

Contribution by the Government of the United States of America

Call for Inputs: Taking stock of the 2016 work program and 11th IGF and suggestions for 2017 and 12th IGF

General Comments

The Government of the United States of America appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Secretariat's call for inputs to take stock of the 11th IGF and to suggest improvements for the 12th IGF.

Over the past decade, the annual IGF has served as the premier global forum for multistakeholder dialogue on cross-cutting Internet policy issues. In this unique environment, free from the pressures of formal negotiations and decision-making, stakeholders from all sectors are able to share ideas and exchange best practices on Internet governance issues, and to build global, collaborative relationships to address areas of mutual interest.

The U.S. Government has actively participated in the IGF since its inaugural meeting in Athens, Greece in 2006. At the IGF 2016 in Guadalajara, Mexico, the United States Government was represented by 28 participants from three government agencies, including four senior level principals, and various subject matter experts. In addition, the U.S. Department of Commerce's Commercial Law and Development Program brought representatives from Afghanistan and Pakistan to the IGF, helping to contribute to the various efforts within the IGF community to help defray costs for people to attend, particularly from developing countries.

The U.S. Government expresses its deep appreciation to our Mexican hosts for their hospitality during the 11th IGF, as well for providing an excellent venue and support team on the ground in Guadalajara. We also thank the IGF Secretariat and the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) for their tireless efforts in planning the IGF event and developing its program, and MAG Chair Lynn St. Amour for her guidance and leadership.

Looking forward, we welcome Switzerland's offer to host the 12th IGF in 2017 and wish the new and continuing MAG members a productive and collaborative planning process.

Increased government participation

Historically speaking, government participation at the IGF has not been as high as that of other stakeholder groups. There was, however, an encouraging level of government participation in Guadalajara this year. According to the list of IGF participants, government representatives from 80 countries, across every region, attended the IGF in Mexico. While more government participation can always be encouraged, we were pleased to see such diversity and breadth in engagement. Hosting the IGF in Geneva, where many countries have permanent missions, presents a unique opportunity for government outreach. We suggest that the MAG consider ways to maximize this opportunity to help

bolster government participation—across a multitude of relevant ministries and institutions—during the IGF 2017.

Responsive and flexible programming – Corner Sessions & the Unconference

The IGF program development process has been and should continue to be flexible enough to accommodate Internet policy issues that emerge after the finalization of the workshop and main sessions in the IGF program. The new Corner Sessions and the Unconference are an ideal way for participants to address these issues. These new formats received high praise this year and we suggest retaining these formats in the IGF 2017 program.

Relatedly, we note that the duration of the Open Mic session this year was reduced from previous years. The Open Mic session, which alongside all other official IGF events is held according to the IGF Code of Conduct, presents an important opportunity for stakeholders from underrepresented groups or regions to address fellow participants in plenary and to share their views. We support reintroducing a 90-minute Open Mic session to the IGF program.

Continuing intersessional work

We view the various community-developed, written outputs of the IGF's intersessional work program as information-rich resources for governments and all others working on pertinent Internet policy issues. We support the ongoing development of the intersessional work program, particularly in the areas of greater administrative support and participant coordination.

Improving the IGF preparatory process and MAG working methods

As noted above, many aspects of the organizational process for workshop submission and evaluation have improved greatly, but we think that there is room for continued improvement. Efforts to improve the working methods of the MAG should continue into 2017, in line with the recommendations made by the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) Working Group on Improvements to the IGF. In particular, the MAG should review the proceedings of last year's in-person workshop evaluation and selection session, and work to develop a process for 2017 that provides greater clarity for all involved – both submitters and MAG members.

IGF Initiatives – Regional, Sub-regional, National, and Youth

We recognize the efforts that have been made in 2016 to increase the participation of various IGF initiatives at the global IGF event, and we support IGF initiatives as geographically and culturally diverse contributors to the global IGF discussions. We appreciate and endorse the adoption and operationalization by IGF initiatives of the core IGF principles and practices of being open, inclusive, and non-commercial, and working in a bottom-up, consensus-based process with multistakeholder participation.¹ Connecting conversations at different levels of the IGF ecosystem should continue, in

¹ **“Organizational principles** The IGF initiatives are expected to follow the principles and practices of being open, inclusive and non-commercial. They work in accordance with the bottom up consensus process of the IGF and

order to enrich the global dialogue and contribute to ongoing Internet governance discussions at the domestic and regional levels.

Conclusion

The IGF in Mexico took place after a historic period on Internet governance issues between IGF 2015 and IGF 2016. During that period, the UN General Assembly concluded the 10-year review of WSIS and extended the mandate of the IGF for another decade, and the Internet community completed the transition of the IANA stewardship to the multistakeholder community. The IGF community is witnessing a pivotal point in the history of the Internet where the multistakeholder approach to Internet governance is proven and successful. There is still more work to do. Questions surrounding sustainable development, access, privacy, security, trust, and many other important Internet policy issues continue to call for debate and discussion by the multistakeholder community. The IGF is an ideal venue for supporting these discussions, and we look forward working alongside all other stakeholders to help the IGF achieve its potential in Geneva in December.

need to have a multistakeholder participation (at least three stakeholder groups initially, and evolve toward inclusion of all stakeholder groups), in both formation of the Initiative and in any other Initiative related events.” Website of the IGF Secretariat, available at: <http://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-regional-and-national-initiatives>.