



ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS

CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE PROGRAMME OF THE 2011 INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM (IGF)

These comments are compiled from various earlier submissions made by the APC. APC would like to note that we also endorse input made by the Internet Governance Civil Society Caucus.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) has participated in the IGF process since its launch in 2006. We have found the IGF to be a creative and influential forum for policy dialogue and strongly support its continuation and the strengthening of global, regional, and national IGFs. As an international space for open exchange on matters of public policy affecting the internet, the IGF must continue to thrive in conjunction with the regional and national processes which are evolving in accordance with local contexts and priorities. We do believe that the IGF can be improved particularly to enable greater participation of developing country stakeholders (government and non-governmental).

2. FORMAT OF THE IGF MEETINGS

Main sessions and new formats

We recommend that the IGF continue to explore innovative and creative meeting formats as well as effective facilitation methods to involve remote participants in sessions and workshops. There was a lack of energy in most of the main sessions in 2010. This might be because there were too many main sessions or because there needs to be a stronger link between them and the rest of the activities in IGF.

A format which allows for more synthesis at main sessions (e.g. avoiding lists of what was discussed) could lend some dynamism to these sessions. We also envision experimenting with expert responses to workshops outcomes and posing of further challenges. In both cases we hope for more discursive dialogue in IGF main sessions. In our view, it is crucial to ensure that facilitators selected are experts on the issues. We also suggest that at least 50% of the facilitators are from developing countries.



Pre-events

Pre-events are good opportunities to focus on a given theme and they should be encouraged as a format that can contribute to the IGF discourse. They can offer added value and attract participants that might not normally attend an IGF meeting. We recommend that ways to provide more support for organising pre-events should be found, particularly at the level of logistics and the necessary assistance for its effective realisation. It would be very useful for both the IGF Secretariat and the Host Country to appoint contact persons with regard to the organisation of pre-events.

Workshops

Application of the multi-stakeholder format in workshops

The current mechanism for ensuring multi-stakeholder participation in workshops has become too formulaic. Organisers scramble around chaotically in the months leading up to the event to make sure that they have "a civil society speaker" and "a government panellist". Is this tokenism, or is it succeeding in building stakeholder engagement? We believe that MAG should ask this question at its upcoming consultation. Workshops would benefit from ensuring that they include speakers who are stakeholders in the topic under discussion in the sense that they *have a stake in it*, rather than simply being representatives from different sectors. It could also be useful to create a space for workshops that address the challenges of particular stakeholders, e.g. problems faced by government, regulator, by business, or civil society.

Number and merging of workshops

The agendas of many workshops at Vilnius seemed incoherent. When asked, organisers reported that they had been asked to merge with other workshops making it difficult to maintain a common, coherent thread. The increasing number of workshop proposals that are received every year is an indicator of success. However, a balance has to be struck between trying to please everyone (with the possibility of diluting the quality of discussion and debate through multi-mergers), and making hard decisions based on stricter criteria (but thereby increasing the possibility of higher quality discussion and debate).

Number of speakers

Generally, workshops have too many speakers. The Secretariat and MAG should limit the number of speakers and inputs or strongly encourage workshop proponents to do so. The goal of the IGF is dialogue and debate and it is the organisers' responsibility to make sure that workshops enable this. Too many speakers results in monologues and disengagement. The MAG should carefully check this aspect at the proposal submission stage.

Proposal template and format

We recommend that the workshop proposal template be changed to make it clearer that those actively involved in the issues are invited to participate. The number of speakers should be limited and a minimum time allotment for discussion should be enforced. A revised template would encourage people to plan their workshops in such a way that enough time is left for discussion.

Participant evaluations of workshops and main sessions

We propose that the IGF secretariat introduce a simple online evaluation form for each workshop and main session which participants can complete online. The results of these evaluations will provide useful input to workshop organisers, the Secretariat and the MAG.

Linking to main sessions

We propose a format that consists of two days of workshops followed by two days of main sessions interspersed with round tables and best practice forums. The main sessions can then more effectively respond to and build on discussion that took place in workshops.

3. SHAPING THE OUTCOME OF IGF MEETINGS

A more 'outcome' oriented approach

APC would like to see the outcomes of the dialogue extracted succinctly and made more visible in a format that can facilitate uptake by actors involved in internet governance and development. We believe this can be done without compromising the non-binding, non decision-making nature of deliberations as it does not imply negotiated agreements which we do not believe is the role of the IGF. We would like to see the IGF evolve away from its annual event format into a year-round process that allows multi-stakeholder dialogue to inform policy-makers and that effectively facilitates interaction between this dialogue and the forums and institutions where internet governance and policy decisions are made.

IGF messages

A change in the format of the IGF that leans strongly towards documenting the outcomes and conclusions of workshops and main sessions in the form of "IGF messages" can be of benefit to participants who are not physically present and could lead to more straight forward collaborative action of stakeholders that attend the event. If the IGF can distil messages, or suggestions for further discussion, or even concrete advice, it will facilitate follow up interaction between stakeholders and it could consolidate and elevate its impact.

