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 a highly efficient and well-organized IGF. Contributions from of 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 in advance. The consistent evaluation methodology developed by the MAG is also helpful to build stronger results. There is room for improvement on how to look for solutions 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 continue to be nurtured, streamlined and strengthen this year. Instead of having separate sessions, more efforts to integrate the BPFs, DCs and NRIs substantive inputs into the workshop sessions could improve immensely the overall IGF programme, as well as deliver stronger outputs.

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

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

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

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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/

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

The Internet Society believes that existing digital cooperation mechanisms need to be improved, and collaborative approaches are the best way where technology is concerned. Therefore, 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 ahead, the evolution of the IGF will depend on the implementation of the recommendations made in the UN HLPDC's report. The Internet Society firmly believes that now is the time to strengthen the IGF rather than reinventing new mechanisms. One priority should be to deliver more tangible outcomes, while not transforming the IGF into a negotiating body. "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 arguably be forced to make 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 work towards solutions, building collaborative paths that will take the IGF to the next level. 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.