

Report on improvements to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

Preliminary contributions

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1. Introduction/setting the scene

Making suggestions on IGF improvements is not an easy task. On the one hand, zooming the analysis too much may divert us from the real challenges and make us get lost among procedural details. On the other hand, a generalist or theoretical analysis cannot provide practical suggestions of improvement that are currently much needed.

In order to try to strike a balance among the two approaches it might be helpful to start by identifying the main changes that should be introduced in the IGF process in order to allow the forum to better fulfill the goals set forth in the Tunis agenda.

In our opinion, the measures taken to improve the IGF should be based on three fundamental goals:

1) To allow the IGF to be an important and integral part of the process of public policy making regarding Internet issues.

On this regard, it is important to stress that If enhanced cooperation is indeed implemented, the complementarity between the IGF and enhanced cooperation needs to be better defined. Despite the fact that enhanced cooperation is being discussed at DESA, the CSTD WG should not avoid touching on the issue of defining what this "complementarity" mean, as this may have a decisive impact on the IGF.

2) The urgent need to increase the participation of developing countries and key-players who have not been involved in the IGF process so far

3) The need to see the IGF as a process, that should take place constantly throughout thin year, in face-to-face meetings or online

2. Format of the IGF meetings

The IGF represents an innovation when it comes to fostering openness and participation in meetings with global scope. This worked very well for the discussions of internet governance issues. Innovative principles have become rules of procedure among participants that are worth preserving and reinforcing in the future, such as:

- Multistakeholder participation, on equal footing
- No need for accreditation to take part in the meeting, only simple online registration
- Room for bottom-up articulation among participants, which allowed the emergence of Dynamic Coalitions, the possibility to organize workshops in accordance with the interests and needs of the community and the proliferation of regional and national IGFs.
- Openness for worldwide participation in all IGF sessions through remote participation.

Having said that, there is room for improvement in IGF proceedings, in order to rend the discussions more efficient and to optimize the schedule of the meeting:

2.1. General observation

a) All the main themes chosen for the IGF meetings expressed vital concerns, but were formulated in terms that were too generic. The Secretariat and the MAG could work together with regional and national IGF organizers to identify priorities that could be translated into more objective terms.

2.2. Workshops

a) Although the efforts of people who volunteer to organize IGF workshops should be recognized and valued, there has to be a stricter evaluation of workshops proposals, which takes into account the following points, among others: i) the need to reduce the average number of workshops; ii) presence of representatives from all stakeholder groups, who really work with the topics under discussions. Artificial multistakeholderism in workshops (when representatives from stakeholder groups are only invited to comply with a formality) should be avoided; iii) taking into account the time allocated for the workshop, evaluate if the number of speakers would allow meaningful debate. Avoid an exaggerated number of speakers per workshop; iv) check if workshop organizers have complied with the requests from the secretariat in a timely manner (ex: if they appointed the name of a rapporteur and of a moderator for remote participation - see item e).

b) A template for workshop proposals should be developed, in a way that proposals are presented in a more uniform manner, which would render evaluation easier.

c) In order to allow remote participation in all IGF sessions it is necessary to have someone in the room that will receive the questions and comments sent online by remote participants and voice them in the session. This person needs to receive some basic instructions in advance that will allow him/her to use the platform for interaction

with remote participants. The Remote Participation Working Group (www.igfremote.info) has volunteered to provide information and training, but the names and contacts of remote moderators need to be made available by workshop organizers in a timely manner.

d) Participants (both in situ and remote participants) should be able to give feedback and evaluate online the workshops they have attended, leaving comments and suggestions for workshop organizers. That would help to improve the quality of workshops.

e) Workshop organizers should appoint rapporteurs that would be responsible to summarize the main positions advanced in the workshop, and their pros and cons, with a special focus positions that could be translated into different policy options.

f) Wrap-up workshops that would congregate rapporteurs from workshops with thematic affinity should be held in order to discuss and organize the inputs that will be forwarded into the main sessions (see also item 2.3).

g) A more detailed and comprehensive report on the workshops should be made available online by workshop organizers, in accordance with a template developed by the secretariat. Failure to comply with this requirement in due time should be taken into account if the workshop organizers presents another workshop proposal on the next year.

2.3. Connection between workshops and main sessions

The connection between workshops and main sessions needs to be improved. Steps in this direction have been taken in the past years, but more needs to be done.

