

## **Contribution to the “Call for Feedback to the High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation Report's Recommendation 5 and the IGF Plus Model”**

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First of all, I would like to congratulate the High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation for its work and the production of the report “The Age of Digital Interdependence”. The report illustrates very well the challenges that global community faces in order to improve the global cooperation in the current “digital world” to use the power of new technologies in the benefit of all and to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.

I would like also to commend the UN Secretary General, Mr. António Guterres for his commitment and decision to really make a change on this field.

Last but not least, I appreciate very much the work of the IGF Secretariat and IGF Chairwoman in conducting this consultation and the opportunity to provide these comments.

### **Comments -**

Is not original to say that we live in an era where things that were once considered set in stone are no longer valid, one where paradigms are being destroyed. In all probability, we do not need to find new paradigms but instead accept that there will be no more paradigms.

Organizations based on participatory models will be best positioned to build strategies that will allow them to respond successfully to the changing environment.

In order to respond to the challenges of these times in the timeframes in which these responses are needed, we cannot afford to have to design and implement new policies whenever there are political changes in a government or organization.

Stability lies in the distribution of power among the various stakeholders.

This is why any solution to address current and future challenges should be built on the innovative governance instruments we have created and avoid the temptation of

going back to previous models. Openness, transparency, the search for consensus and equal participation of the various actors, are governance features that should be protected and maintained.

So far, what best represents these concepts, is the Internet Governance Forum, the IGF. However, as already noted, the world continues to change constantly and rapidly, and the IGF must adapt to this reality.

The IGF was conceived as a place to hold central multistakeholder discussions on almost every Internet governance topic. Today, however, these topics crosscut every policy issue, so they cannot be discussed in a single place and must instead be present at every forum, on almost any issue. We need mechanisms with different level of formality, focus and type of stakeholders involved.

The report prepared by the High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation includes three possible cooperation models. In fact, it is not a question of adopting one or the other; what we need is a bit of each: an improved IGF plus additional, more flexible collective construction mechanisms.

The improved IGF will be complemented with a series of other forums and some of them will fit the description of the Digital Cooperation Networks described in the “Distribute co-governance architecture” and new collaboration mechanisms will be created to close the gap in areas where more multi stakeholder collaboration is needed what is also compatible with the architecture described in this option. Better platforms for collaboration are also important and so the concept “Network support platform” should be considered too as a complement of the IGF plus.

### **The IGF Plus -**

The role of the IGF should evolve to a forum that synthesizes the different points of view, documents differences and coincidences, and that, without forcing agreements, produces consensus always that is possible.

The outcomes of the IGF should have the form of principles, best practices, general guidelines and/or directions in which to move forward. Other global, regional and national forums will then take these outcomes from IGF and design ways to implement them.

The IGF must obviously evolve to fulfill this new mission. The IGF has already made much progress and must continue to improve.

In 2014, Netmundial allowed us to experiment with practices that produced good results. It was the first time that a multistakeholder process with no formal negotiation mechanism managed to produce outcomes. It was a demonstration that producing tangible and valuable outcomes in environments with characteristics Those practices should be recovered.

I envision an IGF that works throughout the year, that advance the production of conclusions, that interacts with other forums following up on global discussions on the most relevant topics; an IGF that holds its annual meeting having first produced solid foundations that will allow us to identify disagreements and also to achieve high-level consensus that can be validated with a NetMundial-type high level meeting to be held on the final day of the Forum.

Those conclusions should be brought later to other forums so that they can continue the work in cycles, nourishing others and producing local policies that will once again serve as inputs for regional and global discussions.

There are almost infinite topics that could be covered by IGF, but that's impossible. The IGF has done a great effort in being more focused but still more focus is required.

In conclusion, the IGF should aim to produce agreements in forms of principles, general directions and best practices. It should build on the work done over the year and the outcomes should be finalized and validated in a high level meeting at the end of the IGF annual forum, conducted under the Netmundial's style.

If the community makes the effort to renovate and reinvigorate the IGF to play a significant role for all stakeholders, the IGF should provide some guarantee of mid term stability. Let's say for 5 years.

More and better advertising of the processes are needed in order to increase the inclusiveness of the discussion.

After 14 years It will not longer be just an experiment or something that is useful only for a few people. It will play a central role for the whole international community and so, while part of the funding could still depend on voluntary contributions, a significant part of its budget should be secured. It's time for UN to formally include IGF in its budget.

The new IGF will have to do more things and to do some things better. All of that require muscles.

Without the appropriate funding, the IGF plus won't be able to fulfill its mission.

### **Practical considerations about the IGF -**

Some practical comments to consider for the IGF annual meeting :

- The annual IGF meeting should have less competitive sessions.

- There should be time dedicated for bilateral meetings so the bilateral don't compete with the debates.
- The sessions should be designed around the most relevant issues for the time and based on the work already done during the year.
- Discussions should be on specific aspects of the themes.
- Workshops should not compete with the discussions.
- Workshops could be held on the first day maybe, but once we move into the "discussion mode" there shouldn't be workshops organized in parallel.
- As already commented, the high level meeting should be organized at the end of the IGF and not at the beginning.
- The high level meeting has to be a really high level meeting where the conclusions of the discussions are considered toward the adoption/validation of outcomes.
- The high level meeting should be conducted in a Netmundial's style.

