

MAG Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy (WG-strategy) proposals on strategic improvements to the IGF and operational measures in 2021

Version 3.1, January 22, 2021.

[1. About this document: General considerations and objectives](#)

[2. A more inclusive IGF](#)

[3. A more strategic IGF](#)

[3.1 Multi-year IGF planning for 2021 to 2025](#)

[4. A more impactful IGF](#)

[4.1 Adopt a more consistent issue-driven approach to IGF programme development](#)

[4.2 Strengthen, develop and integrate the IGF's intersessional activities](#)

[4.3 Consolidated integration of national legislators through an IGF Parliamentary Track](#)

[4.4 Consolidate liaison with decision-making bodies](#)

[4.5 Strengthen communications strategies and mechanisms](#)

[5. A sustainable IGF](#)

[5.1 Financial sustainability](#)

[Annex 1: Proposals for IGF2021 process and design](#)

[1. A more focused and inter-connected IGF agenda](#)

[2. Suggestions regarding workshops](#)

[3. Intersessional work](#)

[4. Format and phases](#)

[5. Capturing and communicating messages/outcomes](#)

[About the MAG Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy](#)

1. About this document: General considerations and objectives

The UN Secretary General published the [Roadmap for Digital Cooperation](#) in June 2020 with the aim of reporting the state of play of follow up on the recommendations included in the [report of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation](#) (HLPDC) and proposing action points for the way forward. In relation to Recommendations 5A and B (on the architecture of global digital cooperation) of the HLPDC report, the Roadmap included a set of proposals to make the IGF more responsive and relevant to current digital issues.

Global digital cooperation (from paragraph 93 of the [Roadmap for Digital Cooperation](#))

93. While discussions on the different digital architecture models proposed by the Panel are ongoing among stakeholders, the following ideas have emerged with a view to making the Internet Governance Forum more responsive and relevant to current digital issues. These include:

- (a) Creating a strategic and empowered multi-stakeholder high-level body, building on the experience of the existing multi-stakeholder advisory group, which would address urgent issues, coordinate follow-up action on Forum discussions and relay proposed policy approaches and recommendations from the Forum to the appropriate normative and decision-making forums;
- (b) Having a more focused agenda for the Forum based on a limited number of strategic policy issues;
- (c) Establishing a high-level segment and ministerial or parliamentary tracks, ensuring more actionable outcomes;
- (d) Forging stronger links among the global Forum and its regional, national, subregional and youth initiatives;
- (e) Better integrating programme and intersessional policy development work to support other priority areas outlined in the present report;
- (f) Addressing the long-term sustainability of the Forum and the resources necessary for increased participation, through an innovative and viable fundraising strategy, as promoted by the round table;
- (g) Enhancing the visibility of the Forum, including through a stronger corporate identity and improved reporting to other United Nations entities.

In December 2020, after a successful IGF held in November 2020, the IGF MAG issued a call for [suggestions for improvements for IGF 2021](#). This document, developed by the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) 2020 Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy (WG-strategy) during December 2020 and January 2021 responds to this call, as well as to the broader discussion on the future of Internet governance and digital cooperation. It is submitted to the IGF MAG and Secretariat for their consideration and will also be shared with the UN Secretary General and UNDESA. It should be read together with the WG-strategy's earlier [Response to the paper on "Options for the Future of Digital Cooperation"](#)¹ and includes the WG-strategy's vision for a more strategic, inclusive and impactful IGF and suggests specific actions that the IGF MAG and Secretariat can undertake to:

- a) Make a first attempt to *implement some of the proposed changes to the IGF suggested in the UN's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation* towards achieving a more impactful IGF, in other words, an IGF+;
- b) Affirm and build on the existing achievements of the IGF process;

¹ This Options Paper was produced by the co-champions for taking recommendations regarding the architecture for digital cooperation (Recommendation 5 A/B) in the report of the UN SG's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation.

- c) Recognise and consolidate the IGF's positive characteristics such as its openness and "bottom-up" nature; and,
- d) Achieve a more inclusive IGF with improved participation of, inter alia, governments, youth and the wider Internet Community.

