



**IGF** Internet  
Governance  
Forum

# IGF 2021 Summary

Sixteenth Meeting of  
Internet Governance Forum  
6–10 December 2021  
Katowice, Poland



**INTERNET  
GOVERNANCE  
FORUM  
POLAND**  
INTERNET UNITED

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# Glossary

BPF Best Practice Forum

CSTD Commission on Science and Technology for Development

DC Dynamic Coalition

DPIDG Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG)

IGF Internet Governance Forum

IoT Internet of Things

ITU International Telecommunication Union

MAG Multistakeholder Advisory Group

NRI National, Regional and Youth Initiative

PN Policy Network

PNE Policy Network on Environment

PNMA Policy Network on Meaningful Access

UN DESA United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNOG United Nations Office at Geneva

WG (MAG) Working Group

WG-OEC Working Group on Outreach, Engagement and Communications Strategy

WG-Hybrid Working Group on Hybrid Meetings

WG-Strategy Working Group on IGF Strategy

WSIS World Summit on the Information Society

# Internet Governance Forum

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is a global multistakeholder platform that facilitates the discussion of public policy issues pertaining to Internet governance<sup>1</sup>. The IGF was one of the most important outcomes of the United Nations World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) that mandated the United Nations Secretary-General to formally convene the Forum on 18 July 2006.

In the resolution adopted by the UN General Assembly on 16 December 2015, (70/125) 'Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the overall review of the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society<sup>2</sup>, the existing mandate of the IGF as set out in paragraphs 72 to 78 of the Tunis Agenda was extended for another 10 years.

Institutionally, the IGF is supported by the IGF Secretariat, administered by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), while the programme of the annual IGF meeting is developed by the Multistakeholder Advisory Group.

So far, sixteen annual meetings of the IGF have been hosted by various governments. The seventeenth annual IGF meeting will be hosted by the Government of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa in 2022. The 2023 IGF will be hosted by the Government of Japan.

1 <https://www.intgovforum.org/en/about>

2 [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ares70d125\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ares70d125_en.pdf)

# Foreword



**Liu Zhenmin**  
United Nations Under-Secretary-General  
for Economic and Social Affairs

In the past two years we have felt the disruption that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought upon our lives - from the ways we interact, to the ways we work and provide education and essential services. The global community is, however, encouraged that the Internet has demonstrated its central role in enabling our lives to go on when we are forced to be confined in our physical environment.

The 2021 Internet Governance Forum (IGF) was not exempted from these disruptions. Organizing an IGF amidst the pandemic was challenging. The safety and wellbeing of everyone in Katowice, Poland, as well as the equal treatment of onsite and online participants, were guiding principles for Poland as the Host Country, and the United Nations, as we set out to organize the IGF and laid the groundwork for its hybrid format.

From 6 to 10 December 2021, in Katowice and online, the Internet community stood fast in their commitment to the IGF as the place to address critical digital policy issues. This year's meeting saw record participation with over 10,000 stakeholders from 175 countries gathered around 300 over sessions.

On the meeting's main issue areas, the Katowice IGF participants sent a number of important messages to the world, calling for closing digital divides, stronger digital cooperation, preservation of environmental sustainability, encouraging circular economy, respect for rights and freedoms online, and much more.

Over 200 ministers, parliamentarians and other high-level leaders from the private sector, civil society, the technical community, United Nations agencies and other international organizations contributed to the IGF's discussions. High-level panels featured discussions on various aspects of the digital society and economy, highlighting the importance of strengthened multistakeholder cooperation in advancing sustainable and inclusive digital development. In the parliamentary track, members of parliaments from around the world explored key principles and approaches for ensuring that legislation for the digital space has human rights at its centre and is flexible, agile, and future-proof.

In addition, more than 140 national, regional, and youth IGF initiatives, or NRIs, contributed to IGF 2021, helping us understand the local specificities of the

global Internet governance ecosystem. Young people brought their views and opinions to the table, reminding us all that the digital future cannot be shaped without their active involvement.

The IGF 2021 meeting also marked the culmination of the work carried out throughout the year by multiple IGF intersessional activities, as best practice forums (on cybersecurity and gender and digital rights), policy networks (on environment and meaningful access) and dynamic coalitions (on a wide range on Internet and digital policy issues, from accessibility and children's rights, to core Internet values and platform responsibility) presented the outputs of their work.

While the pandemic prevented many from traveling to Poland, alternative modes of organizing for and participating in the IGF flourished. Remote hubs around the world proved to be an excellent means of engagement.

We aim to continue building on these successes. Working with upcoming host governments, Ethiopia in 2022 and Japan in 2023, the UN is committed to ensuring the IGF's processes 'reform, innovate and adapt', as called for by the Secretary-General. Thanks also to the generous support of the IGF's donors, we believe we have the right elements in place for the IGF to continue enhancing its role as the meeting place for all stakeholders to discuss and road-test ideas for a safe, secure, affordable and accessible Internet.

This report contains the key outcomes of the IGF 2021 process, including its intersessional work and capacity development activities, cooperation with national, regional and youth IGF initiatives (NRIs), and main outputs of the 16th annual IGF meeting. I hope that you will read it with interest and share with us your vision for an even better IGF in 2022. The United Nations, as well as the IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group, eagerly await your input.