In recent IGFs, main sessions have been regarded by many as less interesting parts of the meetings. Reporting-backs from workshops that are merely a description of discussions, or inviting the same panelists to speak every year is something that may drive participants away from main sessions. The role of workshops and of main sessions, as well as the connection between them, should be made clearer.

a) In our opinion, workshops and main sessions have distinct roles. While the workshops are usually forums for more focused and in depth debate of specific issues, main sessions could be an important forum to allow workshop rapporteurs to share with others the positions summarized by them, and to allow experts on the field to debate correlations between issues that may have been debated in different workshops, such as, for instance, network neutrality and access to knowledge.

b) In the face of what has been said above, a more neat separation should be made between main sessions and workshops that would give participants the opportunity to take part in both.

c) Assistance to cover travel costs should be able for experts from developing and less developed countries, so they can be panelists in main sessions. This would help to ensure a more balanced regional representation in main sessions. These speakers could also take part in workshops, if organizers want to invite them, contributing to diversity in workshops as well.

3. Shaping the outcome of IGF meetings

One of the main goals of the IGF process is to contribute with policy development, specially on the global level. For that, it is important that the IGF produces more concrete and objective outcomes that could serve as input for the development of policies by other bodies. Some of the changes that could help achieve this goal are suggested below.

a) IGF workshops need to be better documented (see 2.2, e), with main positions (specially policy positions) being identified by a rapporteur and forwarded to main sessions for further and wider debate.

b) A strengthen MAG (see item 6.2) could analyze the summaries of IGF discussions - both what has been pointed out by workshops rapporteurs and discussed in main sessions - and translate this valuable but rough material into messages about policy proposals to be shared with relevant decision-making bodies. These messages would have the legitimacy of being advanced and discussed in a Multistakeholder forum and coming from a multistakeholder elected group.

c) IGF messages could be fed into relevant fora dealing with Internet governance issues

d) A dynamic online repository of Best Practices discussed at the IGF should be created and have the possibility to be constantly updated. Best practices can serve as model for local policy development.

4. Working methods of the IGF, in particular improving the preparation process modalities

The IGF should be a process, not a yearly event. The creation of regional and national IGFs was an important way to give more continuity to the debate throughout the year, but IGF working methods and communication mechanisms could be enhanced to allow more openness, diversity and participation.

4.1. Regional and national IGFs

a) Seek the inputs of national and regional IGFs regarding the issues that should be discussed in open consultations, especially the agenda on the IGF, to make sure that points that were regarded as important on the regional and local level are included in the agenda of the meeting. The MAG could establish a close dialogue with regional and national IGF organizers, to make sure that a feedback relation is created and that

information flows on both ways - from regional to the global level and from the IGF to regional meetings.

b) Foster periodical meetings (that can be carried out online) with the participation of the organizers of national and regional IGFs

4.2. Communication

It is important to notice that very positive actions were taken by at the secretariat in order to improve communication with the IGF community, such as reforming the website and using social media, such as Facebook and YouTube. Nevertheless, a more coherent strategy for communication should be put in place, if outreach is a important goal to be achieved on the next years.

a) Improvement of the IGF website. Maybe the IGF Secretariat could take advantage from the expertise of the Division for Public Administration and development-DESA, particularly on e-government standards. Three points to be taken into account on this improvement are: i) A section could be created for the national and regional IGFs, where they would be able to share news and reports; ii) an easy online way to seek input from stakeholders regarding specific matters, such as the agenda of the meeting should be put in place; iii) The website could encompass a section in which representatives of different stakeholders could talk among themselves and reach a more round understanding of issues in-between the open consultation meetings. These discussions could take place throughout the year, with the possibility of meaningful participation of people who cannot make it to the Open Consultations in Geneva

4.3. Open consultations

4.3.1. The need to improve remote participation

a) At least one of the open consultations should take place as an online meeting. Online meetings can not only be more eco-friendly, but also more efficient, and can foster more equal participation among regions.

Planning meetings, such as the open consultations, are very important, as they decisively shape the agenda on the next IGF. Several documents that present an evaluation of the IGF, such as the note by the Secretary-general, mention that the agenda of the meeting needs to be more socially and development oriented. It is easy to understand why developmental issues are not so mainstreamed, if one takes a look at the participants of open consultations. There is a great majority of people from developed countries, who put forward their own legitimate concerns, which may not coincide with the issues faced in developing countries. The fact that all the meetings take place in Geneva and that developing country representatives have to deal with scarce resources are also obstacles.