The document includes reflections and proposals on broader IGF strategy, strengthening and development, focusing on the Roadmap process and the IGF's current mandate which expires in 2025. Concrete proposals to the MAG and Secretariat for the planning and design of the 2021 IGF are in Annex 1. It should be noted that the dimensions addressed below are all interconnected. A more strategic and inclusive IGF will result in a more impactful IGF, and a more impactful IGF will contribute, over time, to a more sustainable IGF.

The actions proposed take into account previous suggestions on strengthening the IGF, including those developed by:

- Previous MAG working groups;
- The Commission for Science and Technology for Development's Working Group on IGF Improvements; and,
- The 2016 IGF Retreat organised by UNDESA.

Only four annual meetings of the global IGF remain before the mandate is up for renewal in 2025 and the MAG, together with the Secretariat, need to demonstrate early progress in strengthening the IGF and in responding to the proposals in the Roadmap and related documents.

2. A more inclusive IGF

The WG-strategy considers maintaining and further improving the IGF's inclusive and multistakeholder nature as of fundamental importance. Strengthening participation and diversity in the entire IGF process (including in the intersessional modalities and the NRIs - National and Regional IGF Initiatives) is an ongoing task for all involved. The WG recognises the enormous effort that has been made to make the IGF inclusive and grow it into the most successful current Internet governance-related global forum in terms of the diversity, range and number of participants. The last two IGFs (2019 and 2020), each attracted over 6000 participants. In 2020 a total of 6136 from 173 countries² registered for the event. Developing country participation was impressive as indicated by the regional breakdown of participants: Africa - 15%; Asia-Pacific - 17%; Eastern Europe - 12%; Latin America and the Caribbean - 13%; and Western Europe and Others (this includes North America - 35%). Participants from international organisations (IGOs) made up 8% of the total.³ At least 50% of participants (other than from IGOs) in the 2020 IGF came from developing countries. Nevertheless there is a need to increase participation from the global south, particularly from least developed countries and small island developing states. The IGF also needs greater participation from governments and policy makers, as well as from the private sector and youth. Gender balance has improved dramatically and remains important. The participation of women and gender diverse people should continue to be encouraged. In 2020 52% of participants identified as male, 47% as female and 1% chose not to be identified as either. The IGF needs to attract new participants from the broader Internet community, such as, researchers from the fields of science, technology, and the humanities, the open source community, human rights defenders, start-ups, etc.. It also needs to include people who are not Internet specialists, but who deal with Internet related issues and whose

² From https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/filedepot_download/10794/2357, IGF2020 summary report.

³ <https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2020-participation-and-programme-statistics>

perspectives can enrich Internet governance debates, such as, for example, people working on climate change and environmental sustainability.

There is strong consensus that youth integration and participation is essential, but not through a siloed approach. In other words, youth engagement should be enabled in all parts of the IGF process, including in intersessional work and in IGF programme shaping as well as at the global forum. The WG-strategy proposes that:

- The MAG organises a consultation with the youth IGF initiatives and current programmes that support youth participation to develop a combined strategy for strengthening youth integration and sustaining it over time. Potential participants in this consultation include the Youth Observatory, Youth4DigitalSustainability, Youth Coalition on Internet Governance, Diplo, ISOC Ambassadors, ICANN Next Gen, and the organisers of schools of IG.

An inclusive IGF requires a multi-faceted approach. Inclusion is linked to participation, and to participants having a sense of ownership of the process. Access to information and communication and outreach enables participation, and improving the functionalities of the IGF website (planned for 2021 with support from the UK government) could play a major role in increasing this ownership and making the IGF process more accessible and inclusive.

To a large extent the IGF has relied on the open call for session proposals (with successful proposers organising these sessions themselves) to create this sense of ownership and this has succeeded, but to some extent at the expense of focused discussion and outcomes. Going forward, the WG-strategy recommends that the MAG:

- Consider using the call for issues, and further discussion of these issues to generate IGF community/stakeholder inclusion and ownership of the programme.
- Adapt the workshop planning format to enable more collaboration between different institutions and actors as opposed to an approach where one or two institutions “own” a session.
- Combine dealing with a narrower set of policy questions with an approach that looks at these questions from diverse perspectives.
- Improve the IGF website and in particular functionalities that allow it to serve as a platform for collaborative work and a source of information about the IGF process and Internet governance in general.