*Liu Zhenmin*

*United Nations Under-Secretary-General for  
Economic and Social Affairs*

# Foreword



**Krzysztof Szubert**  
High Representative of the Prime  
Minister for European Digital Policy,  
Republic of Poland Plenipotentiary  
for UN IGF 2021

I am proud that the 16th UN Internet Governance Forum – IGF 2021 was held in Poland. On 6-10 December 2021 Poland was the heart of the global debate over digital policy-related issues. Needless to say, we had been pursuing this opportunity for several years, and we finally succeeded! The UN has appreciated our efforts in the international arena. The organisation of such a prestigious event was not only a great honour to us but also proof that Poland has become an increasingly important player in the global efforts to ensure an open and united Internet.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the Internet proved helpful in organising our lives to an

extent that we would never have foreseen. This has only confirmed its enormous value to all of us. We are functioning in a digital world where we need freedom, openness and security. These are strategic elements of growth – and these are the topics, inter alia, that we discussed in connection with the theme of this year's IGF 2021 – Internet United. During the UN Internet Governance Forum – IGF 2021 in Poland, all participants, both onsite and online, had an opportunity to express their opinion on the future of the Internet and thus influence the debate.

The global pandemic has accelerated the process of digitalisation of individual areas of economic, political and social life. Naturally, this process requires adequate funding and the involvement of the younger generation. That is why our particular focus during the UN IGF 2021 was to include young people in the debate on the digital future. The 2021 IGF in Poland featured several sessions that brought an explicit youth lens to the discussion, such as debates on digital cooperation and cybersecurity. Moreover, we also organised the IGF 2021 Youth Summit, which focused on digital policies that the youth feel they could and should successfully advocate for. I am very pleased with the involvement of so many young Internet users in debates and decision-making in Katowice, where they had an opportunity to speak up and be heard.

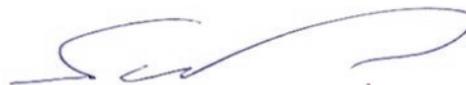
A record number of 10,371 participants from 175 countries in all continents of the world registered for the UN IGF 2021. Over 2,700 participants joined us onsite in

Katowice. The IGF 2021 in Poland generated more than 15,000 connections, 50,000 social interactions with the hashtag #IGF2021 with a reach of 5 million people, and more than 20,000 views on YouTube. 7 dedicated high-level sessions took place, discussing the most important issues on the global digital agenda, including those related to the regulation of platforms, as well as the role of digitisation during the pandemic and its impact on the economic development of the world. We were joined by nearly 200 (!) ministers, parliamentarians and other high-level leaders from the private sector, civil society, the technical community, UN agencies and other international organisations, whose participation in the high-level track resulted in the Summary of the IGF 2021 High-Level Exchange Panels. Furthermore, the final document called

Katowice IGF 2021 Messages was issued.

Thank you all for being with us during the event in Poland and I extend the best wishes for another successful and fruitful global Internet meeting to the IGF host country in 2022 - Ethiopia.

I truly believe that the debate launched and continued in Poland will have a positive impact on future digital issues and will bring us even closer to the Internet United!



*Krzysztof Szubert*  
*High Representative of the Prime Minister*  
*for Digital Policy, Republic of Poland*  
*Plenipotentiary for UN IGF 2021*



# IGF 2021 at a Glance

In 2021, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) held its 16th annual meeting in a hybrid format, in Katowice, Poland and online. Under the overarching theme *Internet United*, the meeting featured discussion on some of the most pressing Internet and digital policy issues, from meaningful access, digital rights, and cybersecurity, to

the challenges and opportunities offered by advanced technologies such as AI and quantum computing.

The [IGF 2021 Multistakeholder Advisory Group \(MAG\)](#), with members appointed by the UN Secretary-General from all stakeholder groups, supported the planning of the 16th annual IGF meeting.

## INTERNET UNITED

6-10 DECEMBER 2021  
KATOWICE, POLAND  
+ONLINE



**10371**  
PARTICIPANTS

**175**  
COUNTRIES

**318**  
SESSIONS

### PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

ISSUE-AREA TRACKS - IGF  
COMMUNITY SESSIONS

IGF HIGH-LEVEL LEADERS TRACK

GLOBAL YOUTH SUMMIT

IGF PARLIAMENTARY TRACK

IGF INTERSESSIONAL WORK TRACK

### ISSUE AREAS

ECONOMIC & SOCIAL INCLUSION AND HUMAN RIGHTS

UNIVERSAL ACCESS AND MEANINGFUL CONNECTIVITY

EMERGING REGULATION: MARKET STRUCTURE, CONTENT,  
DATA AND CONSUMER RIGHTS PROTECTION

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE

INCLUSIVE INTERNET GOVERNANCE  
ECOSYSTEMS AND DIGITAL RIGHTS

TRUST, SECURITY, STABILITY

# Highlights

## Opening ceremony

The meeting opened with **remarks** from the United Nations Secretary-General and the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, as well as the President and Prime Minister of Poland.

▮▮ The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the life-changing power of the Internet. Digital technology has saved lives by enabling millions of people to work, study and socialise safely online. But the pandemic has also magnified the digital divide, and the dark side of technology: the lightning-fast spread of misinformation; the manipulation of people's behaviour; and more. We can only address these challenges united, through strengthened cooperation: by establishing clear rules to safeguard human rights and fundamental freedoms; by regaining control over our data; by countering disinformation and hate speech; and by connecting everyone to the Internet by 2030. The Internet Governance Forum has a crucial role in shaping the conversation.

António Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General

▮▮ The numerous presence here on the site in Katowice, but also online due to the current pandemic situation only shows the significance of the digital space in present days and how important its issues are for us all. Let's be honest, if there was no Internet, we would not be able to meet in such a big numbers these days.

