

## IGF Consultations: IGF 2018 Taking Stock

### January 2018

We would like to compliment the French government, UNESCO and the IGF Secretariat for their work and efficiency in organizing IGF 2018. Below is some feedback on IGF 2018. We plan to present additional suggestions at the next MAG meeting end of January 2018 in order to continue building a stronger IGF.

### A) Taking Stock of 2018 programming, outputs, preparatory process, community intersessional activities and the 13th annual IGF: What worked well? What worked not so well?

#### > What worked well

- **Relevance of the IGF as the venue for shaping Internet Governance:** the insertion of the IGF 2018 into the Paris Digital Week, a series of Internet and Security-related events promoted by the host country, had initially raised concerns. It turned out that launching the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace just before the IGF reinforced the potential relevance of the IGF as a forum to discuss in an open, bottom-up, collaborative and inclusive fashion.
- **Building blocks for a more concise programme and thematic approach:**
  - The agenda was more concise. The call for inputs has allowed to gather the community main topics and issues of interest, and consequently to provide a more cohesive review and allocation of session slots.
  - The “IGF Messages” presented at the end by the French host proved to be a successful way to consolidate the outputs of the forum.
- **Multistakeholder organizing committee:** The involvement of local key actors in the preparations was critical. It allowed to compensate the short period of time the French had to organize the event.

#### > What could be improved

##### Schedule & Content

- The agenda is still covering too many topics which reduces the opportunity to have a deep dialogue. Many sessions overlapped in terms of content, including Main Sessions and Workshops.

##### Logistics & Operations



- There was very limited participation of high-level governmental officials and industry representatives.
- The navigation at the venue was complicated. Different entrance doors were confusing. The sessions and bilateral rooms were difficult to find.
- The fixed setting for the workshop rooms has not allowed new formats for dynamic discussions (e.g. breakout groups).
- The bilateral rooms were too small.

## B) What suggestions for improvements could be made for 2019? (Please focus on programming, the outputs preparatory processes, community intersessional activities and improvements for the 14th annual meeting and beyond.)

The Internet Society has expressed its concerns over the past months regarding the IGF showing signs of fatigue and eventually losing its relevance (cf. Call for IGF Reform made by our Vice President Raul Echeberria<sup>1</sup> and reiterated by the MAG member Raquel Gatto<sup>2</sup>.) Today there is an opportunity to work with the Swiss, French and German to strengthen the IGF.

Below are specific suggestions:

- **The IGF needs to become the “go to” place to address existing and emerging Internet public policy issues.** While the IGF is not meant to become a negotiating body, it can produce more concrete outcomes, to define issues, document existing practices, and share intelligence on what worked or did not work in addressing Internet-related public policy issues through intersessional activities like Best Practice Forums (BPFs) and Policy Options dialogues; developing policy messages as more tangible outcomes from Main Sessions; and by developing IGF Chairs’ own recommendations on key topics. It also needs a way to showcase outcomes globally.
- **The IGF’s annual meeting should aim to attract valuable experts and high-level leaders.** The latter would be more engaged if the schedule and program were better aligned to the needs of stakeholders. The forum should notably focus on emerging issues, reduce drastically the number of competing sessions, and increase the interactivity of all sessions.

## C) How could the IGF respond to the recommendations made by the UN Secretary-General during his speech at the IGF 2018 Opening Ceremony?

The Internet Society strongly supports the statement from the UN Secretary General, Mr Antonio Guterres, that there is a need to reform the IGF. To be more effective, the IGF needs to focus its discussions on critical issues (no more than 3 parallel tracks), improve intersessional work, and produce tangible outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> Blog post entitled “Let’s reform the IGF to Ensure its Healthy Future”, published on 17 March 2018, and available at:

<https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/2018/03/lets-reform-igf-ensure-healthy-future/>

<sup>2</sup> Blog post named “IGF 2018: Improvements and a Call for Contributions” published on 24 September, and available at:

<https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/2018/09/igf-2018-improvements-and-call-for-contributions/>



## D) How could the IGF respond to President Macron’s “call for action” made during his speech at the IGF 2018 Opening Ceremony?

During his speech at IGF 2018, President Macron has expressed concerns on certain behaviors in the digital space (e.g. fake news, cyber-attacks), leading to a call for regulation.

The Internet Society shares these concerns. However, we also recognize the need for policies to be technically informed to ensure they do not create unintended consequences such as affecting Internet functions.

Working together to address these complex issues is the only way forward. The Internet depends on the collaborative, voluntary action of networks holding it together. Unilateral action will only result in governments put the Internet at risk (Cf. Andrew Sullivan’s IGF 2018 post, *We won’t save the Internet by breaking it*<sup>3</sup>).

President Macron also called for innovate ways to address Internet-related issues, new forms of multilateral cooperation that involve not only States, but also different stakeholder groups. This is consistent with the commitment of the Tunis Agenda, and the essence of the IGF itself. This reinforces the need for the IGF to grow to its full potential.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/2018/11/we-wont-save-the-internet-by-breaking-it/>