The WG-strategy elaborates on these suggestions in more detail in Annex 1 to this document.

3. A more strategic IGF

A strategic IGF, in the vision of the WG-strategy, is an IGF that is a known, open and accessible platform for sharing information on all aspects of digital cooperation, including Internet governance. It sees the IGF as providing the institutional framework for improving global digital cooperation, facilitating continuity on past work, and for strengthening the exchange of information on all aspects of digital cooperation.⁴ The WG-strategy considers several elements included in the Options Paper as fundamental to the way forward and to the evolution of the IGF + model:

- Raising the profile of the IGF;
- Strengthening its inclusiveness across all geographies and stakeholder groups;
- Devising and implementing a professional and targeted communications and outreach strategy;

⁴ From the WG-strategy’s response to the “Options Paper” submitted in September 2020. https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/filedepot_download/10447/2267

- Avoiding duplication of existing structures or creation of new structures, but rather building on existing structures of the IGF such as the Dynamic Coalitions (DCs) and Best Practice Forums (BPFs);
- Establishing a professional and dedicated fundraising structure.

In this respect, it recommends a sequenced and gradual way forward, to first build on the strengths of the IGF to achieve the discussed IGF+ model, then consider what – if any – further elements should be added to this structure.⁵

In order to better address gaps in digital cooperation and promote a governance architecture that is more inclusive, effective and accountable, the IGF should become better at locating itself strategically in the growing terrain of Internet-related policy challenges and debate. A strategically positioned IGF also needs to have the capacity to be visible in the digital cooperation landscape and to play a role in setting the digital cooperation agenda.

A key building block for a more strategic IGF would be the systematic development and execution of (and reporting on) a targeted multi-year plan. Additionally, measures aimed at ensuring strengthened impact and sustainability are intrinsically related to the design of a more strategic IGF – these are detailed in sections 4 and 5 below.

WG-strategy members believe that the strategic relevance and positioning of the IGF can be strengthened through:

- a) Developing a multi-year plan in an inclusive manner and sharing the plan publicly as well as modifications to it;
- b) The IGF focusing on fewer issues, in greater depth, but also retaining the agility to integrate emerging and urgent issues;
- c) This more focused approach being reflected in the agenda of the annual forum;
- d) Strengthening the organisation and outputs of intersessional modalities (National, Regional and Youth IGF Initiatives, Dynamic Coalitions, Best Practice Forums) and where relevant emerging new modalities and work streams;
- e) More effective articulation and interconnection between intersessional modalities and work streams and the annual forum.

3.1 Multi-year IGF planning for 2021 to 2025

The WG-strategy suggests the MAG and the Secretariat develop, during 2021, a multi-year plan for the remaining years of the current IGF mandate. This plan can take the following into account:

- Implementation of the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and the IGF's role in supporting digital cooperation broadly;
- Internet-governance related (directly or indirectly) international decision-making processes, ranging from treaties and negotiations taking place in the UN system and in other international fora (such as G20, G8, ITU, etc.) to decisions made in multistakeholder bodies (e.g. ICANN), by industry bodies, or sector specific spaces (such as those of the private sector, technical community or civil society);
- Priorities for the IGF identified through input from IGF stakeholders;
- Multi-year planning defined by individual DCs and BPFs and, where applicable, NRIs;
- The bottom-up process where all communities would express their proposal.

⁵ The text is also taken from the WG-strategy's response to the "Options Paper" submitted in September 2020. https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/filedepot_download/10447/2267

The WG-strategy proposes that:

- The IGF MAG and the IGF Secretariat develop a draft multi-year plan that will be submitted to the UNSG for approval and finalisation.
- The plan anticipates key policy areas for the IGF to address in the coming years and considers continuity and further engagement on topics/discussions of the previous year, to avoid each year's IGF programme development starting from scratch.
- Input for the plan can be provided by stakeholders through a public consultation process.
- NRIs and other intersessional IGF modalities contribute to the development of the plan and share their own multi year plans for inclusion in the overall IGF multi-year plan.
- A draft version of the 2021-2025 plan is shared on the IGF website and finalised in a public IGF session.
- Reporting on the 2021-2025 multi-year plan takes place annually with the plan being updated for the following year at the end of each annual cycle.
- That it should include plans for the annual forum and IGF intersessional activities and include new activities emerging from the Roadmap process.