Andrzej Duda, President of the Republic of Poland

▮▮ The pandemic has impacted how we live, how we work and how we interact with each other. And how those unconnected are left further behind. The IGF could deliver its promise for shaping a digital future for the world -- turning the COVID-19 crisis into opportunities. Indeed, this is easier said than done, as global Internet governance is complex. But united, we can succeed, together.

Liu Zhenmin, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

▮▮ For the first time in history, Poland is hosting the global Internet Governance Forum organized here in Katowice, International Conference Centre and we Poles, are honored to hold this important event and we consider it as an appreciation of our efforts and activities in the field of the digitization.

Mateusz Morawiecki, Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland

## Hybrid IGF

Against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, the 16th IGF was held as a fully hybrid meeting, with participants joining onsite, in Katowice, and online. With the overall objective of making participation in the meeting meaningful and inclusive for all attendees, the hybrid format included several features:

- **Unique participation platform** through which the meeting discussions were implemented in an equal manner for all participants, whether they were connecting from the venue in Katowice or any other part of the world.
  - **3D Venue** created as an equivalent to the onsite venue, for all participants to experience the space visually. As onsite participants, online participants had the opportunity to enter meeting rooms and connect to the participation platform.
  - **IGF Village**, composed of over 23 booths representing different organizations at the venue, with their 3D booth equivalents.
  - **Flexible sessions** that allowed for participation of speakers/moderators/rapporteurs completely online or in a mixed setting. Regardless, each session was allocated a room in Katowice with a screen projecting the Zoom room, and a support team of staff for technical and overall logistical implementation.
  - **Remote hubs** as an effective participation alternative for those unable to travel.
- These were substantively and in several cases, financially, supported.
- **Time zone** of the meeting programme corresponded to the Central European Time with slightly extended working hours aiming at accommodating as many time zones as possible. For those challenged by the time zone difference or simply other commitments, there was an opportunity to communicate interventions beforehand or after the session.
  - **Hybrid feedback** that facilitated engagement in sessions live onsite or online, and even asynchronously (to redress time zone difficulties), with participants able to watch session recordings and register their input using session-specific hashtags. All comments could be made on social media - with Twitter the preferred platform for ease of use - and tagged according to the [guidelines](#). Session organizers were advised to scan Twitter for comments and take them into account for their reports.
  - **Bilateral meeting rooms** with online participation facilities.
  - **Networking** opportunities that were accessible to online participation through a dedicated digital platform and virtual connections to onsite events.
  - **New website and mobile app** that supported easier navigation of the IGF 2021 content.



## Strengthened parliamentary track

In 2019 and 2020, the IGF parliamentary track consisted of a roundtable in which over 70 members of parliaments (MPs) from around the world engaged in discussions on Internet and digital policy issues. In 2021, the track was strengthened to include (a) a series of online preparatory sessions held between September and November, and (b) three topical sessions held in the context of IGF 2021, in addition to the now traditional roundtable. (More details below.)

## Involvement of UN agencies

The Forum saw over 45 entities from the UN system involved in the 16th IGF, as organizers of sessions or panelists. An open forum, specifically dedicated to how the United Nations system can support digital transformation and achieve sustainable

development goals, engaged senior officials of ten UN agencies, all calling for more cooperation across the system.

## Focus on youth

Throughout the year through cooperation of the Polish Youth IGF, Government of Poland, United Nations on putting in place capacity development track for youth, over five webinars were hosted aiming to engage youth from around the world to prepare the Global Youth Summit.

## Issue-driven approach

In response to input from the IGF community and from proposals relating to the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation calling for a more focused IGF, the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) has opted for using an issue-driven approach

to design the IGF 2021 programme, to achieve a dual goal:

- Contribute to ongoing IGF evolution and strengthen through an approach to the programme that would encourage focused discussion that delves more deeply into specific issue areas, thereby potentially leading to more focused outcomes.
- Maintain the IGF's open and bottom-up character as a space for dialogue and debate on a wide range of issues considered relevant by people and institutions from all stakeholder groups around the world.

The issue-areas are associated with corresponding narratives, policy questions and issues, to help orient session organizers when submitting session proposals. In addition, several **new types of sessions** are introduced to better respond to the community's demand for the programme's diversity.

### Capacity development

Throughout 2021, the IGF Secretariat has been engaged in a series of capacity development activities, including running workshops, providing grants to NRIs, supporting youth engagement and schools of Internet governance and providing travel support for IGF 2021 participants.

Capacity development was also an integral part of the IGF 2021 preparatory and engagement phase, as it included:

- Workshops under the theme [Our digital](#)

[future](#) – organised with the support of Microsoft and with the engagement with various IGF groups such as NRIs, MAG and DCs – and addressing matters related to safe digital transformation in the framework of sustainable development goals.

- Sessions organised in cooperation with NRIs.
- Training sessions for IGF 2021 session organisers and participants focused broadly on explaining mechanisms of hybrid participation.
- Newcomers session for orienting the first time IGF participants.

### Follow up to the Secretary-General's Report on "Our Common Agenda"

Continuous efforts are invested to improve the IGF in line with its mandate and responding to the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. To understand the community's views, several rounds of consultations were hosted in the framework of the IGF 2021 process, which contributed to the Secretary-General's decision to introduce a new structural segment of the IGF organisational system, the multistakeholder high-level body called the [Leadership Panel](#). The public call for nominations for the Panel concluded shortly before the 16th IGF and is currently under processing.

Furthermore, the Secretary-General had issued a new report called "Our Common Agenda", which among other matters, calls for IGF to adapt, innovate and reform.



