

Report on improvements to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

I. Introduction/setting the scene

In setting the scene, the Business representatives believe that background and details about how the IGF was established according to the Tunis Agenda language should be included.

It is also useful to have a short summary of the principles that were inherent in the IGF's establishment, such as

- Non negotiating forum
- Multi stakeholder participation in planning and organizing and reflecting continual innovation in the topics and themes addressed
- Voluntary funding that draws from both countries and the private sector [in the broadest use of that term]
- Coordinated by an independent secretariat service, based in Geneva and supported by a multistakeholder advisory group
- With a balanced representation of governments and other stakeholders

Although the IGF is only five years in existence, it has evolved into an important global event attended by a wide range of stakeholders. The role of the IGF is established by the Tunis Agenda, representing text approved by Heads of State and provides a process where all stakeholders participate on equal footing. In the global IGF, stakeholders, bring their expertise and experiences to the IGF, collaborate while there, in interactive sessions; and leave the IGF with information that is useful in the processes the stakeholders choose to participate in.

More recently, in addition to the important global IGF , national and regional IGFs have evolved in all regions, each distinct to

their own locality, but building on dialogues of the global IGF and providing new input then, back into the global discussions. As national and regional IGF initiatives, such events provide an evolution of the dialogue and reflect the implementation of goals of the Tunis Agenda.

The IGF process should strive to be easy to participate in, simple to contribute to – e.g. to bring data and share experiences, and with increasingly effective mechanisms to bring information back to reflect upon in a localized, national, or regional context.

The IGF has and should continue to support, and inform skills and informational/policy exchanges both within the global IGF, and in other processes that are more national or regional in nature. Accordingly, the mechanisms that are strengthened within the global IGF may benefit from some defined objectives, which should be voluntary, but which should increasingly help to improve the nature and contribution of workshops, best practice forums, and plenary sessions. The Stakeholders and MAG should play a role in proposing such objectives and should seek further public comment on such proposals.

The IGF is not designed to “take over” issues from other processes. It might however, help stakeholders and processes that are independent of each other to exchange experiences in a way so that it makes their dialogues easier and more informed, including by having the opportunity to build on experiences of successes and failures. . Some topics may actually begin and remain with the IGF, as key policy issues in Internet Governance, with outputs that can be considered by other entities, as was envisioned in the creation of the IGF.

II. Format of the IGF meetings

The IGF meetings should be open, transparent, collaborative and inclusive. All stakeholder groups should have the ability to participate. In this regard, in addition to ease of physical participation, remote participation is also essential and is one of the many variables that must be taken into account regarding inclusiveness. Additionally, transcription and archiving of audio and video files is another important mechanism to enable participation through in non-real time.

The format at present includes plenary sessions, workshops, best practice sessions. It may be appropriate to consider adjacent skills enhancing sessions that are more in depth, such as encouraging the adjacent skills/training sessions as pre or post events. Such topics deserve discussion related to the format of the IGF meeting.

The format discussion also should address the number of days of the IGF.

However, we strongly support the open inclusive nature of the meeting itself, avoiding unnecessary protocol, and maintaining the greatest possible openness to all stakeholders to participate on an equal footing.

The IGF itself is contributing to philosophies and practices that other entities may wish to consider adopting, but it is a global event, and this must be continued as a global event.

It is useful to also ensure that national and regional IGFs are one of the reporting in groups into the global IGF.

However, this section of the report should also report on what has happened to date in the five global IGFs, what is consistent, what is unique, and what has emerged as possible congruent or consistent procedures.

IGFs must include real time reporting, transcripts, accessibility for persons with disabilities, remote access/participation. The

format of the meetings will need to reflect sensitivity and accommodations to such features.

A discussion about whether there should be consistent format structures, with then flexibility that is agreed by the MAG, or the host is a useful discussion for this segment of the report, and the past experiences should be reflected, so that the WG and stakeholder appointees, and then the broader CSTD community can review, and make informed comments when they receive the report.

Each hosting country has unique contributions to share in this section of the report.

III. Shaping the outcome of IGF meetings

The IGF is a non binding, and non duplicative process, as established by the Tunis Agenda.

Each IGF should result in a a flexible number of consistent outputs: the Chairman's reports and summaries as well as workshop summaries that in a simple way should be published, easily referenced, and accessible via a much enhanced IGF website, and easily reused.

In addition to reports like these, the actual IGF discussions during plenary sessions and in workshops in themselves must become a resource s. Templates for workshop and plenary reports, and additional staff support can result in more effective impact documents as outcomes of the IGF, without changing its nature.

A further enhancement opportunity for the IGF is to provide for a compilation of the different experiences and practices in different regions, a reference tool to share best practices. For example, a status of Internet policy issues around the globe, which could include legal frameworks, private sector activities

and multistakeholder consensus agreements. Additionally, sharing of experiences and information of national and regional IGF events would complement.

This reporting out but more standardized approach, while historically unique, will contribute to the evolving Internet policy discussions in all regions and countries, where each situation is different, and each experience is different. This will enable and support discussions at the local, national and regional level, but without dictating outcomes.

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

The working methods of the IGF should be open, transparent, and must be even more effective and inclusive for remote participants. In fact, great progress in these areas has been made, and business participants note that some IGOs are actually emulating the IGF.