4. A more impactful IGF

4.1 Adopt a more consistent issue-driven approach to IGF programme development

The WG-strategy agrees with the recommendation in the Roadmap that the IGF agenda should be more focused. Greater impact can be achieved by dealing with fewer policy issues in greater depth, making sure that relevant stakeholders participate in discussing these issues, and that the outcomes of the discussions are communicated effectively and strategically. The WG-strategy proposes that the MAG builds on the current approach used for developing thematic tracks to consolidate an “issue-driven” approach as the basis for building the annual programme. This is not an entirely new approach, but it will involve some adaptation of the steps used by the MAG to design the programme and call for, and select, workshop proposals.

4.2 Strengthen, develop and integrate the IGF's intersessional activities

An important aspect of the IGF's impact, particularly at national, regional and sectoral levels takes place through the IGF's intersessional modalities, the work they do and the many people and institutions that participate in them. These include the NRIs, BPFs, and DCs. Strengthening the impact of the IGF can be achieved by integrating the intersessional activities more closely with the agenda of the global forum, and the other way round.

WG-strategy members feel that the activities and outputs of these modalities can be more closely linked with the IGF's multi-year plan and annual issue-driven agenda. However the WG also recognises that one of the strengths of these modalities is that they are organised by the people and institutions that participate in them, and that they should continue to be able to determine their own priorities.

The WG-strategy therefore proposes that:

- Intersessional work should have clear objectives and timelines, which are aligned with the IGF multi-year planning.
- Closer integration with the IGF's issue-driven agenda should be encouraged and facilitated but not be compulsory. The relative independence of these modalities should be retained.

- The differences between the various intersessional modalities need to be clarified and clearly explained on the IGF website. How the different modalities contribute to building an IGF+ should be given careful consideration.
- DCs can be considered as long-term think tank reserves of the IGF process, dedicated to one or more Internet governance issues, and driven by a desire for collaboration among a set of IGF community members. Their independent and longer-term horizon shouldn't prevent them from contributing - when it is appropriate - to the focal policy questions of the year, and they should be encouraged to do so.
- BPFs offer a platform to facilitate stakeholder dialogue and collect emerging and existing practices, share experiences and flag challenges that require additional multistakeholder dialogue and/or require the attention of policy makers. The 'BPF on BPFs' compiled a set of [recommendations to enhance future BPF work](#), including suggestions to enhance cooperation with other IGF activities and workstreams.

The WG-strategy believes that there are unused opportunities to connect the intersessional work by BPFs and DCs with discussions in workshops, main sessions and high-level sessions on the same or related topics at the annual event. Feeding in intersessional work, especially into main and high-level sessions, can enrich the discussions, and, in return raise awareness of their outputs, improve the feedback-loop between intersessional expert discussions and more high-level discussions, increase the chances that intersessional work outputs find their way to other fora and decision-making bodies.

In addition, intersessional activities could be a suitable place to continue topical discussions or further explore issues raised at the annual meeting. Intersessional work can be an opportunity for exploring policy questions in more detail and to report back to the subsequent IGF.

4.3 Consolidated integration of national legislators through an IGF Parliamentary Track

The Working Group endorses the idea of building a standing Parliamentary track in the IGF and proposes that Parliamentarians are considered and treated as a special stakeholder group in the context of the IGF+.

National laws on Internet related public policy issues constitute an important part of the regulatory framework for the global Internet Governance Ecosystem. Parliamentarians at national and regional level are working on proposals and laws dealing with several aspects related to Internet Governance issues as cybersecurity, Internet standards, data protection, telecommunication, social media, content moderation, intellectual property, artificial intelligence, platform economy, digital taxation, digital education, etc.. At the same time, they often lack the information and capacity to understand the relevant issues, and be able to link global discourse and developments to national considerations. Increasing knowledge and capacity in dealing with Internet governance and digital policy will ultimately contribute to more informed policy making. And the IGF can be a suitable venue where, in addition to discussing digital issues, parliamentarians can involve with other stakeholders.

The IGF could provide parliamentarians with the opportunity to share "good practices" across issues and regions. By enhancing interaction and knowledge-sharing among MPs, in a context where other stakeholders are also present, the IGF will allow legislators to raise the efficiency of their work and to find the right balance between meeting specific national needs and contributing to an open and accessible Internet globally.