The IGF endeavours to contribute to the Global Digital Compact – proposed by the UN Secretary-General – on norms, principles and values as it relates to Internet governance issues based on current and past IGF annual meetings as well as through its sub-groups including the extensive networks of national, regional and youth IGF initiatives (NRIs) and dynamic coalitions (DCs), as well as its policy networks (PNs) and best practice forums (BPFs).

In parallel with structural changes, efforts are invested in advancing long-term sustainability of the forum. In this regard, three host countries are confirmed, with several expressions of interest for the remaining one.

### MAG 2022

Following the public call for nominations, the Secretary-General appointed twenty new members to its IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group, to plan the 17th annual IGF meeting in 2022.

A new Chair of the MAG was also appointed by the Secretary-General, coming from the private sector. The [list of MAG 2022 members](#) and its Chair is available at the IGF website.

### High participation of business

The 16th IGF meeting saw a record number of 38% of its onsite participants coming from the private sector, surpassing other stakeholder groups.

# Preparatory and Engagement Phase

The [Preparatory and Engagement Phase](#) was more than an introduction to this year's IGF. It aimed to engage people in IGF discussions and identify synergies between different activities to facilitate cooperation. The pre-programme is organised jointly by the MAG, working in 'issue teams' dedicated to the programme's different areas; intersessional activities, including NRIs who choose to participate; the Secretariat; and community members.

The shared goals were:

- Facilitate in-depth engagement with IGF 2021 issue areas towards achieving the goal of a more focused and impactful IGF,
- Provide the IGF community with opportunities for developing capacity in IGF-linked areas,
- Facilitate engagement with IGF intersessional activities, and
- Broaden participation and inclusion in all aspects of the IGF process.

# The 16th IGF Overarching Theme: Internet United

The headline of this year's Forum is *Internet United* – the Internet connecting all its users into one community, responsible for its shape and functioning. Our shared dreams, ideas, needs and actions are what shapes the Internet of the future!

During the COVID-19 crisis, the Internet proved to be helpful in organising our lives to an extent that we could have never foreseen just a few months ago. This has only confirmed how precious and valuable part of our lives it actually is. We are living in a digital world, and we need freedom, openness and security.

# Issue-area Tracks and IGF Community Sessions

Community-led sessions, including MAG-organised main sessions, as well as sessions organised by hundreds of other stakeholders, were built around the six IGF 2021 issue areas (selected on the basis of a public call for issues which ran between December 2020 and January 2021). Stakeholders were invited to submit session proposals under one of the six issue areas.

- [Economic and Social Inclusion and Human Rights](#)
- [Universal Access and Meaningful Connectivity](#)
- [Emerging Regulation: Market Structure, Content, Data and Consumer Rights and Protection](#)
- [Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change](#)
- [Inclusive Internet Governance Ecosystems and Digital Cooperation](#)
- [Trust, Security and Stability](#)

The MAG reviewed all 203 **workshop proposals** and made a final selection of **83 workshops for the IGF 2021 Programme.**

# Katowice IGF Messages

The Katowice IGF Messages provide a high-level overview for decision-makers of the most current thinking on key Internet governance and digital policy issues. They are sourced directly from the more than 300 sessions held during IGF 2021. Session organisers were invited to self-identify key takeaways and calls for action at the end of their session as input for these messages. A set of draft messages, curated by the IGF Secretariat, were published for community review. The final messages are part of this report.

Katowice IGF Messages are compiled for each of the six issue areas, available below and at the **IGF website**.

## 1. Economic and Social Inclusion and Human Rights

- Adequate enabling environments (e.g. policies, legislation, institutions) need to be put in place at the national, regional and global levels to foster inclusive, just, safe, resilient and sustainable digital societies and economies.
- Stakeholders have a joint responsibility in ensuring that digital transformation processes are diverse, inclusive, democratic and sustainable. Commitment and strong leadership from public institutions need to be complemented with accountability and responsibility on the part of private actors.
- Digital IDs and financial inclusion solutions could contribute to fostering meaningful participation in the digital economy and society. Public actors are encouraged to create or upgrade digital ID ecosystems

and put in place normative frameworks to ensure that these ecosystems are inclusive, human rights respecting, and interoperable. Regulators and the private sector are invited to support a more extensive use of technologies as a way to achieve sustainable development and drive digital inclusion.

- With the expansion of platform and digital work, regulators need to ensure that labour dimensions are added to broader digital policies and regulations, so that the rights and interests of workers are adequately protected.
- International organisations are invited to develop definitions and tools to help countries measure digital transformation and its societal impacts in an objective, effective and efficient manner.
- Agile regulatory frameworks – at the national, regional and, where possible, global levels – need to be put in place to outline rules, responsibilities and boundaries for how public and private actors behave in the digital space.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) needs to be developed and deployed in manners that allow it to be as inclusive as possible, non-discriminatory, auditable and rooted into democratic principles, the rule of law and human rights. This requires a combination of agile self, soft and hard regulatory mechanisms, along with the tools to implement them.
- Policies implemented by Internet platforms to deal with harmful online content need to be transparent, acknowledge the limits

of automated content moderation, and ensure a proper balance with the right to freedom of expression.