One example of the inclusive potential of remote participation may be illustrative. Last IGF, only 5% of the people who physically attended were from South America. But 25%

of the remote participants were from the same region, showing that lack of resources is more significant than lack of interest when it comes to participation in IGF process.

b) The actual dynamics of remote participation should continue to be improved, so remote participants will have more impact on discussions and equal chance to intervene and make their voices heard.

4.3.2. Identifying topics of interest

a) Early each year, in Open Consultations, participants should identify key global policy areas that require attention. Working groups coordinated by MAG members could be created around these areas. These working groups could share background material and discuss them in thematic sessions that could be carried out online throughout the year, with the aim to prepare for more in depth discussion at the IGF.

b) Organizations that are part of the IG ecosystem could be invited to share a document with their suggestions on specific thematic issues. This will improve the inputs that go into the IGF

5. Financing the Forum (exploring further voluntary options for financing)

The Financing of the IGF should be transparent and should not hinder the independence of its Secretariat. It is important to consider the following, among other suggestions:

a) Assigning public UN funds that would constitute the main source of IGF funding

b) Allowing private voluntary donations to the IGF from all stakeholders, since they are made in a transparent manner

c) The Secretariat should present periodic reports of funds received and their expenditure.

d) Consider the possibility that private organizations in the IG ecosystem, such as ICANN, contribute with a small percentage of their budgets to fund the IGF.

6. Functioning of the IGF secretariat

Under this topic, we would like to make suggestions both about the functioning of the IGF secretariat and the MAG.

6.1. The secretariat

The Secretariat of the IGF and the chair have done a remarkable work during the past few years, with the necessary openness to receive inputs from stakeholders, and also with the ability and experience to moderate debates in such a diverse group of participants.

a) The secretariat should continue to preserve its ability to innovate and the political space it currently has to act in a more flexible way, if compared to the secretariat of other UN bodies. Openness to innovation and flexibility are necessary to constructively deal with the Multistakeholder culture of the IGF.

b) The secretariat should reinforce its political independence from stakeholders. One important way to achieve that is to secure public UN funding to the IGF, as discussed above in question 5.

6.2. The MAG

The MAG needs to be more than a committee to discuss the program and the infrastructure for the next IGF. The competences of the MAG should be enlarged, its legitimacy should be strengthened and its internal dynamics should be rendered more efficient.

a) The election of non-governmental members for the MAG needs to be more transparent and to guarantee that the wide range of interests of this diverse group are indeed represented. It is worth to analyze and drive lessons from successful methods for electing non-governmental members of Multistakeholder bodies, such as the one put forth by the Brazilian Internet Steering Committee.

b) The periodicity of the rotation of MAG members needs to be further discussed. Good suggestions have been advanced about it in the MAG questionnaire and need to be reviewed.

c) The members of the MAG should approve an annual working plan and implementations strategy on the beginning of every year, right after the first round of open consultations.

d) Sub-committees could be created in the MAG. These committees could have an administrative nature, such as a coordinating committee, or deal with more substantive themes that are agreed to be priority in the beginning of the year (see 4.3.2)

e) MAG should have an important role in the process of identifying policy messages from the IGF. The valuable but rough summaries of workshops discussions and main sessions need to be translated into a language and format that could serve as input for policy development in other fora. An elected and legitimate MAG could perform this role.

7.Outreach to and cooperation with other organisations and fora dealing with IG issues

7.1. Enhanced cooperation

It is fundamental to stress that if enhanced cooperation is indeed implemented, the complementarity between the IGF and enhanced cooperation need to be better defined.

In our view, multistakeholder participation on shaping policy issues should be preserved not only as a principle, but as a necessity in the field of Internet governance. The development of the Internet governance regime was different from the development of other regimes in the international level and counted on the decisive involvement from the private sector, civil society and the technical community. On very simple terms, better policies can be developed if this diversity of views is taken into account.

