

**12th Annual Meeting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)
18-21 December 2017, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland**

**Main Session co-organized by National, Subregional, Regional and Youth IGF Initiatives
(NRIs)**

**NRIs Perspectives: Rights in the Digital World
20 December 2017; 11:30-13:00 p.m. and 15:00-16:00 p.m. in Room XVII**

- SUMMARY REPORT -

Note: This report reflects the organizational process of the NRIs main session, as well as the main points raised during the session. For complete content of remarks, please consult the official transcripts of the session, available [here \(for first segment\)](#) and [here \(for second segment\)](#).

1. Description of the organizational process

During the 11th annual meeting of the IGF in Mexico, the NRIs co-organized and hosted the main session. Following the IGF 2016 Taking Stock process session and in their subsequent discussions organized shortly after the 2016 IGF meeting, the NRIs agreed that the main session was an excellent opportunity for fostering engagement among the NRIs, and for bringing substantive inputs from many respective communities to the IGF. A formal request for co-organizing a main session for the 12th IGF annual meeting was submitted to the IGF MAG that after several rounds of consultations was approved by this respective Group. The IGF Secretariat, NRIs Focal Point, facilitated the organizing process of the session.

The NRIs collaborated in a bottom up consultation process, to gather substantive inputs on topics of interest, with the goal for the NRIs to identify a topic of mutual interest around which the NRIs main session could be organized.

After extensive discussions to be as inclusive as possible across the NRIs, the NRIs agreed to address “Rights in an online/digital world”.

The NRIs continued to run their public consultations among their respective communities, to agree on the format of the NRIs main session. These extensive consultations resulted in the NRIs consensus based view on the format of all NRIs related sessions to be organized during the 12th IGF meeting. The document that reflects these views was adopted under the title: NRIs Sessions Guidelines.

In total, fifteen NRIs preparatory meetings were hosted to help facilitating the organization of the NRIs main sessions, in addition to two face to face preparatory meetings were held in Geneva during the 12th IGF meeting, prior to the session that was scheduled for the 3rd day of the meeting. Summary reports for all these meetings are available at the IGF website.

Consistent with the NRI’s commitment to bottom up consensus regarding all roles, session onsite and online co-moderators and rapporteurs were endorsed among the suggested candidates by the NRIs.

After undertaking a bottom up consultation on the two co moderators, the NRIs were advised of the selection of Ambassador Janis Karklins and Anja Gengo, IGF NRIs Focal Point. The NRIs also nominated their session speakers to the IGF Secretariat, as an outcome of their internal consultative processes.

Given the UN’s internal requirements for the sessions that have interpretation to all six official UN languages to be within one fixed time block that does not exceed three (3) hours, and that the number of these types of sessions required one session to be split across the 2 hours long lunch break, the MAG has invited all main session organizers to consider compromising to this request, should the format and structure of their sessions allow. After several consultations, the NRIs decided to compromise. The NRIs main session was scheduled to be on Wednesday, 20 December with its first segment from 11:30 a.m. to 13:00 p.m., and second segment from 15:00 until 16:00 p.m.

2. Session Format and Structure

In a bottom up, open and inclusive process, the NRIs have agreed to have the sessions structured around five policy questions. These were:

1. How do the NRIs communities understand the rights in the digital world?
2. From the perspective of your NRI, what are our rights in the digital world and do you see the access as one of those?
3. Are there any challenges and limitations in exercising our rights in the digital world, according to the views of your NRI?
4. How is the development of new technologies affecting our rights in the digital world, from the perspective of your NRI?
5. What are the recommendations/advices from your NRIs in approaching the identified problems? Can the multistakeholder model here be an effective approach for making improvements?

As agreed among the co-organizers, the session structure was divided into two main segments. The first segment focused on NRIs speakers elaborating on the above policy questions, while the second segment was reserved for addressing the fifth policy question and mostly for the engagement with the online and onsite present audience.

After introductory remarks by one of the co-moderators, Mr. Janis Karklins, second co-moderator presented an overview of the evolution and growth of the NRIs , available [here](#).