- A suggestion was made for states to consider transposing the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) General Comment 25 (GC25) on children's rights in the digital environment into national regulation and legislation, and to ensure compliance. Another suggestion was for the UNCRC itself to tailor recommendations to individual countries during dialogue and review processes related to GC25.
- To ensure that human rights are enforced and upheld in the digital space, a careful reflection is needed on how technology serves humanity, as opposed to simply putting in place safeguards around the edges and waiting until harms occur. States' duty to prevent potential harm of human rights (e.g. through regulation and enforcement) needs to be complemented with (a) effective access to remedy when people are victims of human rights violation, and (b) responsibility on the part of relevant actors in integrating human rights due diligence and impact assessments throughout the entire life cycle of a technology.
- Mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that the rights-limiting measures put in place to cope with public health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic are not prolonged indefinitely and become instruments of mass surveillance.
- States and the private sector should perform due diligence when it comes to

the protection and promotion of digital rights, including in the context of public-private partnerships.

- Issues that were raised, but on which disagreement remains among stakeholders, include (a) the possibility of introducing a moratorium for certain human rights violating technologies that are not (yet) regulated adequately (e.g. facial recognition and biometric data collection and analysis), and (b) the potential development of a legally binding agreement on technology and human rights, which would build on existing frameworks (e.g. the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights).

## 2 Universal Access and Meaningful Connectivity

- Ensuring that all people everywhere have meaningful and sustainable access to the Internet must be a priority. Access to the open Internet is key for bridging the digital divide, as well as fostering democracy and human rights.
- The open Internet can be considered a multistakeholder domain, fostering dialogue. There are three main elements that structure the concept of meaningful access: (a) affordable access (e.g. to connectivity, devices); (b) social environment (skills, education, content, multilingualism); (c) meaningful, permanent, and quality connectivity (including the technical foundation that allows meaningful access to become a reality).
- Public access through institutions such as libraries can help deliver on all of the components of access that help drive development – equitable and inclusive connectivity, content and competences. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that countries had to prioritise the massive development of connectivity infrastructure to connect the unconnected to an increasingly digital world.
- Regarding online education and learning, many countries are faced with a lack of devices, weak infrastructure and low levels of digital literacy and digital skills. Increased support and international collaboration and partnerships to tackle these issues are key. Individual actors at local and regional levels should also take responsibility in finding solutions together.
- For all stakeholders working on connectivity and access in community contexts, it is vital to map out their community networks. Data from these exercises can feed into building participatory training curriculums or refining existing curriculums. Community networks are also struggling to have a financial sustainability model. Some countries are reviewing their Universal Access Funds requirements to allow small cooperatives or community networks to access those programmes and increase rural and remote connectivity. In addition, regulatory measures and public policies should consider the sustainability of private sector investments, in order to help strengthen infrastructure coverage globally.
- Multiple different actions are needed to fight against illiteracy, in particular

in the Global South. There is insufficient common language between stakeholders, inadequate participation and lack of critical assessment of whether engagement is meaningful. There is a need to improve coherent use of terminology which can impact the effectiveness of Internet policy debates. For example, having better translation between languages, but also exchange within and between regions.

- Multilingualism is a foundational component of Internet inclusivity. The development of local language content, the widespread adoption of Universal Acceptance (UA), and the promotion of Internationalized Domain Names (IDNs) are key to creating a truly multilingual Internet – a driver of peace. All stakeholders should promote policies that support the development of local language content and the adoption of UA; governments in particular can drive multilingualism on the Internet by incorporating these policies in their procurement contracts.
- While access to the Internet must be supported, it also must be ensured that the open Internet access goes hand in hand with infrastructure deployment - especially needed in the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states.
- Competition was identified as a highly desirable characteristic of the Internet across the various participants representing diverse stakeholders. Competition was welcomed in every aspect from connectivity, creation of inclusion, accessibility, small-players, geographically (Global South) etc.
- There is an urgent need to understand why policy solutions already known and proven to be effective are not being more widely implemented.

### 3 Emerging Regulation: Market Structure, Content Data and Consumer Rights and Protection

- The complex interplay between the market and society is being reshaped by online platforms. Online platforms continue to gain power in the digital world, generating high impact throughout the globe, especially in the Global South. There is no one-size fits all approach as impacts may be positive or negative, depending on the local reality.
- Suggested underlying principles to guide policy approaches towards strengthened market competition and consumer protection include: (a) transparency; (b) global taxonomy of service providers; (c) emphasis on rights application; (d) proportionality; (e) acknowledging the complexity of platforms, content and behaviours and jurisdictions; (f) harmonization - ensuring that the Internet remains a global, unified platform that enables the exercise of human rights.
- There is a necessity to strengthen the multistakeholder approach, in order to be truly inclusive and to develop effective policies that respond to the needs of citizens, build trust and meet the demands of the rapidly changing global digital environment. The most powerful stakeholders - governments and private companies - are responsible for

ensuring that civil society actors are able to meaningfully contribute to these processes.

- All stakeholders must work together to foster digital growth and development at the local level, within different countries and regions; approaches could include governmental grants or investments from large companies to foster local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
  - More awareness should be raised about the interplay between big platforms, competition, and consumer rights, among both consumers and global, regional or national antitrust regulators. Antitrust regulation could incorporate the concept of public interest, addressing the issue of market power and concerns about fundamental rights such as the right to freedom of speech. Tailored approaches like pro-ethical design in regulation should also be considered.
  - In the debate on digital sovereignty and digital autonomy, more focus needs to be placed on the individual autonomy of Internet users within the digital realm.
  - New technologies incorporated in video games are also likely to become an object of discussion around questions on intellectual property. Examples include non-fungible tokens, metaverse and user-generated content. As video games are likely to incorporate cutting-edge technologies for user engagement, governments are called to pay further attention to this innovative sector for inspiration.
- #### 4 Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change
- Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution have catastrophic consequences for humans and other species. Human activities have caused around 1.1 °C of global warming to date, causing scientists to sound a “code red for humanity” (IPCC, 2021).
  - As another megatrend of the 21st century, digitalisation has a significant environmental footprint. Urgent action is needed with regard to: (a) The digital world’s carbon footprint, amounting to about the footprint of the aviation industry, is expected to increase in the years ahead; (b) The main source of impact stems from emissions related to the manufacturing and powering of user equipment; (c) Extraction of resources (also critical for digitalisation) - with it are associated about 90 percent of total biodiversity loss and water stress (d) End of life resource loss and e-waste: E-Waste is the fastest growing waste stream within our already very wasteful society. In 2020, a record number of 53.6 million tons of electronic waste was released into the environment.
  - However, digitalisation can also provide us with the tools and devices to combat and adapt to climate change - e.g. by using digital technologies to help us evaluate consequences of actions already taken and develop new ones that benefit the global community. Areas of beneficial application of digitalisation include (among others) environmental data, food and water systems and circular economy.