### **Improved inter-connection among the various existing and futures forums -**

The increasing importance of Internet and ICTs for every human activity, has brought as a consequence the formation of new discussion's spaces all around the world. Some are global forums, some are multistakeholder and others are the expression of what is known as minilateralism.

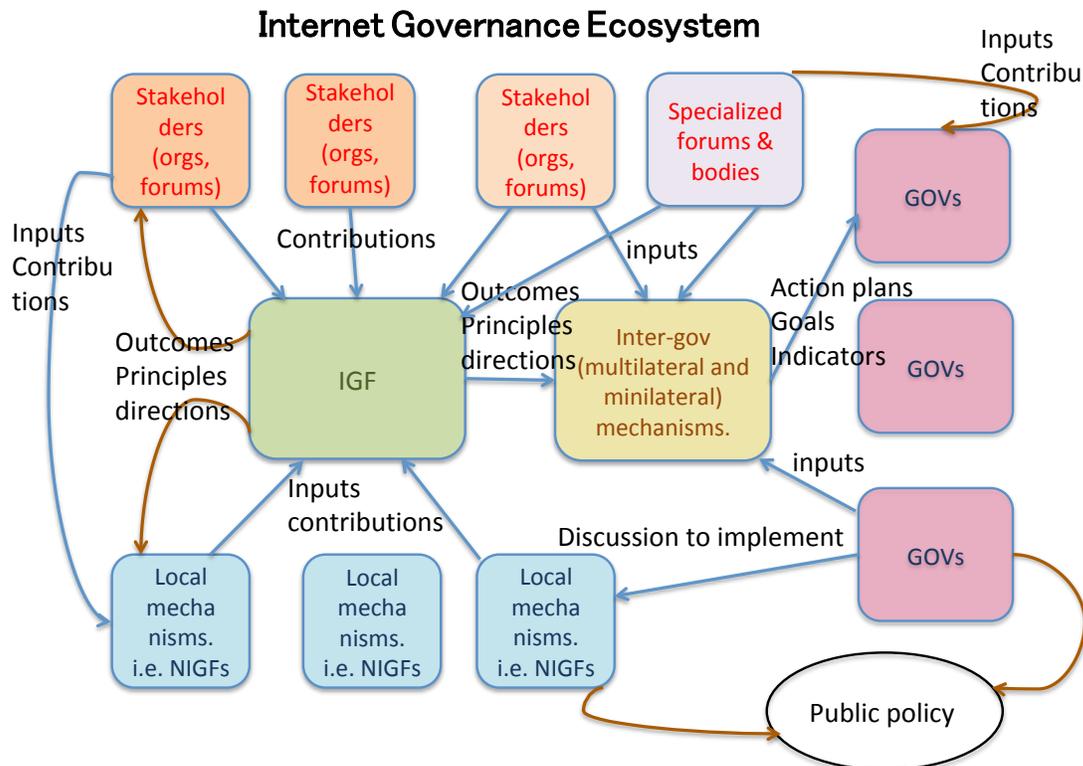
While traditional forums and mechanisms like IETF, ICANN, ITU, etc. remain very important, there are now many other forums that are also producing impact: Internet and Jurisdiction, RightsCon, Global Forum on Cyber Expertise, OECD forums, Digital Nations (formerly known as D9), Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace (GCSC), regional mechanisms like eLAC, etc. etc.

The Challenges and Gaps identified by the UN High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation in the point 4.2 of its report, are very well defined. However it's important to understand that it's impossible to drive or to avoid the creation of new forums on a top down fashion. People will get together to discuss what they need every time they feel they need it.

It's impossible to say for example "privacy related issues are discussed only in this forum or network", if groups or subgroups of stakeholders think they need new spaces for conducting their discussions or to cooperate among them, they will create those spaces.

In order to improve the cooperation between different organizations, networks and forums, it is essential that each of them define and understand clearly what are their respective roles in the ecosystem

In the chart below it's described how many different forums interact with others in different roles. In the image, governments are individualized because they have a double role. They have the same role of all other stakeholders groups, but also specific role as governments.



It's very important to understand that most of the policy making happens at the national level and so all the ecosystem should cooperate in order to facilitate that the decisions at the local level are well informed and taken in an as open manner as possible with participation of multiple stakeholders. And for that it is essential to continue strengthening local multistakeholder experiences (IGF like) to deal with concrete issues and challenges.

Each organization in the global ecosystem should not only understand what is its place in the system but also what are the other organizations related in order to proactively seek for inputs when needed and proactively push their outcomes in the appropriate direction so others benefit from them.

The IGF Plus should recognize in its work all the contributions made by local IGFs, specialized agencies and forums and different stakeholders (including governments

of course) and to produce Principles, Guidelines and Best practices that could be transformed by other organizations in concrete action plans with goals and indicators.

The regional IGFs should evolve in the same direction than the global one in order to replicate the model regionally.

## **Conclusion -**

As a conclusion, the report of the HLPDC is very useful and provides many elements that are essential for the future discussion. The challenges and gaps are very well described. The IGF Plus is not an option, is a must. The improvement of the IGF is not something that we have to do from the scratch. The IGF has been evolving since its inception, but more work is still needed.

However, the improvement of IGF is not enough by itself. It's important to combine it with some aspects of the other 2 architectures proposed.

No matter how good are the models we implement; the most important thing remains the political will of all interested parties to cooperate for the benefit of all.