

Working Group on Main Session Guidelines IGF 2015

Summary of Recommendations

AIM:

- To facilitate a meaningful and timely organization of main sessions for the IGF 2015
- To deliver main session with maximum value for all stakeholders and the IGF community
- To structure a process for main sessions which is facilitative, inclusive, transparent and conducive to enable MAG members and the IGF community to contribute.
- To support and augment the IGF mandate implementation and renewal through effective main sessions

1. Criteria for adoption of themes for main sessions / in conjunction with sub themes of the year

Given the importance of this 10th year and its particular nature (IGF extension), please find below some recommendations for criteria for adoption of themes:

- (i) Contemporary and relevant to developments in IG space during 2015;
- (ii) Overarching or one of the existing themes of IGF, which continue to be work in progress for stakeholder communities;
- (iii) Contributes substantively, and promotes the cause of IGF extension proposal in 2015;
- (iv) Engages key influential stakeholders as it relates to the extension;
- (v) Allows for all multistakeholder groups to contribute substantively, on an equal footing;
- (vi) Continues to be an important concern for developing countries with relevance for developed countries;
- (vii) Will subsume inputs from all relevant workshops, if not an entire theme;
- (viii) Facilitates for special contributions from regional and national IGFs;
- (ix) Will generate wide ranging interest amongst onsite and online IGF participants;
- (x) Lends itself to qualitative documentation and benchmark for future reference;

2. Readout from workshops

- To the extent possible workshops should be invited to present 1-minute readouts from the floor / participants.
- Ideal to schedule main sessions at the end of workshops, though it may not always be possible.
- Mixed opinion on whether main sessions can be held as plenaries. Plenaries will lead to loss of workshop time, unless extended time available.

3. **Volunteers for Main Sessions**

- Doodle poll to decide volunteers who can assist main session facilitators. 2 conference calls to coordinate amongst facilitators / moderators and eventually speakers.

4. **Public Consultation**

- Multi-stage, sequential process for consultation with community as in attachment (timelines). Increased consultation from 2014.
- After finalization of speakers, structures and moderators – additional open call for “policy questions”.
- MAG members representing stakeholder groups should send in speakers from each stakeholder group. Recommendations to include experts and new voices, gender and regional balance. Final decision to be left to the facilitators before placing it in front of the MAG for approval.

5. **Times / consensus based decisions**

- All main sessions should follow the same timeline. Allows for better process at the peak of email traffic – August-October.
- Unless issues are raised within timelines, consent needs to be assumed by working group / facilitators.

6. **Content**

- Problem definition and policy questions are the key to a good session. Needs extensive public consultation.

7. **Format**

- Multiple formats possible. U-shaped panel discussions and large roundtables are a viable option
- An alternative approach for some sessions could be unconferecing doing away with the panelists/speakers completely
- Certain sessions will lend themselves to more innovation in format.

8. **Balancing speakers / Diversity/ New Voices**

- Even though regional, gender and stakeholder representation adds up to nearly 30, an ideal 3 hour main session with 12-14 panelists/speakers, with interventions of upto 10 minutes will still leave 1 hour for questions / comments from participants. Smaller main sessions will have corresponding fewer speakers / time for discussions. This will however be organic. There is no one size fits all.
- Large roundtables can have upto 20 speakers (5 to a side) with pre-identified participants from the floor. Also 1 minute readouts for workshops need to be accounted for.
- Facilitators may also choose to work with a lesser number of panelists if it is a better fit for a particular theme, leaving more time for engagement from the floor addressing the talking heads only issue.

- Facilitators may make active use of registered panelists on the IGF website. Even a registered list of participants may be used to identify new voices.
- A special effort may be made to identify young people / youth to make interventions on main sessions.
 - Ensuring diversity by requesting stakeholder groups to provide references, which are both a mix of expert and new voices, is one of the tested ways of achieving this objective. (Desirable)

9. **Conflict of interest**

- Stakeholders should be allowed to recommend speakers from their stakeholder groups based on expertise. This should not constitute conflict of interest. Referee should declare affiliation in case they see a conflict.
- Speakers should not be repeated in mains session unless there is an extreme exception. MAG should agree to exceptions.
- The MAG may choose to restrict the number of interventions by the same panelist to two main sessions at the most.

10. **Role for MAG members**

- MAG members should limit speaking / moderating roles to one main session max.
- They may consider doing a read out of the preparatory process or key takeaways at the end of session.
- MAG members may volunteer to attend atleast ONE main session, where they haven't played an active role, to give feedback.

11. **Moderators**

- It is strongly recommended that MAG members should not speak at more than 1 main session and 2 workshops (subject to a MAG consensus). They should certainly not serve as a speaker on their self-organized main session. However, given the amount of information and planning that resides with co-facilitators, MAG members must be allowed, as organizers, if they choose, and others agree, to either serve as moderators or online moderators, for the sessions that they help plan/organize. The moderator's skills do not have to be confused with that of a subject matter expert. However, as moderators, MAG members should be strictly prohibited from either offering their own opinion or going beyond:
 - introducing the chair;
 - introducing the theme;
 - introducing the speakers;
 - asking clarifications from speakers;
 - engaging the participants from the floor;
 - ensuring that all speakers have had a fair opportunity to speak;
 - ensuring substantive participation from the floor;
 - strictly observing time limits (2-3 minutes at a time);
 - Wrapping up the session in time for the chair to conclude, while keeping an eye on the translators and transcription facilities;

As moderators, they should have no speaking role whatsoever, except as the continuum from one speaker to another. In fact, such briefing should be provided to all moderators whether or not they are MAG members.