- Faced with the realities of anthropogenic climate change, it is clear that the environmental impact of technology needs to be further investigated and adequately addressed.
- There is also a growing need to tackle emissions from mineral extraction. The digital devices we use today are host to a complex mix of materials (screens alone being made up of 14 different elements), many of them produced in developing countries. Many extraction sites are correlated with negative impacts on the health of the local human population as well as surrounding fauna and flora. As renewable energy technologies are also heavily reliant on the same minerals, challenges associated with mining and extraction could lead to supply disruption, slowing down a successful transition to clean energy.
- Encourage circular economy and tackle e-waste: Whenever a digital device is bought, significant environmental damage has already occurred. It is thus crucial to strive towards circular business models, keeping the devices and resources in use as long as possible.
- When devices are finally taken out of the cycle, proper disposal is key. It is advocated for raising awareness for the problem of e-waste and making use of public-private partnerships to replicate good practices for reducing e-waste, building on the latest pollution data. Targeted capacity support (financial resources, infrastructure and knowhow) is needed especially for developing

countries, who carry the burden for many of the disposal sites.

- Acknowledge and encourage the contribution of youth: Young people play a key role in the achievement of sustainability and environmental conservation, and their actions need to be supported by providing necessary infrastructure and connectivity.

## 5 Inclusive Internet Ecosystems and Digital Cooperation

- A positive vision for the future of the Internet has to draw together the strands of core values across technical principles, human rights, access and openness, transparency, and rule of law, as well as economic considerations. This can only be done in an inclusive multistakeholder manner, where the interests of all actors can be addressed.
- While the Internet contributes to social, cultural and economic growth, questions of governance, accountability, misuse, trust and access still exist. As the Internet cannot be dealt with from a one-dimensional perspective, collaborative, equitable and inclusive Internet governance is imperative and requires well-structured coordination and consolidation.
- There is a need to think about the sustainability of the Internet governance ecosystem, including the empowerment of youth - the next generation of experts and leaders. Given the rapid pace of technologies, there is a need to build the capacity of the generations to come. One



of the concrete ways this could be done relates to creating educational curriculums based on competencies and skills in the local languages of targeted groups. Similarly, the “train the trainer” concept could be a quick, feasible and effective way to ensure educational professionals, such as teachers, are equipped with knowledge and skills to pass on to massive numbers of multiple generations.

- Violation of the rights of youth and minors on the Internet are a growing concern. One approach to protecting young people against online threats (e.g.

data breaches, cyberbullying) could be to establish a global network of Youth Digital Ombudspersons to act as mediators between the youth and all stakeholders.

- Digital inequalities have become much more visible during the COVID-19 pandemic, calling urgently for actions to resolve them. It has been raised as a concrete example to prioritise digital cooperation. Through collaboration, partnerships and cooperation, stakeholders can exchange good practices and attract investment to ensure an affordable and accessible Internet for all.

- Inequalities are multi-layered nuanced areas and require dedicated assessments and tailored solutions. Women and girls are especially affected. The inclusion process should be designed and implemented in a multistakeholder manner through capacity development, empowerment and awareness raising and building common understanding across stakeholder groups.
- Digital cooperation requires trust, and the IGF can help build that. To adapt to the future, the IGF has to boldly embrace the policy controversies that face the Internet.
- Different forums, at the UN and beyond, need to have distinct roles, but multiple dialogues are not necessarily a bad thing. The multistakeholder community should take advantage of the upcoming opportunities, to contribute to and participate in the new OEWG dialogues on cybersecurity. The IGF may need to have an expanded role in facilitating either implementation or multistakeholder inclusion in cyber dialogues at UN.
- It is too early to celebrate cyber norms; they must be implemented! An effective implementation, e.g. through Security by Design, must respect core basic principles such as openness and decentralisation that have made the success of the Internet.

## 6 Trust, Security, and Stability

- The development and implementation of cyber norms should include the views of all stakeholders (including victims, first responders, and frontline defenders) and address meaningfully their needs and responsibilities. Processes need to be based on research and analysis which include these communities.
- Industry sets of good practices, standards that are globally recognised, norms and principles (such as those under the United Nations' (UN) Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) and Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG)) that call for states to focus on the security of supply chains and reducing vulnerabilities, and regulatory instruments – like labelling and certification schemes – are also emerging. However, more stakeholders should be aware of best practices and base their work on them. Initiatives and forums, along with standardisation organisations, play an important role in gathering actors together.
- The norm to protect the Public Core of the Internet should not be interpreted as enabling or encouraging control over the Internet, but as a norm of restraint that is largely oriented towards moderating malicious state behaviour. Actors around the world need to better understand and further define what is meant with “public” and what constitutes a violation of the norm. To this end, civil society and other non-governmental actors should continue in calling out violations of the public core norm.
- Addressing cyberterrorism and violent extremist content is a complex and important problem. Human-rights-based multistakeholder approaches on cybersecurity lead to better outcomes but are also harder to achieve. Transparency and inclusiveness are vital to their

success. It takes time to build trust and relationships in which challenging conversations can take place. It is vital that such approaches succeed as the alternative is a cacophony of incoherent and less effective approaches.