Capacity building

This is one of the key outcomes of the event. Finding ways to report on the capacity building outcomes in a consolidated way could be of value in maximising this outcome in future IGFs.

4. WORKING METHODS OF THE IGF, IN PARTICULAR IMPROVING THE PREPARATION PROCESS MODALITIES

Regional and national IGFs

There is a general consensus that regional and national processes should be strengthened and that their link with the global space should be flexible rather than formal, allowing these processes to follow their own dynamics and respond to their regional or national priorities. The MAG should, however, encourage national and regional IGF related processes to contribute to the open consultations to ensure that the priorities identified at those levels are taken into account when building the global IGF agenda. We propose that the Secretariat facilitates periodic meetings between conveners of national and regional IGFs and provide avenues for the exchange of information. We urge national and regional IGFs to be as inclusive as possible and to respect the WSIS principles at all times. We also suggest that conveners of national and regional IGFs produce reports which feed the main session on regional perspectives and be tabled in pre-events, workshops and other sessions.

Piloting thematic IGFs

As with pre-events, thematic events can help to deepen the understanding of complex issues. Thematic IGFs can provide fora for individuals with the appropriate expertise from different stakeholder groups to engage specific issues in greater depth and then communicate the outcomes of their discussions to the MAG, specific institutions and to the internet community at large. Recommendations on issues for thematic IGFs could be made at the end of an IGF year, for thematics during the following year, in the run up to the next annual event. APC suggests that a pilot thematic IGF on spam is organised.

5. FINANCING THE FORUM

We believe that two principles should be adhered to in all financing of the IGF: transparency and independence (ensuring that financial contributors do not have specific influence on agenda setting). The IGF secretariat needs independence from any form of undue influence. We propose that a terms of reference for donations

could be put in place to protect the IGF secretariat's independence. In addition, there should be a travel fund for speakers from developing countries that is accessible and transparently managed by a multi-stakeholder group, in order to prevent a single stakeholder exerting undue influence over the selection of funded participants in the IGF. Sponsors from the private sector could be encouraged to contribute to this fund.

6. FUNCTIONING OF THE IGF SECRETARIAT (AND THE MULTISTAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP)

IGF Secretariat

We believe that the IGF secretariat needs to operate with flexibility, but remain under a UN umbrella. However, it does need to be sufficiently resourced, and have enough human capacity. A closer link with a UN agency, such as the CSTD, could work well, provided CSTD is able to second some personnel to the secretariat for a period of time.

The IGF secretariat should remain in Geneva, and maximise benefit from the close proximity of other UN bodies based there, including the ITU. At the same time it is critically important, to preserve the multi-stakeholder nature of the IGF, and adherence to the WSIS principles. Therefore we believe that the secretariat should be accountable to a multi-stakeholder body of some kind, and not to an intergovernmental body.

The MAG has been supposed to play this role, but, we feel it has not been effective enough, in spite of the effort made by many of its members and the co-chairs. Some comments on the MAG follows below:

Facilitation roles within the MAG

We recommend that the Secretariat assigns a coordinator to work with the MAG, that the MAG develop a work-plan which includes distributing its work more evenly throughout the year, and that the MAG elects a small coordinating group from among its own members to help facilitate its work. This group could assist the chair and the executive coordinator in facilitating the work of the MAG. The positions in this group could be pre-defined e.g. a liaison for fund-raising, for regional meetings, remote participation, for evaluation and feedback to stakeholders. The IGF Secretariat should direct more resources towards facilitating the work of the MAG so that it realises its full potential.

More on-site support from MAG members during the annual fora would contribute for more effective sessions and workshops. We would like the MAG to be more proactive in identifying emerging issues. The MAG should find a way of making recommendations for follow up on some of those emerging issues.

Increased use of ICTs by MAG members

We recommend that the MAG makes use of online platforms for meetings in between face-to-face meetings in addition to their existing use of a mailing list.

Rotation and renewal of mandate

Clear annual or bi-annual rotation and mandate renewal process should be in place to ensure greater representational parity between different stakeholders.

Nomination of MAG chair

Terms of reference and criteria should be developed for this position and a non-com process instituted to propose names for the SG to appoint a chair. One idea could be to have co-chairs (or a chair and a vice-chair) with one position chosen by the UN and the other by the MAG itself. This would be consistent with the IGF leading the way in terms of process at the UN, and it would also support continual communication between MAG members, the Secretariat and the chairs.

7. OUTREACH TO AND COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS AND FORA DEALING WITH IG ISSUES

We need more outreach. As a community we are reaching maturity but we are still in infancy when it comes to working with others. As the internet increasingly impacts all facets of our lives, our discussions must increasingly include a broader set of stakeholders. As such, the IGF should have a clear liaison role with regard to international processes and institutions. For example, with regard to increasing access to the internet, a summary of outcomes and suggestions from the discussions at the IGF should be tabled for discussion in international processes and institutions that deal with policy and regulation that impacts on internet access.