One possible suggestion to characterize this "complementary" between the IGF and enhanced cooperation specific the demand for specific policies should emerge from bottom-up, being put forth in the IGF. The IGF is a forum in which ideas can be examined by a Multistakeholder group of participants and submitted to qualified debate and scrutiny. After being translated into policy inputs by the MAG, a message about policy-making could be examined by this forum for enhanced cooperation, responsible for actual policy drafting and serving as umbrella for global agreements on the matter at stake.

7.2. Outreach with organizations and fora dealing with IG issues

In order to cooperate with other organizations in substantial policy matters, the IGF needs to produce clear outcomes from its proceedings, as suggested in the comments made to question 3.

a) The MAG should map the constellation of organizations and fora that have an impact on IG, map the current issues they are discussing and inform the IGF community about it.

b) The MAG should make sure that the policy messages from the IGF reach the organizations mentioned above

c) Opportunity should be given for other organizations to present contributions to the open consultations, including on the discussion about priorities for the next IGF.

d) The impact of the IGF on decision-making organizations of the IG ecosystem need to be strengthened. One important avenue yet to be fully explored is the cooperation between the IGF and the CSTD, main responsible for WSIS follow-up. CSTD could take into account messages sent from the IGF in its annual resolution.

e) The cooperation with other fora should be equally encouraged. The General Assembly resolution on Information and communication technologies for development that deals with the renewal of IGF mandate encourages in paragraph 10 that UN funds, programs and specialized agencies contribute to the outcome of WSIS. The links between the IGF and UN organizations need to be strengthened accordingly.

8. Inclusiveness of the IGF process and of participation at the IGF meetings (in particular with regard to stakeholders from developing countries)

The note by the Secretary-General on the continuation of the IGF recommends that the General Assembly invites member States to provide additional funding to increase the participation of developing countries in the IGF. Additional funding should be employed in capacity building, remote participation and on increasing physical attendance.

8.1. Capacity Building

a) institutional focus should be placed on institutional capacity building (governments - with emphasis on policy makers - and civil society organizations), rather than on individual capacity. There are capacity building organizations that focus on individuals.

b) Take advantage of the expertise of the Division for Public Administration and development (DESA) for capacity building, both online and offline

8.2. Increasing physical participation

a) An outreach strategy should be developed by the MAG and the secretariat to bring to the IGF process key-groups that have not yet been included. In parallel, communication should be established with outsiders to understand the real barriers for participation in the IGF process.

b) Travel funding should be available to people from developing countries (with special emphasis on developing country policy makers), taking into account clear criteria, such as, for instance, age, gender and whether a particular group works with the marginalized key-groups that need to be included in the IGF process.

c) Open opportunity to apply for funding, widely announced among interested people, specially the ones from developing countries. Transparent and timely decisions regarding the funding is important

8.3. Remote attendance

Remote participation has been a very important way to increase the involvement of people that otherwise could not follow the IGF meetings, due to several reasons, such as lack of financial and human resources, time constraints or mobility issues.

During IGF meetings interested people are able to take individually, from home or office, or they can gather in IGF hubs. The hubs are local meetings where the participants are able not only to watch the webcast of the IGF but also to interact with the meeting. Also, and more importantly, participants are be able to discuss the themes covered by the IGF from a local perspective with others from their own region. The Forum serves as a stimulus or a starting point for the debate of local issues and implications and for the development of a network of interested people in every region.

According to statistics about the IGF Vilnius, made available by the IGF secretariat, 1299 people participated remotely and 81% among them were from developing countries (<http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/2010/Stats.2010.pdf>)

Due to its importance, remote participation should be regarded as an integral part of the IGF. In addition to that, it should be made available in the IGF process as a whole, not only in the meetings per se.

a) In all IGF meetings, MAG meetings and open consultations, webcast, recording and captioning should be available, as well as options for remote participation

b) Remote participation should be formally recognized as an integral part of the IGF. Due to the importance that remote participation has gained in IGF meetings, the secretariat should not rely only on voluntaries to provide remote participation. Technical, financial and human resources to put in place remote participation should be provided.

c) Tools and techniques should be used to enhance remote participation, giving participants the opportunity to effectively influence agenda-setting and IGF debates. Some innovative ideas are being put in place in EuroDIG this year, with the support of fellows from DiploFoundation.

d) The participation of remote speakers should be encouraged. In IGF Vilnius, representatives from civil society as well as parliamentarians were able to deliver their presentations online. This contributes to the diversity of stakeholder and regional views on the panel.

9. Conclusions and recommendations

NA