- The dialogue on industry security standards needs to be broadened with more stakeholders, including industry, regulators, standardisation organisations. Places like the Geneva Dialogue or the IGF provide a platform to bring them together.
- Neutrality holds significant potential as a force for stability in cyberspace and - in times of lively global discussions - can advance the understanding of key conditions for implementing rules of responsible behaviour. Greater clarity about state views, which have been the traditional focus under the law of neutrality, has the capacity to create safe spaces for non-state actors that assist vulnerable groups.
- A responsible use of AI algorithms ensures the preservation of human rights and avoids biases that intensify inequality. Policies to deal with misuses should be developed where needed.
- Women and girls are disproportionately victimised online and find it difficult to obtain support. Governments need to harmonise legislation to protect victims of non-consensual intimate image abuse and ensure easy access to redress. Network and platform policies need to accommodate a spectrum of global cultures. Peer support networks for girls who are victims of online gender-based violence, such as Safer Internet Centers, must be strengthened, while digital literacy should be improved through school curricula and start from a young age, before they venture online.
- Discussions on Internet of Things security should involve all stakeholders (i.e. private, public, technical, academic and civil society) include more youth representation, pursue a user-centric approach, and work towards a unified set of open security standards, while leaving space for users to customise to what is appropriate for their needs.
- Cybersecurity has become even more important in times of hyper-digitalisation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Cybersecurity measures put in place must be designed to evolve with the rapid digital transformation, including enabling important social services to function online instead of physically. Cross-silo collaboration is essential to strengthen cybersecurity.

# High-Level Leaders Track

Co-organised by the Host Country and UN DESA/IGF Secretariat, the IGF 2021 high-level leaders' track focused on the overarching theme Internet United. Experts and leaders from all stakeholder groups discussed a series of key questions such as: In which areas of people's lives do we see the biggest impact of digital transformation for sustainable development? How can we ensure that revitalised digital economies are inclusive? How can technologies work for people?

The sessions of the high-level track were:

- Global economic recovery – where are we at?
- Cities United: connected, green and inclusive
- Creating sustainable value and inclusive society – the role of digital platforms
- How to promote inclusive and diverse innovation, investment opportunities and corporate social responsibility in digital technologies?
- Building equitable employment conditions and competences for the future of work. Governance models to promote inclusive and diverse business development – what stands in the way?

[Summaries of high-level sessions available at the IGF website](#)

# Global Youth Summit

The [Global Youth Summit](#), as a traditional IGF session which facilitates dialogue between young people and senior stakeholders, took place on 6 December. The summit gathered hundreds of young people from around the world to discuss the most pressing issues related to the IGF 2021 issue areas. It resulted in several concrete action points added to the youth voices to resonate more clearly in the Internet governance ecosystem.

The summit was co-organized by the Polish Youth IGF, IGF 2021 Host Country, NASK and IGF Secretariat. Its format included addresses from several high-level senior stakeholders, among which, the UN Secretary-General and Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland.

More details about the summit and its outputs are available on the [dedicated page](#).

# Parliamentary Track

Building on the [2019](#) and [2020](#) parliamentary roundtables, the [IGF 2021 parliamentary track](#) was organised jointly by UN DESA, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the lower chamber of the Polish parliament, the Sejm. Support was also provided by the Department of Digital Policy in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, acting as co-facilitator and overall coordinator of the IGF 2021 from the Host Country's side.

Under the theme Legislative approaches for a user-centric digital space, parliamentarians

exchanged views and shared good practises on tackling three key digital policy challenges: privacy rights and legitimate uses of personal data; balancing freedom of speech and the fight against harmful online content; and the governance of artificial intelligence. The main points emerging from these discussions – as well as from a series of preparator sessions held between September and November – formed the basis for the [output document from the parliamentary track at IGF 2021](#).



# Parliamentary Track Output Document

**We, parliamentarians taking part in the Parliamentary Track at the 16th UN Internet Governance Forum under the theme Internet United,**

**Coming together** in the context of the 16th UN Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and discussing issues relating to privacy and data protection rights in the digital space, the challenges of addressing harmful content online, and governance approaches for artificial intelligence (AI) systems,

**Welcoming** the expansion of the IGF Parliamentary Track, from a roundtable in 2019 and 2020, to a more comprehensive programme including five online preparatory sessions held prior to IGF 2021, and three topical sessions and a roundtable held during IGF 2021,

**Acknowledging** the role of UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and the lower chamber of the Polish Parliament – the Sejm – in co-organizing the IGF 2021 Parliamentary Track, as well as the support provided by the IGF Secretariat and the Department of Digital Policy in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland,

**Recalling** UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/74/304 which encourages strengthened cooperation between the United Nations, national parliaments and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

**Further recalling** the outcomes of the parliamentary roundtables held at IGF 2019 and IGF 2020, which recommended that national parliaments cooperate and exchange good practices in dealing with digital policy issues, and noted the responsibility of parliamentarians to devise people-centric legal frameworks that respond to the challenges of the digital age,

**Taking note** of the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for digital cooperation which calls for more actionable outcomes of the parliamentary track at IGF and the Secretary-General's report Our common agenda, which emphasize the importance of strengthened multistakeholder cooperation in addressing pressing digital policy issues in areas such as bridging the digital divide, protecting human rights, and ensuring online safety and security,

**Noting** that the technology-oriented world we live in is abundant in contradictions and divergent policy approaches, making it increasingly difficult to enact suitable and future-proof legislation for the digital space.