- Preferable to have 2 moderators from different stakeholder groups. The most important skill should be the ability to moderate and keep the timelines rather than subject matter expertise alone. Moderators can make or break the main sessions.

12. Duration and Number of Main Sessions

- Recommendation for 3 hour and 2 hour main sessions depending on the topic.
- Speakers between 8 – 14, depending on the duration/Topic

13. Substantive rapporteurs

- Best to appoint 2 substantive rapporteurs in addition to 2 moderators – for contributing to the Chair’s summary and the ‘Taking Stock’ main session.

14. Interactivity

- 2 standing moderators was well tested during 2014 and this is highly recommended during 2015. Their role should be restricted as described in Section 11 (ii) above.
- There is a major effort underway via the working group on “Online Participation”, to improve online participation at the IGF. Recommendations of the working group, along with the experience of remote hubs, set up during the NETmundial conference, in Sao Paulo, Brazil, of April 2014, must be implemented for improved remote participation.
- 4 standing microphones may be placed on the floor with two roving microphones with volunteers.
- It is recommended that engagement be done on a sustained basis with inroom participants throughout the session.
- Active engagement with social media may also be used to feed inputs in the session.
- The main session through hastags as well as online web spaces may be promoted adequately.
- The online applications may be further refined to indicate main sessions and linked workshops distinctly and prominently.

15. Housekeeping / host issues

- Main Hall seating should be flexible as in Istanbul rather than fixed, unless there are multiple main halls. Allows for better accommodation of
- English speaking translators and interlocutors in each room to be able to work with facilitators and volunteers, with regards to microphones, visual screens, timers, air conditioning, etc. 1 dedicated senior person to be appointed as single point of contact.
- Outreach and direction to main sessions should be clearly identified.

- Host country chair should limit comments to 3-4 minutes in the opening and 3 minutes at the end of each main session, assuming that host country will provide chairs for each of the main sessions.
- Advance meeting between host country and facilitators for better coordination.
- A single page report to be filed at the end of the session summarizing key takeaways for the Chair's summary.

#In addition to inputs provided during Virtual MAG Meetings intermittent reports may be shared with the MAG to ensure that duplication may be minimised/ repetition of speakers avoided.

OTHER INPUTS:

- **Recognizing dissent**
 - (i) Dissent usually occurs in the areas of theme, speakers and policy questions.
 - (ii) Individual stakeholder groups should refer speakers from their own stakeholder groups but leave the final choice to the facilitators. References should be a mix of experts and new voices. Avoid pressurizing facilitators. Avoid too many speakers.
 - (iii) It is also extremely important that the final decision is left to facilitators who usually proceed, keeping multiple factors in mind, all of which may not be visible in real time basis to those making recommendations. Final decision by MAG.
 - (iv) Recording dissent and capturing different perspectives while the session is on.
- **Timelines/ deadlines**
 - (i) A proposed schedule of activities has been recommended in 'Attachment 1' below, which includes "Timelines / deadlines" for each activity. Facilitators should be allowed to work strictly as per deadlines- to ensure a structured and transparent process – across all main sessions.
- **Distributed responsibility**
 - In the past, the volunteers for main sessions usually leave it the co-facilitators, beyond recommending names of speakers, input for content, and other planning ideas. It is highly advisable (cannot be enforced) that volunteers on the main session planning / dedicated lists, unless unavailable, should try and help during the actual organisation of the session in the main hall.
- **In house onsite and offsite participation engagement/ interactivity**
 - This would depend from session to session. While there can be no hard and fast, new modes of outreach, both online and onsite, can certainly help increase visibility, participation and by consequence, effectiveness of the sessions.
 - Recommendations of the Working Group on Online Participation" must be considered and implemented as appropriate in 2015.

- **Takeaways**

- Assuming 'takeaways' means conclusions and highlights it is highly recommended that independent substantive rapporteurs be requested to be seated along with the speakers, or in the main hall. This also critical since the "Taking Stock Looking Forward" session, usually held on the last day, usually provides short 4-5 minute slots for main session organizers to present a readout / takeaway from the main sessions.
- Similarly, such 4-5 minute readouts in a concise format are required for the chair's summary – usually presented in an abridged form, at the end of the IGF, and in a detailed form, within a couple of weeks of the conclusion of IGF.
- A detailed report as per protocol needs to be filed. Currently no format is provided. Perhaps the need to have a format along the lines of the template can be considered.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Discussion and finalization of Guidelines by MAG members

2. Invite **SUGGESTIONS FOR MAIN SESSION/THEME IN 2015**

Rationale for the theme:

- A contemporary theme, related to one of the most significant developments related to IGF in 2015;
- Contributes substantively, and promotes the cause of IGF extension proposal in 2015;
- Theme can facilitate special and pointed contributions from regional and national IGFs;
- Theme expected to generate wide ranging interest amongst onsite and online IGF participants;
- Allows the IGF to engage key influential stakeholders as it relates to extension;
- Allows for all multistakeholder groups to contribute substantively, on an equal footing;
- Continues to be an important concern for developing countries with high relevance for developed countries;
- Theme has the ability to subsume inputs from several workshops;
- Lends itself to qualitative documentation and benchmark for future reference;