Participating NRIs were: Afghanistan IGF, African IGF, Argentina IGF, Armenia IGF, Asia Pacific IGF, Benin IGF, Brazil IGF, Central, African IGF, China IGF, Colombia IGF, Croatia IGF, Dominican Republic IGF, DR Congo IGF, EuroDIG, IGF-USA, Italy IGF, Japan IGF, Kenya IGF, LACIGF, Nepal IGF, Netherlands IGF, Nigeria IGF, North Africa IGF, Pacific IGF, Panama IGF,

Poland IGF, Portugal IGF, SEEDIG, Spain IGF, Sri Lanka IGF, Uganda IGF, Ukraine IGF , West Africa IGF, Youth IGF Turkey, Youth LACIGF.

Onsite co-moderators were: Janis Karklins, Ambassador of Latvia to UNOG; and Anja Gengo, IGF Secretariat, NRIs Focal Point.

Online co-moderators were: Lianna Galstyan, Armenia IGF, SEEDIG; and Oksana Prykhodko, Ukraine IGF.

Rapporteur was: Dustin Phillips, ICANNWiki and IGF-USA.

3. Summary of key points

Responding to the first policy question, many noted that the online rights should be equal to offline rights. From the Spanish IGF, it was underlined that the communities should look into the most effective ways for protecting online rights, as they are more vulnerable in the digital world.

The Italian IGF added that within this respective community, the country's Parliament approved the Declaration on the Internet Rights, that was in detail discussed during the latest Italian IGF.

Representative of China IGF noted that the concept of understanding the online rights may be different across various communities, and therefore, that there is not a uniform understanding. However, this was not supported by some other speakers, who supported a uniform interpretation of rights, while accepting that some countries apply the rights differently.

On the moderator's follow up question for the NRIs to reflect access as an online right, the West African IGF representative remarked that within this region, there are several examples of the Internet shutdowns, that directly affect health and economic issues of end users. The speaker noted that this is why access to Internet should be considered as a right for everyone. It was further noted that such limitations in access prompted the African Union to adopt a Declaration of Internet rights and freedoms.

Following these remarks, the Afghanistan IGF noted that in this country, the costs of Internet bandwidth are very high, and remain among the world's most expensive rates, creating a significant barrier for citizens and businesses.

Due to security issues in Afghanistan, there are often fiber cuts that affect the connectivity, in addition to having the electricity power instability. However, related Government actions were noted as positive toward improving the overall conditions for having better connectivity for all citizens in the country.

From the Nigerian IGF, importance of access for the development of economy was noted, and in relation to this role, importance of inclusion of young people and the SMEs, is seen as generating improvements on this field. Positive examples of the regulator's approach to bringing access in rural areas were underlined.

From the national IGF of Brazil, it was said that the national Parliament, within the Marco Civil da Internet, assures several rights to be respected to everyone in an online environment, such for example are right to freedom of speech, privacy, data protection, the need for obtaining a court order for the online content to be removed. Among its goals, the Law explicitly notes the promotion of the right to access the Internet and information, to knowledge and participation in the cultural life and in public policies.

From the national IGF of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, concerns were shared in terms of insufficient Internet coverage within the country in addition to noting the high costs for access. A further comment noted the need for developing appropriately tailored regulations that will fit the needs of the citizens.

On behalf of the Asia Pacific regional IGF (APrIGF), the speaker remarked that the online human rights topic is of concern for this respective community. The APrIGF coordinator noted that access is fundamental when it comes to the right to information, as well as to the education, health, and culture, and access to other e-services. In some of the areas of this region, there are Internet shutdowns that in particularly affect the flow of information as well as the overall development of the community. In regards to the access, it was said that status of the digital literacy is an important aspect that should be looked at, as well as the cross cutting issues that arise from gender and age aspects.

From Nepal IGF, it was said that access remains an issue for this respective community, and among the main reasons for it is country's hilly and mountainous terrain. This problem has deepened after this country went through a strong intensity earthquake in 2015. Examples of positive actions where the community forms public funds to improve the conditions related to access, were outlined.

