

# Taking Stock of the 2017 Work Program and 12th IGF / Suggestions for 2018 and 13th IGF

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## Introduction

It is my distinct privilege and pleasure to submit inputs to the IGF Secretariat to the following questions:

A) Taking stock of 2017 programming, preparatory process, community intersessional activities and the 12th annual IGF: What worked well? What worked not so well?

B) Suggestions for improvements in 2018? (programming, preparatory processes, community intersessional activities and improvements for 13th annual meeting)

The 12<sup>th</sup> IGF was the first time for me to participate as a member of the IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) and I got actively involved in the preparatory process of the 12<sup>th</sup> IGF. Fortunately, I was assigned to take the lead of a main session on digital economy, and could hold the successful main session with distinguished high-level moderators and speakers, thanks to tremendous cooperation and efforts made by other supporting organizers. In addition, I could serve as a speaker for a workshop titled “[Equipping populations with the skills to shape and secure their digital future \(WS141\)](#)”, and my colleague from Yahoo Japan Corporation also serve as a speaker for a workshop titled “[Policy Challenges for AI Development \(WS91\)](#)”. I know that some of Japanese stakeholders also served as speakers for various sessions during the 12<sup>th</sup> IGF. Further, I could exchange views and information with various stakeholders through bilateral and plurilateral meetings. Given the above experiences and the overall program of the 12<sup>th</sup> IGF, my observation is that the 12<sup>th</sup> IGF was successful.

Having said that, it is an undeniable fact that there were some issues and challenges not only in the preparatory process but in the overall program of the 12<sup>th</sup> IGF. I strongly believe that the IGF should effectively embody its mandates envisioned in paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda, so hereby I would like to share the issues and challenges with suggestions for

solving or at least improving them.

## 1. Preparatory Process

- The MAG and IGF Secretariat should **consider to describe Stage 3 of a MAG workshop review and evaluation process in more detail**. Although there is [detailed guidance](#) on the MAG workshop review and evaluation process, there are still unwritten customs and practices in the process, especially in Stage 3: MAG discussion, identification of merger candidates, and finalization (like “wild cards”). From the fairness and impartiality perspective, I hope this discussion will be conducted in the near future.
- The IGF Secretariat should **place a reasonable period to call for opinions from MAG members before drawing up a main session grid or issuing MAG chair s straw proposal on the grid**. In 2017, when chair s straw proposal was shared with MAG members, each main session was already allocated to each slot, and after all, that proposal was adopted with only minor changes although there were various opinions from MAG members. I took the lead of a main session on digital economy and when I saw chair s straw proposal, the digital economy main session was placed in the morning of Day 4, 21 December. Because there were mainly 3 serious challenges to hold the session in the morning of Day 4<sup>1</sup>, I continuously and repeatedly asked the MAG and IGF Secretariat to place the session either on Day 1, 18 December, or Day 2, 19 December in successive MAG virtual meetings. However, my request was not taken into account finally and I, together with other supporting organizers, had to find moderators and speakers almost all over again desperately, at the last minute. In order to avoid this worst case scenario, I strongly request to set a reasonable time period to accept opinions on the scheduling of main session in the future preparatory processes of the IGFs.
- **Any sessions of National and Regional Initiatives (NRIs) should be subject to a MAG selection process**, same as other sessions proposed by various stakeholders from all over the world. In 2017, NRIs collaboratively held 1 main session (150 min.) and 8 individual sessions, and the number of the latter was more than the MAG agreed (compromised or in rough consensus). While I fully support the importance on NRIs participation in the global IGF, any NRIs sessions should be subject to the same selection process as that of other sessions from the fairness and impartiality perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> The 3 serious challenges are: (i) morning of the last day of the IGF (Day 4), (ii) late in December (holiday season), and (iii) [11<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference \(MC11\)](#) just before the IGF.