The WG-strategy's position and proposals are elaborated in the "[Non Paper - Building a Parliamentary track in IGF +](#)" drafted by WG-strategy member Wolfgang Kleinwächter and therefore recommends:

- The establishment of an “Informal Parliamentary IGF Group” (IPIG) to enhance communication, collaboration and inter-sessional work among MPs.
- NRIs organize similar initiatives at national and regional level.

4.4 Consolidate liaison with decision-making bodies

Impact is also achieved through close and consistent liaison between the IGF and decision-making bodies from all stakeholder groups and sectors, including governments. Liaison between the IGF and decision-making bodies and processes already exists, but can be more consistent, systematic and outcome oriented. Some of the approaches adopted to strengthen liaison with NRIs and youth could be helpful in achieving this, for example, through the Secretariat including staff whose primary function is to look after liaison with decision-making bodies from all stakeholder groups, including governments. Liaison with decision-making bodies should take place throughout the entire IGF annual work cycle including the preparatory process; intersessional modalities and work; the annual forum itself; and, in particular, the outcomes of the annual forum and intersessional modalities.

The WG-strategy has engaged in extensive discussion on strengthening the interaction between the IGF and decision-making bodies. This discussion is reflected in the WG-strategy’s [“priorities document”](#). Key recommendations made in this document include:

- Integrate multi-directional communication between the IGF and decision-making bodies into the evolution of the IGF.
- Regarding the implementation of 93 (a) and the role the proposed MHLB would play in bridging the gap to decision-making entities we refer to our [“Response to the paper on “Options for the Future of Digital Cooperation”](#), and the options for implementation of the MHLB contained therein.
- MAG members from the different stakeholder groups should proactively engage with their communities in order to secure buy-in into the program-development process.
- Specific and continuous outreach to governments should be undertaken by the IGF-Secretariat and the MAG to secure their active participation in intersessional work, main sessions and high level sessions, and workshops, e.g. with the occasion of intergovernmental events such as CSTD, WSIS-Forum etc.
- High-level sessions and main sessions should be equally linked to the program and aspire to secure the widest and highest-level representation from all stakeholder groups as possible.
- Invitations to secure participation of high-level representatives from all stakeholder groups should be sent out as early as possible, and in any case 6 months before the IGF takes place. Tailored follow-up actions will be undertaken with the support of MAG members.
- Decision-making bodies should be invited to join the “issue-teams” mentioned below.

4.5 Strengthen communications strategies and mechanisms

The WG-strategy sees better promotion and communication of IGF outcomes, including the outcomes of the intersessional work and of the annual forum, as key to achieving greater impact. Communicating IGF outcomes and packaging them for specific audiences is essential in order to ensure uptake of these outcomes by relevant fora and stakeholders. The WG-strategy proposes the development by the MAG together with the Secretariat of:

- A communications plan linked to the multi-year plan. This plan should include periodic contacts with press and media and include the use of social media and networks, throughout the year in order to reach a wider audience. The WG-strategy recommends that this task is taken on as soon as possible and that it includes dissemination of IGF2020 outcomes.

- It's recommended that the communications plan has different layers or sub-plans, for example for general information (including the preparatory process), the IGF meeting (announcements, promote sessions, distribute highlights), post-IGF (IGF messages, outputs, but also support for BPFs to distribute their outputs, etc).
- That the proposed redeveloped IGF website is used as a strategic opportunity to raise the visibility of the IGF and strengthen its role as a platform for cooperation and a source of information on Internet governance processes and capacity building opportunities.

5. A sustainable IGF

5.1 Financial sustainability

Urgent fund-raising strategy and efforts are needed. Many proposals in this document can only be implemented effectively if additional resources are secured.

UN DESA's [January 2021 recruitment process](#) for a dedicated fundraising consultant is a very welcome step which should allow the Secretariat to expand the pool of donors and explore new ways of raising funds.

One avenue the fundraiser should pursue is partnerships with philanthropic organizations with interest in supporting work on Internet governance, including those that are engaging with the Roundtable process to implement the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation.