Japan IGF elaborated on the access issues from the private sector's point of view, and within a context of net neutrality in IPv6 network.

In regards to the challenges in exercising online rights, Sri Lanka IGF remarked that this respective community was focused on discussing digital literacy, noting that such basic digital literacy is seen as critically important for exercising online rights.

On behalf of EuroDIG, it was noted that data security and privacy related issues are among concerns for European stakeholders. However, it was stressed that the community is focused on discussing ways for improvements. Remarks were concluded with emphasizing that continuous communication among stakeholders on matters of relevance is necessary.

For the Armenian IGF, issues related to the intellectual property and privacy are of concern. It was said that with cloud computing and this country's policy on telecom providers, data protection is now more challenging to be maintained.

Representative from the North African IGF outlined an example from the region, where in Tunisia as one of the participatory country in this subregional IGF, the constitutional rights now include right to communication, in line with the right to water and electricity, for instance. It was said that the communities should work on raising awareness on current issues, as well as on the capacity building initiatives in addressing these.

From Croatian IGF, online safety of children, as well as the open data related topics are of concern. In this regard, digital literacy is seen as an alarming problem, because children are not prepared for the treats existing in cyberspace. Also, it was mentioned that citizens do not use e-services in

public administration that often, which is indicative of present digital literacy issue. This national IGF has also outlined that the existence of online hate speech, mainly in between various political ideologies is becoming one of the major issues toward what the Government is taking appropriate measures.

The national IGF of Poland representative noted that every discussion at this national IGF was in line with rights and values that are of importance for people. The multistakeholder model was seen as effective in discussing new emerging issues.

Human rights are also focus of the discussion for the national IGF of the Netherlands. There are positive actions toward finding effective ways for assessing some online human rights, such for example are the right to freedom of expression, privacy, worker's rights, and anti-harassment policies.

Through public online consultation, the national IGF of Panama has identified some of the most pertinent issues on this topic for this respective community. This resulted in identifying the causes, where the outdated laws are seen as problematic, as they remain behind the digital markets ongoing trends.

From the national IGF of Uganda, it was noted that this community faces lack of awareness about the notion of digital rights, as well as good approaches in balancing the right to freedom of expression with privacy.

With underlining that the online rights should be equally respected as offline rights, from the national IGF of Dominican Republic it was said that this community has produced a Declaration on digital rights and values. Issues related to problematic specific legal provisions and public policies, were raised.

From the Kenyan IGF, it was said that Internet shutdowns, surveillance, online safety and data protection are among issues of concern for this respective community.

Co-coordinator for the Youth IGF of Turkey noted that this multistakeholder and bottom up initiative is focused on discussing issues related to surveillance, and inclusion of person with disabilities in the online environment, given the challenges they face with the current Internet environment settings.

The Youth LACIGF coordinator noted that within this region, lack of connection together with lack of access to information are among major limitations for citizens to benefit from the Internet. This is especially case in rural areas.

The APriIGF followed by noting that among most concerned issues within this region are challenges and limitations based on gender digital divide, in addition to the region experiencing gender-based violence. The region also notes existence of access barriers based on personal and cultural norms.

From the Italian IGF, it was said that this respective community has discussed extensively the importance of data security. Because of the complexity of this matter, this initiative finds the capacity building to be important segment of addressing the issue, which is why they support trainings in schools and universities for raising awareness. Remarks on the importance of big data, as well as the artificial intelligence were shared.

The Brazilian IGF added that in this country, concerns are related to the newly proposed Bill of Rights that faces certain pressure from some stakeholders, mainly in the context of net neutrality and its interpretation by telecom companies; as well as the data protection that is under discussion for years without final outcome decision.

So far raised inputs were supported by the national IGF of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, that has underlined the importance of having the IGF processes, what in this country was recognized by the Ministry in charge for new technologies.

Above summarized inputs have concluded the first segment of the session. During the lunch break, the NRIs were briefed by Mr. Guy Berger, Director for Freedom of Expression and

Media Development at UNESCO, about the UNESCO's work related to the Internet governance and potential collaboration between the NRIs and UNESCO.

