Internet Society

IGF Consultations: IGF 2019 Taking Stock
January 2020

Part 1 - Taking Stock of the IGF 2019 programming, outputs, preparatory process, community intersessional activities and the event itself: What worked well? What worked not so well?

The Internet Society would like to thank Germany for hosting an efficient and well-organized IGF. Contributions from UNDESA, the IGF Secretariat, and MAG members were also critical.

Regarding the workshop selection process, the timeline worked well, in particular, the early release of approved workshops to allow organizers to plan. The consistent evaluation method developed by the MAG is also helpful to build stronger results. Different solutions are needed in assessing proposals with technical in-depth expertise when required. The reporting streams – before, during and after the event – could also benefit from more clarity to both organizers and participants.

The intersessional activities of the IGF offer great potential and should be nurtured, streamlined, and strengthened. Instead of having separate sessions, more efforts to integrate the BPFs, DCs, and NRIs substantive inputs into the workshop sessions could improve the IGF programme and deliver strong outputs.

Having fewer thematic tracks helped focus the programme. The introductory and concluding sessions created a more consistent flow between the narratives and the overarching policy questions. We encourage continuing in this direction. There is still room for improvement to avoid repetitive sessions, too many speakers, and less time for discussions.

All logistics aspects have run smoothly throughout the event. While the location could have been better considering the flow of participants to the rooms, booths at the village were well equipped.

In a nutshell, there were visible improvements to crystallize IGF's relevance as the place for Internet-related international policy discussions: Fewer thematic tracks, less parallel sessions, more cohesive agenda shaping, outreach efforts to new stakeholder groups, and increased attendance. But improvements are still needed (see our previous contributions in this matter[1]).

Part 2 - What are your suggestions for improvements for IGF 2020?

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[1] See: *"Let's reform the IGF to Ensure its Healthy Future"*, published on 17 March 2018, and available at:
https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/2018/03/lets-reform-igf-ensure-healthy-future/

When it comes to technology, the Internet Society believes that improving existing digital cooperation mechanisms and building on collaborative approaches are the best ways forward. With this in mind, we appreciate the UN HLPDC's report calling for mechanisms to '*become more holistic, multi-disciplinary, multistakeholder, agile and able to convert rhetoric into practice*'.

Looking into 2020 and beyond, the evolution of the IGF depends on the implementation of the recommendations made in the UN HLPDC's report. Now is the time to strengthen the IGF rather than reinventing new mechanisms. While not transforming the IGF into a negotiating body, one priority must be tangible outcomes. "New" mechanisms such as an Advisory Group, a Help Desk, and a Cooperation Accelerator need further clarity to better operationalize the IGF. The idea that the IGF+ could provide 'multi-stakeholder and multilateral legitimacy' at the same time is unclear. In trying to be both, it may force unreasonable compromises in negotiating outcomes.

As the honorable UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in his opening remarks at the IGF 2019 '*not only we are still building physical walls to separate people, but (that) there is also the tendency to create some virtual walls in the Internet also to separate people. And the only way to avoid it is if you are able to have one vision. With one vision and one world, I hope we'll be able to be also with only one Internet*'.

Back in 2005, when the Tunis Agenda, in article 72, asked the UN Secretary-General to convene "this open and inclusive process for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue—called the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)" it reflected this vision.

Now is the time to that the IGF to the next level. We must work towards solutions and build collaborative paths. We appreciate Poland's commitment to host the IGF 2020 in Katowice and offer our support to work together on making it a redundant success as Berlin.