

IGF 2020 Parliamentary Roundtable

Output document jointly drafted by DESA, IPU, IGF Secretariat, with initial inputs from IGF 2019 Host - Germany and IGF 2021 Host - Poland

Building Trust in a time of COVID-19 response and post-COVID-19 recovery

The IGF 2019 Parliamentary Forum encouraged and recommended national parliaments to cooperate and exchange best practices for dealing with Internet-related public policy issues. The Berlin IGF's "[Jimmy Schulz Call](#)" called on parliaments from all parts of the world *to enhance international cooperation and the exchange of best practices among national parliaments to deal with Internet related public policy issues*¹. It was agreed that legislation must be reconsidered to address the challenges of the digital age, underlining the importance of engaging non-state actors, and respecting and protecting individual human rights and fundamental freedoms, as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)².

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it clear: The Internet is more critical than ever in keeping up basic economic processes, social interaction and a minimum of cultural life. This prioritises having meaningful access for all people, good digital policies and Internet governance, as well as trust in public officials and information.

Parliamentarians have a responsibility to actively contribute to creating policy frameworks for the current and next generations of the Internet users to make the Internet accessible, open and safe for everyone. In these people-centred processes, parliaments must be guided by public trust, both in themselves as legislators and in the Internet itself.

The Internet is all-pervasive; it affects multiple aspects of our lives and has become normative for many people. Yet, despite people's growing dependency on it, many are among marginalized groups. Digital and gender-based divides must be addressed by all, including the parliamentarians, for the sake of everyone benefiting equally from the immense power digital technologies have for sustainable development. For those connected, safety and security online is not yet a norm, and beside the positive aspects cyberspace challenges us to deal with information overload, misinformation and disinformation. Increasingly, it is hard to distinguish truth from fiction or outright untruths. The World Health Organization has noted that this has created significant problems in fighting the pandemic, with an '*infodemic*', an unprecedented overabundance of information (both accurate and false) preventing people from accessing authoritative, reliable guidance about the virus.³

The IGF 2020 Parliamentary Roundtable, taking into account the above, referring to the Tunis Agenda of the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS, 2005); noting that through a number of UN General Assembly documents, the member states have confirmed that

¹ "Jimmy Schulz Call" https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/index.php?q=filedepot_download/7505/1807

² Ibid.

³ <https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/immunizing-the-public-against-misinformation>

international law, as enshrined in the UN Charter (1945), and human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), are both relevant in the online domain; being guided by the United Nations Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation (2020); referring to the work of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and taking note of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, advise on parliamentarians' active engagement in facilitation of public trust in the Internet, as noted further below.

A: Public Trust in the Internet

Parliaments can contribute to improving public trust in the Internet by:

- promoting good practices of digital technologies supporting sustainable development to showcase the benefits digital inclusion can bring to people and foster people's trust in technologies.
- advocating for bringing meaningful access to all its people through multistakeholder partnerships and initiatives.

Given a rapidly growing strong integration of the Internet in people's lives and the fact that online safety also depends on an end-user's skilful and informed behaviour, national parliaments can:

- encourage embedding digital literacy in formal educational curricula available to all citizens.

Misinformation and disinformation online are a systemic global problem and cannot be dealt with in a single legislative response. This problem requires a systematic approach, where all stakeholders, including legislators, would actively contribute to long-term awareness raising and facilitation of critical thinking among online population, online content creators and online platform owners. The IGF 2020 Roundtable advises all national parliaments to:

- take active participation in awareness raising and supporting capacity development on combating misinformation and disinformation online.

Cyberattacks and criminal online activities are undermining the security and safety of the Internet and need a collective response, which includes the promotion of confidence and capacity building measures as well as the strengthening of the immunity of the billions of Internet users. The IGF 2020 Parliamentary Roundtable advises all national parliaments:

- to promote a new culture of cybersecurity and comprehensive cyber-hygiene in the daily use of the Internet;
- to promote the stability of cyberspace and its infrastructure by protecting, in particular, the public core of the Internet.

B: Public Trust in Parliamentarians

Trust is crucial to success in political life and the public builds an image of trustworthiness from their media consumption – both formal and informal.⁴ Parliaments and parliamentarians are using the

⁴ Chadwick, A. (2013). *The hybrid media system: Politics and power*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Internet to increase public awareness, enhance their public image, help form and shape public opinion.⁵

The Internet is a place where parliaments can inform, educate and engage. However, disinformation and deliberate attempts to disrupt democratic processes are new realities and well reported. It is vital that parliaments and members understand the risks and challenges. They need the skills to manage their digital spaces safely and effectively if they are to maintain further advance public trust. The IGF 2020 Parliamentary Roundtable recommends that national parliaments:

- actively promote good practice on safe online behaviour for all.
- nurture the public image of parliaments through the social media citizens use to build familiarity and trust.
- encourage all parliaments to actively increase public exposure of their work through open data.
- engage more people in the work of parliaments through digital participation initiatives and multistakeholder dialogues, in particular with regard to legislation on Internet related public policy issues;
- enhance communication and consultation with the technical community on Internet related legislation to deepen the mutual understanding of the interlinkage of law and code making in the digital age;
- take pro-active steps to overcome the impact of disinformation and prevent the flow of misinformation through promoting open standards, open data, and awareness raising through multistakeholder engagement and by fostering inclusive digital literacy.

C: Open Discussion Discourse

Transparent, inclusive and multistakeholder continuous discussion on public digital policy matters is critical for advancing trust in digital technologies, introducing effective policies, but also fostering trust in the work of parliaments.

In light of the 2030 United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly the Sustainable Development Goal no. 9 to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation and referring to the United Nations Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, the IGF 2020 Parliamentary Roundtable recommends that the Internet Governance Forum, as a bottom-up, open, inclusive, multistakeholder, non-commercial platform for facilitation of dialogue pertaining to Internet governance matters:

- introduces as a permanent practice an annual high-level segment and ministerial and parliamentary tracks, ensuring more actionable outcomes⁶.
- promotes the formation of a permanent informal IGF Parliamentarians Group aimed at facilitating the exchange of information and good practice experiences among members of national parliaments with regard to the preparation, adoption and implementation of legislation on Internet related public policy issues;

⁵ Inter-parliamentary Union. (2018). [World e-Parliament Report 5th Edition](#). Geneva: IPU.

⁶ UN Secretary-General Roadmap for Digital Cooperation <https://undocs.org/A/74/821>

- investigates the feasibility of the establishment of a global repository of national legislations on Internet related public policy issues and regulatory frameworks on the development and use of digital technologies.