It would also be helpful to explore possibilities for enabling tax-deductible donations, and to ensure that stakeholders are aware of any subsequent arrangements put in place. According to the UN Charter and related legal instruments and financial regulations, non-governmental donor contributions to the UN are not permitted to be tax deductible. In 2013, the UN legal staff considered a proposal from the [Tides Foundation](#) that would enable U.S. stakeholders to contribute to IGF Trust Fund via the Tides Foundation and this potential model merits renewed attention by the incoming fundraising consultant.

It would also be valuable for the fundraiser to look into possible mechanisms for "small contributions" in a way that would work under the UN's legal instruments and financial regulations, without the administrative processes required for the 5 and 6-figure donations currently made to the IGF Trust Fund. It should not be underestimated that even small contributions (e.g., \$50-\$500) received from the global Internet Community can add up to a significant amount, as well as increasing the number of financial contributors who will feel further invested in the process by making a financial contribution.

Annex 1: Proposals for IGF2021 process and design

The WG-strategy makes the following suggestions for the MAG to consider in its planning for IGF 2021.

1. A more focused and inter-connected IGF agenda

The WG-strategy supports the idea of a more focused IGF agenda. It also wants to make clear that it believes that efforts to make the IGF agenda more focused should be combined with a bottom-up approach that allows discussions to evolve and to capture the proposals from various stakeholders, regions, sectors, disciplines and constituencies. This is key to the uniqueness of IGF's multistakeholder approach and should not be lost. To achieve a more focused IGF that remains bottom up and inclusive the WG-strategy proposes the following for IGF 2021:

1.1 IGF 2021 should address no more than three focused policy issues or questions, defined by the MAG and based on community input and specific suggestions coming from NRIs, BPFs and DCs. The call for workshop proposals can invite further exploration of these questions from multiple and diverse perspectives. The High Level Leaders Track and Parliamentary can then also address these questions.

1.2 These focused policy questions should be included in the pre-IGF "[Guide to issues and themes](#)" and can potentially also be addressed by discussions convened by, NRIs, Schools of IG, initiatives such as "We, The Internet", national policy networks or sessions at relevant events such as ICANN meetings, the WSIS Forum, RightsCon or meetings of intergovernmental bodies. The results could then feed into the annual IGF.

To balance the need for a more focused agenda and outputs with being an inclusive platform available to IGF stakeholders for global discussion of issues relevant to them, a revised IGF format needs to provide adequate space for the discussion of additional topics (beyond those covered by the focused policy questions). Options for achieving this include:

1.3 Opportunities for "pre or side events" which can cover other issues but which are not linked to the focused policy questions around which the core programme is built.

1.4 An additional "open" or "emerging issue" track to the programme which includes a limited number of slots. The programme will indicate clearly that these sessions are not related to the focused policy questions being addressed and the discussions contributing to the development of key IGF messages for that year. Reports on these sessions can still be included in the body of IGF outputs. This "open" track can also include sessions linked to policy questions that have been identified in the multi-year plan for the following year.

1.5 A limited number of open fora will be also part of the side-events programme.

IGF programme development could be **more comprehensively issue-driven**.

The MAG already works with "issues" as a basis for identifying thematic tracks for the annual forum. Session proposers are already invited to build on this by identifying the specific issues they want to address. The challenge of the current approach is that it can often result in an kind of "issue-soup", with the IGF programme touching on, and identifying a multitude of issues, often quite superficially.

The WG-strategy proposes that:

1.6 The MAG works with issues in a more comprehensive and consistent manner, selecting fewer issues and then analysing and refining these in a manner that integrates diverse perspectives on these issues (including regional, thematic, gender, multidisciplinary and stakeholder-specific perspectives). The process that the WG-strategy suggests could roll out as follows:

1.7 The response to the MAG call for issues can be used as a basis for the MAG to define what two or three policy issues will be dealt with by the annual IGF (main sessions, high level sessions and workshops).

1.8 Once the two or three thematic tracks are defined, “issue-teams” will be established which (with MAG help and facilitation) will define the issues to be discussed, the corresponding policy questions and the approximate number of workshops needed (within the maximum set by the MAG).

1.9 An open call for participating in the organization of the corresponding workshops would then be issued, which would be guided by the work of the “issue-team”.

