select topics / sessions could be replicated in a more perfected form at the global IGF of fewer days, fewer tracks and greater focus.
- Better visual overview of DCs on the IGF website and social media;
- More streamlined access to DC webpages on the IGF website for DCs coordinators;
- Advancing dissemination of DC outputs across the IGF ecosystem through the IGF Secretariat, IGF MAG but also through the IGF's networks of contacts and social media. The latter requires development of a specific communication strategy;
- Equal use of the IGF's options for cooperation within respective DCs in the same vein as participants in a BPF can work together or publish interim outcomes for input, for DCs requesting for this option;
- Better cooperation between the Best Practice Forums and DCs focused on similar Internet governance matters;
- Develop mechanisms for cooperation between DCs and NRIs. For example, DC could benefit from inputs from NRIs; while DC expertise can enrich NRIs discussions. Having the NRIs calendar of events well in advance would be helpful for DCs to organize;
- Continuation of collective organization of the DC main session and individual sessions under agreed criteria among the DCs.
- Institutional support on promoting DC sessions;
- DC session organizers to ensure the sessions are output-oriented, as well;

- Continue organizing DC coordination session for defining annual goals and improvements needed;
- DC orientation for newcomers and those wanting to know more about DC could be organized on the margins of the annual IGF meeting

4. Youth participation

More attention was given to youth during the IGF 2020 which is very good. Building on those foundations, the IGF 2021 and beyond could foster meaningful integration of young people in the programme in a way that young people, as future experts and leaders, are an integral part of the IGF 2021 discussions. Possible concrete actions to be taken in 2021 could be:

- Building database for youth, searchable by their age, region, country, background and Internet governance issues of interest to support intersessional work and annual meeting exchanges to reach out to youth;
- Capacity development activities for youth such as webinars, publications, etc. on critical Internet governance (IG) topics;
- Cooperation of the IGF Secretariat and the MAG with other global initiatives on jointly supporting capacity development initiatives for youth;
- Session organizers could be encouraged to involve youth as resource persons in their sessions, to ensure that their voices are present in a wide range of discussions affecting them;
- The IGF Youth DC coordinates with other DCs to ensure younger participants are made aware of the opportunities to contribute their knowledge and insights to the specific work in the DCs.

Overall, the IGF should continue with strategic stakeholder engagement. In addition to youth, it should focus on the engagement of women and elderly population.

5. Parliamentary track

The Roadmap for Digital Cooperation calls for establishing a parliamentary track at the IGF. DCCG welcomes the parliamentary track implemented in 2019 and 2020 and especially its outcome-oriented nature and produced outcome documents. It calls for its continuation.

As the DC network holds expertise on particular Internet governance matters, DCs can support parliamentarians with informed expert views on particular matters of their interest. The IGF Secretariat could act as a liaison between the network's experts and the parliamentarians. A dedicated observatory could be established to help understand which parliaments need support, including knowledge of specific questions from and / or expertise of individual parliamentarians and which DCs hold particular expertise. A possibility for DCs and MPs to meet within the IGF framework could be explored.

Parliamentarians can benefit from DCs' expertise and vice versa spread information about the work of Dynamic Coalitions in their respective country and thus help sustain their work.

The parliamentary track could progress to a format which might be called "IGF meets Parliament" by a participation design that seats Parliamentarians together with the IGF stakeholders. The MAG could also consider scaling up its efforts to reach out for participation at the Ministerial / Head of State / Head of Government level, taking necessary help from participating Government leaders. In the process of elevating the IGF to a high level, the IGF could be emphatic about preserving the existing multi-stakeholder model.

6. DC annual schedule

DCs successfully hosted a main session and eighteen individual sessions at the IGF 2020. These helped strengthen the engagement of DCs among themselves and raised their visibility with the global community. In order to better inform the global IG(F) community on particular IG issues and contribute to building a more resilient Internet, DCs are encouraged to create more work objectives achieved through collective work on a monthly basis, not only on the annual basis.