- **Mailing lists for acting MAG members and for former MAG members should be separated**, and the former mailing list for the acting MAG members should be used for communication or correspondence which relates to MAG decision-making. The latter mailing list for the former MAG members should be used for reference.
- **A rough consensus should be sought only among the “acting” MAG members, making sure that each “acting” MAG member has an equal say when making decisions.** [MAG Terms of Reference](#) are applied to the acting MAG members and the acting MAG members should play a role in managing the MAG and IGF as such. The MAG Terms of Reference provides “MAG members serve in their personal capacity, but are expected to have established linkages with their respective stakeholder groups”, so the acting MAG members should serve in their personal capacity while consulting with their respective stakeholder groups.

## 2. Overall Program

- **The MAG and IGF Secretariat should continue their efforts to increase government and business-sector participation in the IGF.** According to paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda, one of the IGF s mandates is to strengthen and enhance the engagement of stakeholders in existing and/or future Internet governance mechanisms. In this regard, [IGF 2017 Attendance & Program Statistics](#) say that there were 260 sessions held and about 2,200 people participated onsite in the last 12<sup>th</sup> IGF. However, when it comes to the government and business sectors, the participation rates of them were bit improved but still low. Although there is no drastic solution, the MAG and IGF Secretariat should think about providing more incentives for governments and companies to participate in the future IGFs.
- **Dividing an Open Forum into a “Government Forum” and “Business Forum”** could be a solution to increase government and business-sector participation in the IGF. In the former, governments and treaty-based international organizations may request 60-minute slots to discuss how they fulfill their roles and responsibilities to solve issues and challenges pertaining to the Internet, while introducing what kind of Internet-related public policy issues and challenges they recognize and how they plan to address them with internal processes. In the latter, industry groups and associations may request 60-minute slots to discuss how they fulfill their roles to be key drivers for improving

societies and how they facilitate their respective public counterparts (i.e., decision makers including governments and treaty-based international organizations) to conduct appropriate Internet-related rulemaking for innovation and economic growth.

- **Youth participation should also be enhanced.** Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been developing steadfastly and therefore, in all ages, we have to think about how to bring up young stakeholders of the next generation in relation to the Internet. On the other hand, sessions of youth IGFs are still low profile, and there is still not enough collaboration with young stakeholders. The MAG and IGF secretariat should take this into consideration and explore new or closer collaboration with such as youth NRIs, [Global Partnership to End Violence against Children](#), or [International Association of Internet Hotlines \(INHOPE\)](#). If possible, like a NRIs main session, a main session on child online safety should be held so that various stakeholders including government authorities, companies, NGOs, and young stakeholders can make various evidence-based, practical discussions on how to create and maintain a safe and secure cyberspace for youth and children.
- **Rethinking geographical representation would be necessary.** As introduced in [IGF 2017 Attendance & Program Statistics](#), there are mainly 5 regional groups: African, Asia-Pacific, Eastern European, Latin American and Caribbean, and Western European groups. However, when it comes to session proposers as well as moderators and speakers, in some cases, stakeholders from a certain country occupy most of the part of the group to which the country belongs. In order to achieve optimal and well-balanced geographical representation, the MAG and IGF Secretariat should consider to describe statistics in more detail.
- **A main session should not be held on the last day of the annual IGF.** Normally, high-level stakeholders (especially high-level government officials) only attend the first day of the IGF when an opening ceremony is held and while many participants are on Day 1, after that the number of participants often decreases toward Day 4. Therefore, if a main session is held on Day 4, it is quite difficult to invite high-level stakeholders as either moderators or speakers as well as attract many participants to the session. That situation is unfortunate for both panelists and participants, so just holding an open mic/taking stock session and closing ceremony on Day 4 is recommended.
- **The annual IGF should be held in early December or before.** The reason is very simple;

December (especially late in December) is a holiday season and many participants cannot be expected.

## **Conclusion**

As everyone realizes, the IGF is a precious arena to discuss Internet-related public policy issues among multistakeholders. In particular, such opportunity would be indispensable for developing countries who will get actively involved in the Internet community in the near future. Hence the role of the IGF is important and even can be tremendous, but it will depend on the diverse and well-balanced representation of multistakeholders as well as timely and well-founded overarching theme and sub-themes. I hope that my suggestions will be taken into consideration at the 1<sup>st</sup> face-to-face Open Consultation and MAG Meeting of the 2018 IGF preparatory process, and actually be adopted in the next 13<sup>th</sup> IGF.