Second segment was opened by the session's rapporteur, Mr. Dustin Philipps, that presented the major key messages, that emerged as a consensus based view among the speakers during the first segment. These are:

- Online rights are the same as offline rights.
- Access and connectivity are a prerequisite for exercising rights in the digital world.
- Beyond this, access alone is not enough. There is an additional need for capacity development, such as to increase digital literacy and raising awareness about protecting certain rights online.
- Rapid development of new online technologies can have impact and affect our digital rights.
- Approach to all matters pertaining to online rights needs to be inclusive of all perspectives, especially including vulnerable communities.

The co-moderators open the floor with asking the panelists if the multistakeholder model can be an effective way in addressing raised issues.

From the Colombian IGF, it was said that indeed it can, but that it is very challenging to achieve having this model implemented. One of the related challenges is underrepresentation of certain stakeholder groups.

From the Brazilian IGF, it was said that a multistakeholder model has been implemented in this respective community for more than two decades. Examples were shared regarding important processes on digital rights in the country that came as an outcome of extensive multistakeholder consultations.

From EuroDIG it was noted that the European discussion processes on the matter require to be multistakeholder.

The Spanish IGF representative noted that within this respective community, the multistakeholder model is seen as important, and is implemented on several work layers.

Co-coordinator from the Italian IGF noted the importance and challenges of involving the Governments in the multistakeholder process.

From the IGF-USA, it was remarked that having everyone participating in the discussion processes is challenging. But works at the IGF-USA. Further, a broadened engagement in governmental processes was made when a higher level Government official introduced the multistakeholder model within Government beyond the discussions on the Internet governance level.

The Portugal IGF representative noted that the value of the multistakeholder model is inclusion of all stakeholders and bringing all perspectives in order to comprehensively address all issues of relevance and create appropriate action plans for improvements. In this respective community, this allows for defining pathways for digital competences to protect individual data, fundamental rights, the right to be forgotten, and to face up the challenges attached to issues like cybersecurity.

Co-coordinator from the Afghanistan IGF noted that establishing the multistakeholder process is very challenging in this respective community. In addition, it was said that establishing public-private partnership in the country is difficult given the current cashback system. However, there are educational programmes that are encouraging, as they focus on capacity building in digital literacy.

From the Argentina IGF, it was briefed that a multistakeholder model is vital to this respective community for agreeing on national digital policy. Importance of process that goes beyond just one annual event, was stressed.

The African IGF coordinator noted the long-standing establishment of the multistakeholder process in the African region through this regional IGF, as well as the African School of Internet Governance (AfriSIG) which is part of the African process. It was further indicated that the African IGF was a space to bring all stakeholders together, to share ideas and best practices and make each

stakeholder understand and play its role. In addition, the speaker advocated for online platforms, which will enable stakeholders to exchange and air their views.

The Polish IGF representative noted good progress of the multistakeholder process established in the country by this national IGF. Added value is the collaboration with the neighboring countries and their inclusion in the process. However, the process lacks involvement of the SMEs.

The Croatian IGF noted that this respective community tries solving identified problems such as the lack of digital competency through introducing relevant programmes to formal and informal education for engaging more citizens in active participation in discussing these problems.

The Netherlands IGF representative said that there is a good multistakeholder process established by this national IGF, supported by the Government as well. Besides, it was noted that this respective initiative is also involved in many multilateral processes on matters pertaining to the Internet governance, where they also promote the multistakeholder approach.

The APrIGF noted the importance of directing the capacity building initiatives toward meaningful participation in the overall IGF process. This is why this respective initiative invests in fellowship programs for engaging participants in the APrIGF process, and encourages the IGF to develop programmes for expanding participation.

Coordinator from Nepal IGF underlined that this national IGF has established an effective multistakeholder process, recognized and supported by the Government. However, it was said that it is challenging to have participants based outside of the capital, engaging in the process.

The West African sub-regional IGF noted the importance of the capacity building, adding that this region invests efforts in organizing a dedicated school on Internet governance to serve this purpose.