1.10 The high-level track would also address these issues.

1.11 The preparation of the corresponding main session will build on the workshop organization process, and be oriented to converging all angles and perspectives from the relevant high-level sessions and workshops into the main session, where areas of convergence and divergence would crystallize. This would mean that the programme would need to be planned in such a way that main sessions take place on the final day.

1.12 The results of the discussion would be synthesised by independent reporting teams in the thematic “Katowice IGF Messages” (see 4 below).

1.13 This procedure allows for all interested parties to take part in the discussions, streamlines discussions, and avoids duplications and competition between workshop-“owners” as well as avoids the kind of exclusion which happens in the current system when “your” workshop is not accepted.

Increasing the involvement of relevant decision-making bodies in the planning for IGF 2021 can be linked to the issue-driven program management discussed above. The MAG could invite them to contribute issues, and to participate in “issue teams” and these teams can reach out to them as part of their standard activities.

2. Suggestions regarding workshops

The WG-strategy proposes that the call and selection of workshops be shaped by the comprehensive issue-driven approach outlined above. Related to this it proposes that the MAG:

2.1 Reduce the number of workshops. Several WG-strategy members felt that there should be fewer workshops. However, it was also acknowledged that there is a direct link between participation and the number of workshops. The opportunity to organise sessions at the IGF is a key driver for individuals and institutions to allocate the time and resources needed to participate in the annual forum.

2.2 Avoid duplication of content of workshops. The MAG already does this but the WG-strategy feels it can be done more vigorously. Proposers can be warned beforehand, at

the time of the call, that proposals that focus on the same issues will be asked to collaborate with others or modify their proposals.

2.3 Revisit the practice of 'feeder workshops' from previous IGFs. These were workshops directly linked to one of the main sessions or themes.

2.4 Do more to ensure that all sessions have panellists from all stakeholder groups and different regions and with different perspectives. Special attention to this diversity and inclusion needs to be directed to government-led or big tech-led policy sessions.

2.5 Assign a rapporteur to each workshop (or make it a requirement that the organisers identify a skilled rapporteur) and make it a requirement for the rapporteur to summarise key take aways at the end of the session.

2.6 Be firm about the requirement that all sessions must have at least 50% of the time for Q&A discussion and about 5 to 10 minutes at the end for the rapporteur to summarise key messages/takeaways in response to the questions addressed. Points of divergence and consensus should be highlighted.

3. Intersessional work

Best Practice Forums (BPFs)

While links between the issues that frame the agenda of the annual forum and BPFs are welcome, the WG-strategy does not recommend that they are compulsory. The reason for this is that BPFs, in order to maximise the timeframe for their activities, kick off before the MAG concludes its discussions on the topics and streams for the annual meeting, and because BPFs are expected to develop and follow their own work programme in discussion with the BPF participants. The WG-strategy endorses the findings of the [BPF on BPFs](#), including the recommendations to enhance future BPF work, summarised in the [IGF2020 BPF on BPFs Overview of Recommendations](#).

The WG-strategy proposes that:

3.1 The decision on which BPFs it will support is made at the first MAG meeting of the year Feb 8-12 2021. To be considered, proposed BPFs should have a topic and plan of action in place.

3.2 BPFs are invited to address the issue-driven policy questions that the IGF will address but that doing so is entirely voluntary.

3.3 BPFs are invited to join the above-mentioned "Issue teams".

3.4 hat BPFs continue to evolve as a key component of an IGF+.

National and Regional IGF Initiatives

WG-strategy proposes that:

3.5 NRIs are invited to address the issue-driven policy questions in their own contexts and that they organise a session at the IGF to report back on their perspectives on these questions.

3.6 NRIs are invited to join the above-mentioned "Issue teams".

Youth IGF Initiatives:

WG-strategy proposes that:

3.7 Youth IGF initiatives and other youth structures are invited to address the issue-driven policy questions.

3.8 The MAG convenes the consultation on youth integration mentioned above

Dynamic Coalitions (DCs)

WG-strategy supports the MAG proposal to conduct a learning study of DCs during 2021. It also proposes that:

- 3.9 DCs are invited to address the issue-driven policy questions that the IGF will address.
- 3.10 DCs are invited to join the above-mentioned “Issue teams”.