The global IGF preparatory activities, the actual IGF itself, and its preparations must continue to evolve in the use of effective remote participation and onsite mechanisms to increase their effectiveness. In addition, the programs should continue to reflect new and emerging issues – a good model to consider is allocating about 1/3 to 1/2 of the time on discussing the changes from one year to another on a topic; and then examining new and emerging issues.

IGF meetings have not and should not be stagnant on substantive topics. While process is important to ensure a continuing evolution to address the interests and needs of all stakeholders joining the process, it is important to retain a focus on substantive issues relevant to all participants. It may be important to consider an initial and ‘newcomers’ track to support then additional focus on carrying forward the themes and developments achieved in earlier IGFS.

The issues and dialogues arising in IGF meetings are often partially addressed in other forums. Thereby, a recognition and better link between non-IGF meetings and the global IGF is needed, both regarding input and output of IGF. We might envision a sort of circle, a network of networks of dialogues with the global IGF, which is an important platform for bringing together all stakeholders to share experiences, challenges, information, and respective cooperations, collaborations and coordinations. This vision includes the splnning out of concepts, knowledge, and information into other for a, which are both IGOs and national and regional IGF, or other events, where participants in the IGF may chose to catalyze discussions. Other meetings give input to IGF where experiences are shared. Then output from that exchange at the IGF meeting is input to the external meetings, which in turn give input to IGF the following year. This process would result in a form of improved feedback from external activities that are advancing the outputs of the global IGF itself.

The IGF Secretariat should continue to be independent of all other parts of the IGF. It needs to function effectively and efficiently, be objective, and concentrate on being a support function for the information exchange between the participating stakeholders. This will enable a fully responsive set of supportive activities to the planning processes, coordination and actual global IGF. The Secretatriat will also need to be supported to participate in the national and regional IGF initiatives as budget allows.

The process of the IGF is multifaceted, and one important element is the regular and open consultations – they provide a transparent mechanism for all stakeholders to assess, review, and provide input into the next multistakeholder annual meeting, and what needs to be achieved. These mechanisms are well respected, and the documentation of the public consultations should be reflected in the report, as well as the process followed,

its sufficiency, and any additional enhancements that may be called for, especially in the addition of any remote participation mechanism.

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

It is important to have a fact based report on funding to date, which should include the outcomes of additional, or adjacent funding which has brought participants to the IGF, such as the Canadian government funding via the ITU's fellowship program. Additionally, if private sector mechanisms have funded attendance, that may be a useful self-reporting.

This section should identify the costs, and funding mechanisms, including any UN support to the funding of the IGF Secretariat. In many cases, voluntary contributions may not have been fully identified, and this report should enable a simplified understanding of such contributions, without requiring extensive documentation.

The hosting countries make a significant financial contribution, which is not possible to fully document, but this should be noted in a useful but not burdensome manner. For instance, each host provides logistics coordination, and facilities, transport, and much more. It is difficult to impossible, and burdensome to document this, but there needs to be a recognition of this contribution.

As additional comment, funding for the IGF secretariat should continue to be voluntary, and multistakeholder. In addition, there should be a mechanism that acknowledges in-kind donations. It is clear that national contributions from governments, supported by private sector contributions to the UN Secretariat Donor's fund are a significant contribution. This

supports the hosting country contribution, but is the primary support to the Secretariat, and should remain so.

To ease contributions from all stakeholders, the funding process must be as simple as possible, including for small donations. . To date, the IGF multi stakeholder voluntary funding model has been indicative of the support for the model itself, whether at the global or the national or regional levels. This is important to maintain.

VI. Functioning of the IGF secretariat

The IGF Secretariat should continue to be independent, and funded through a voluntary contribution into a centralized funding repository. While in-kind contributions should be recognized, such need to have an identifiable item to which they are related, e.g. travel for Secretariat to national IGF, sponsorship of transcription services, etc., with an estimated value amount. Ideally, the Secretariat will gain additional funding to retain staff, interns, and improvements to the efficient and effective website portal.

The location of the secretariat should be in Geneva as the WSIS process is, as well as other ICT related international processes, is anchored to Geneva.

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

The IGF has been very effective in outreach and cooperation with other organizations and forums with Internet governance issues. This has been achieved through open consultations, national or regional IGF initiative meetings, and a specific role of organisations in the process of coordinating workshops. The continued success of this is demonstrated by the engagement of IG topics in other organizations, that then in turn participate in the global IGF. The partnerships and cooperation that have

emerged out of the IGFs is another example of the effectiveness of the outreach.

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

The ability for all stakeholders to engage in the IGF process is important, including for new participants. This is achieved through a variety of means, including remote participation, national or regional IGF initiative meetings, participation and help by other organisations. . The IGF itself delivers both remote participation opportunities, as well as transcripts and video/audio archives which provide for participation even if not in real-time.

IX. Conclusions and recommendations

This section cannot be written at this stage, but will require the dialogue and examination of the full set of WG and appointed representatives from the Stakeholders.

We do offer the following comment:

The IGF has been in existence a brief period of time – and in this period it has achieved remarkable results in information sharing, cooperations, collaboration, coordination among stakeholders, and informing discussions around Internet policy and governance issues. The multi-stakeholder model, the platform that enables open dialogues without decisions imposed, is essential to this evolving medium and the global stakeholders.

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