The Armenian IGF underlined the importance of having the multistakeholder model applied in discussing the Internet pertaining matters. Within this respective community, the discussion goes through this national IGF, reflecting local, but also regional and global aspects.

Youth IGF of Turkey pointed the value of having the multistakeholder model implemented, that allows for participation of all stakeholders. However, within this respective community, the general awareness among all stakeholders is not present, for having this model accepted and implemented by all. The fact that this initiative gathers many enthusiasts is encouraging the hope that mentioned awareness will be raised among society for understanding and implementing this model.

From the Kenya IGF, remarks were shared in terms of the multistakeholder model being recognized and applied in this respective community for years. In particularly this year, significant improvements were made in regards to having youth represented while discussing matters of relevance in a bottom up manner; as well as in terms of various stakeholders, including businesses and Government, financially supporting the implementation of the multistakeholder process.

After the above summarized interventions, the floor was open for comments from all present onsite and online participants.

One participant noted that this session showcased the uniqueness and differences among the NRIs perspectives and in regards to the implementation of the process. It was said that it was evident during discussion that many lack support from private sector, given that they are not positioned in environments where they can reach this sector stakeholders. As a follow up to this comment, another participant added that the Internet governance should be branded, to make it easier for various stakeholders to identify its importance.

One online participant asked if there is a possibility to create a global institution that will monitor cases of breaking laws in regards to digital rights and that would regulate and solve these cases. The co-moderator responded that there are discussions around arguments should the Internet based discussions be channeled through a centralized entity, or it should be continued through various types of forums. It was remarked that these types of forums allow for decision makers to better understand the matter and make appropriate decision.

From the audience, it was followed up to this comment by noting the existence of a cooperation within the Commission of Science and Technology for Development, that is discussing these possible models. This Group's discussions if these matters should be addressed through working group or through a centralized body are underway.

The Colombian IGF coordinator noted that an existing cooperation between the national and regional IGFs should go through an assessment, in order to estimate if improvements could and should be made in this respect.

An online participant asked about the ways the youth can be involved in the Internet governance discussions. From the IGF-USA it was said that within this national IGF, they invest efforts to have youth integrated in the overall process, while others have different models for youth engagement. The co-moderator followed up by an open invitation to a dedicated meeting for engagement of youth into the IGF, scheduled for a day after this session.

The co-moderators concluded the session by thanking all participants and noting the value of the NRIs network.

4. Summary of main session messages produced by the IGF 2017 organizing team

The IGF organizing team has produced a set of key Geneva-messages from each of the main sessions. For this particular sessions, these messages are:

- There was broad support for the view that the rights that people have offline should also be protected online. Rights such as privacy, data protection and freedom of expression are equally important in the digital space as they are in the physical world. Some pointed out that there might not be an uniform understanding of these rights and that the application of rights might vary from country to country.
- While for some access to the Internet should be considered as a human right, others noted that access is more a need than a right. It was generally supported that access to the Internet is an important enabler of development and growth. For this reason, many noted that more should be done to bridge the digital divide.
- Many indicated that the Internet enables them to exercise their digital rights, and called for more education, digital literacy, and for raising awareness about digital rights, and ways to exercise and protect them.
- Some recommended that the protection of digital rights should be embedded in an inclusive approach that also considers the needs and rights of vulnerable groups and communities – such as children, women, gender minorities, people with disabilities.

- Other challenges and limitations mentioned during the session were: Internet shutdowns; limited transparency in how some Internet intermediaries process personal data or deal with content control policies; individual self-censorship caused by activities such as surveillance; tendencies to trade off rights against each other; and the lack of effective legal frameworks at national level, or insufficient resources to implement them.
- New data-driven technologies such as the Internet of things and artificial intelligence were expected to have both positive and negative impacts on human rights. Suggested solutions to maximise the opportunities and minimise the risks included the adoption of standards and principles on issues such as security and privacy, ethics, and accountability.
- There was a broad confidence that multistakeholder processes could be effective in addressing challenges related to digital rights. It was noted that more efforts should be made to strengthen the engagement of stakeholders, and empower them to make meaningful contributions.