4. Format and phases

The WG-strategy proposes that the IGF MAG:

- 4.1 Consider designing a hybrid IGF that includes virtual components. The 2020 IGF MAG recommended this during its debrief on the 2020 process.
- 4.2 Use the call for issues to develop a headline programme which can then form the basis for organising sessions (rather than just an open call for workshops).
- 4.3 Make use of intersessional events, including a possible mid-year virtual event which can allow for mid-term presentation of the work of BPFs and deeper engagement on the identified issues and themes. This intersessional event can also serve to create stronger linkages with NRIs.
- 4.4 Rather than just a single day 0 event adopt the format of a slightly longer ‘phase one’ that takes place virtually as was done in 2020 to accommodate pre or side events as proposed above.

5. Capturing and communicating messages/outcomes

A more concise and organized style of reporting from IGF sessions, supported by a work plan to identify, gather, and better market existing outcomes and outputs of the IGF is essential. Great progress has been made in recent years to capture and communicate IGF messages. What does still appear to be lacking is an effective annual communications and outreach strategy (setting out key milestones and deliverables). The WG-strategy proposes the following for 2021:

- 5.1 As was done in 2020 the Secretariat should produce a “Guide to IGF issues and themes” that elaborates the focused policy questions. It can also list stakeholders and institutions to whom these questions/issues are relevant.
- 5.2 Each IGF session linked to the focused policy questions should have an independent rapporteur (ideally identified by the MAG and/or the Secretariat).
- 5.3 Five or ten minutes before the end of the session the rapporteur should read to the room three or four session messages or key takeaways from the discussion and invite participants to comment, before they are submitted to the IGF secretariat after the session. In the proposed scenario with clear policy questions compiled by the MAG, these session messages or key takeaways should be replies to these questions.
- 5.4 Session messages or takeaways should be consolidated into a concise, single set of thematic messages, organized according to the thematic main tracks and policy questions as defined in the pre-meeting Guide to IGF issues and themes.
- 5.5 Depending on the design of the programme, the current practice which is to publish these messages on the final day of the annual forum should be continued, and if possible,

convene a session on the same day (or a few days later) for participants to comment on them before a final version is produced. The opportunity to comment online should also remain.

5.6 The system of session messages or takeaways can replace the short session reports, currently requested within a 12-hour time frame after the session. As has become current practice, a session report should be compiled and submitted by a set deadline after the annual meeting. Rapporteurs should aim to reflect areas of consensus, and any significant areas of disagreement, in a clear, balanced and succinct way. There will be published guidelines about how they should report (for example, not singling out individual organisations, limits on length, guidelines for when and how to report on areas of disagreement etc.)

5.7 The outcomes will strive to be actionable, i.e. identify as far as possible the kinds of decision-making fora which the kinds of actions proposed might relate to.

5.8 When applicable, follow-up actions can be announced during the reporting phase.

About the MAG Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy

<https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/working-group-on-igf-strengthening-and-strategy-wg-strategy>

The MAG Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy was established at the beginning of 2020 to develop proposals for simple implementable short and medium term actions to strengthen the IGF and position it strategically in the evolving digital cooperation landscape. The WG-strategy's starting point is two-fold: The IGF mandate in the TunisAgenda (2005) and the UN Secretary General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation launched (June 2020).

It's scope of work includes developing strategies for:

1. A focused IGF agenda conducive to producing more tangible outcomes and better follow-up on proposed actions and recommendations emerging from IGF-based discussions.
2. IGF recognition, visibility, information and communications and outreach.
3. Increased participation from governments, parliamentarians and leadership from other stakeholder groups.
4. IGF accessibility and inclusiveness in particular to actors from developing countries.
5. IGF-based capacity development
6. Long-term financial sustainability for the IGF

The Working Group has around 60 members made up of MAG members, past MAG members and other individuals from all stakeholder groups who have been active in the IGF process.

During 2020 the WG-strategy held regular calls, produced several documents and convened a series of online discussions (together with the MAG chair) on various aspects of the IGF's mandate and the UN SG's roadmap for digital cooperation. The WG-strategy has resolved to continue its work in 2021.

For more information contact WG-strategy 2020 co-chairs:

Concettina Cassa - cassa@agid.gov.it

Anriette Esterhuysen - anriette@apc.org