As mentioned before, we could also pilot thematic IGFs. Thematic IGFs can provide fora for individuals with the appropriate expertise from different stakeholder groups to engage specific issues in greater depth and then communicate the outcomes their discussions to the MAG, specific institutions and to the internet community at large.

8. INCLUSIVENESS OF THE IGF PROCESS AND OF PARTICIPATION AT THE IGF MEETINGS (IN PARTICULAR WITH REGARD TO STAKEHOLDERS FROM DEVELOPING COUNTRIES)

Increasing developing country participation

Additional efforts need to be made to reach out to representatives from developing country governments and civil society. This should be considered early in the IGF 2011 planning cycle and efforts to secure financial resources for developing country participation should be increased. The ITU scholarship fund is useful in this respect, but it is quite opaque, particularly to new IGF participants. Efforts should be made to ensure that information about the fund, how and when to apply, the selection criteria, and successful applicants, should be open and transparent and should be disseminated in all UN languages.

Increasing delegation of non-governmental members for the MAG

Non-governmental stakeholders are diverse and come from networks and/or institutions or associations that are very different in how they are constituted. We believe that the Civil Society Internet Governance Caucus (IGC) has effective and transparent mechanisms for nominating civil society candidates from within its ranks. This process makes an important contribution to the nomination process. However, there are important civil society stakeholders who are not present or active in the IGF space, or, who have their own representative structures through which they could also nominate non-governmental members for the MAG. This will be particularly important if we want to include stakeholders who should be involved in the IGF but who do not yet participate actively. Such as individuals from human rights organisations, civil society organisations working with communication and development, civil society organisations working on economic development and trade justice, community radio activists, gender advocates, academics from the south. We recommend that the IGF actively reaches out to such groups and include them in the MAG.

Broadening the stakeholder community participating in the IGF

As the internet increasingly impacts all facets of our lives, IGF discussions must increasingly include a broader set of stakeholders. As such, the IGF should have a clear liaison role with regard to informing relevant international processes and institutions of IGF messages and outcomes. For example, with regard to increasing access to the internet, a summary of outcomes and suggestions from the discussions at the IGF should be tabled for discussion in international processes and institutions that deal with policy and regulation that relate to affordable internet access. Other policy communities, particularly those involved in development policy, environmental policy, trade, access to knowledge, human rights and women's right in particular, democratisation and governance should be reached out to.

Remote participation

We encourage the Secretariat and workshop organisers to make greater use of speakers and presenters who participate virtually. We recommend that at least one of the two annual open consultations held to prepare for the IGF be held as online consultations. We suggest thinking of remote participation as "enhanced participation" as a means of achieving a more participative IGF process as a whole. We believe that somewhat more structured formats can assist with this, e.g. the use of rapporteurs in workshops and main sessions, and the consolidation by the rapporteur of any messages that the workshop or main session would like to convey to other internet governance fora and institutions.

9. THEMES FOR THE IGF 2011 AGENDA

Our recommendations include a main session on human rights and a sub-session on accountability and transparency for the next IGF, making spectrum allocation, digital migration and intellectual property central and that the IGF should adopt a sustainable development agenda.

Human rights

There is increasing awareness in the internet governance community of the links between internet governance and human rights. This is evident from the enhanced presence of human rights discussions at the global IGF and also at regional IGFs. We also see an increase in interest by the mainstream human rights community. The time is ripe for a main session on human rights which could serve as a springboard for enhanced cooperation and the IGF is the ideal forum for debate, dialogue and learning.

The IGF needs to reach out to professional human rights workers and mainstream human rights organisations who have expertise in the application and enforcement of human rights. They are key to better understanding how can we ensure that universally-agreed human rights are applied to internet governance – and not overshadowed by unenforceable values and principles.

Given that the internet has a key role in the realisation of a broad range of human rights --such as the right to access information on sexual health and pleasure, the right to privacy including control over personal data and respecting for its contextual integrity, right to safety and protection against sexual harassment and violence online, and the rights to opinion, expression and assembly over the internet-- we hope that the space to discuss these issues will continue to grow at the IGF.

Accountability and transparency

The gradual emergence of the issue of improving accountability and transparency in internet governance is now broadly relevant to a great number of different and diverse stakeholders. The issue has reached a point where there is sufficient critical mass, importance and interest to warrant higher visibility in the IGF agenda, besides intersecting with a variety of issues. It warrants being addressed as a sub-theme in the 2011 IGF.

Access to infrastructure and knowledge

Spectrum allocation, digital migration and intellectual property are all issues that were conspicuous in their absence (intellectual property was somewhat present, but not sufficiently). APC recommends that these issues are brought to the fore next year.

Development agenda

Exploring the internet policy impact on social, economic and human development involves the IGF facilitating dialogue between the internet community and development policy-makers and practitioners, many of whom are not currently engaged with internet governance and policy. An IGF development agenda should embrace the concept of sustainable development.