## Promoting a user-centric digital space

### 1. Acknowledge that:

- As people lead more of their lives online, there is a clear policy imperative to make sure the digital space is a safe place. This calls for political leadership to take up the new challenges of the era;
- A considerable body of legislation already exists at the international, regional and national level that applies to the digital space (e.g. to combat hate speech regardless of where it occurs, online or offline). At the same time, the characteristics of the Internet and the digital space (e.g. cross-border nature, speed of content propagation) require specific legal approaches – a matter which tech companies tend to acknowledge as well;
- In order to stand the test of time, legislation should be principle-based, rather than rule-based. The fundamental human-rights-based principles that should underpin legislation have been set out clearly at the international and regional level (e.g. transparency, accountability, rule of law). Legislation needs to be drafted carefully, to the best tests of human rights standards. Conversely, legislation that is prepared hastily or seeks to set detailed rules for specific technologies risks quickly becoming outdated;
- The key – and the challenge – is for legislation to be smart, practical and workable. There is an inherent tension between flexibility (the capacity for the

law to adapt to changing technologies) and clarity (the certainty as to how the law should be understood and implemented). Legislating for the digital environment is largely uncharted territory for parliaments, as well as for the private sector. We are learning by doing;

- Parliaments should act as facilitators so that all points of view are heard and taken into account. It is time for concrete multistakeholder discussions about how to achieve the necessary balance between fundamental human rights such as privacy and the right to freedom of expression and access to information, while also taking into account other important values such as consumer protection, innovation and business freedom. Regulators and the judiciary also need to be part of these discussions from the outset, as they will have a key role in applying the rules;
2. **Underline** that parliaments have a responsibility to ensure that the Internet and the broader digital space remain open, and, at the same time, safe and secure, and reaffirm that the solutions to digital policy challenges need to be human-centric and have users at their core;
  3. **Recommend** that parliaments consider the following elements when developing legislation for the Internet and the digital space:
    - Integrate transparency and multistakeholder consultations as essential parts of legislative processes;

- Ensure that regulatory processes and the regulations themselves are evidence-based;
- Consider – and avoid – potential unintended consequences of regulations. For instance:
  - Embed human rights impact assessments in the legislative processes;
  - Assess whether legislation adopted at the national and regional level may impact the global and interoperable nature of the Internet and the digital economy;
- Cooperate and exchange information with other parliaments, as a way to (a) learn from each other, and (b) contribute to regulatory coherence and interoperability at regional and global level;
- Responsibility, transparency, proportionality, necessity and the rule of law must guide the use of personal data by both private and public entities;
- Legislation should be mindful not only of protecting data itself, but also of protecting the individuals behind the data;
- Considering that the right to privacy is not an absolute right, a proper balance – with adequate checks and balances, and accountability mechanisms – needs to be found with other rights and public interests (e.g. public safety and security, access to information);
- Besides outlining rights and responsibilities, legislation should also contain provisions that enable a strong enforcement of the law, preferably by an independent and adequately resourced regulator;

### Privacy and data protection

4. **Acknowledge** that protecting privacy and personal data in the digital space is both essential and increasingly complex, and recommend that parliaments devise or update, as appropriate, relevant legislation with consideration to the following principles:

5. **Underline** the importance of regulatory coherence and interoperability at the regional and international level, and encourage parliamentarians to collaborate and exchange information so that the laws they devise (a) acknowledge the cross-border nature of the digital



space, (b) provide robust protections for the rights of individuals, including in the context of cross-border data flows, and (c) provide clarity and predictability to companies that operate across jurisdictions, while ensuring they are held accountable for meeting their obligations;

### Tackling harmful content

6. **Express concern** over the proliferation of harmful content online, sometimes with dire consequences for democracy, human rights and safety, and draw attention in particular to the need for multistakeholder cooperation in tackling issues such as (a) the abuse directed towards women online, including women parliamentarians, which can limit their ability to participate freely in the digital space, and (b) online child sexual exploitation and abuse;

7. **Recommend** that parliaments ensure that any legislation intended to address this issue:

- Ensures a proper balance between tackling harmful content and protecting freedom of expression and other internationally-recognised human rights;
- Balances the need to take quick action against harmful content with the need to ensure due process;
- Embodies principles such as transparency (e.g. on how content moderation works), judicial oversight, and appeal/redress mechanisms;

- Contains clearly defined legal terms and concepts so that legislation can be implemented and interpreted in a consistent manner;

8. **Call on** parliaments to encourage (a) awareness raising and capacity development programmes that empower Internet users with critical thinking and media information literacy skills, and (b) initiatives focused on supporting professional journalism, fact-checkers and overall media pluralism;

### AI governance

9. **Call on** parliaments to encourage:

- Domestic stakeholders to actively and meaningfully participate in international multilateral and multistakeholder processes and fora focused on promoting ethical and human-rights-based approaches to the development and use of AI;
- Governmental actors to conclude cooperation agreements with other countries designed to foster exchanges of experiences and technology transfers in the field of AI;
- Domestic stakeholders to develop and deploy AI in a manner that is consistent with principles outlined in documents such as the OECD Principles for AI and the UNESCO Recommendation on the ethics of AI;

10. **Note** that some jurisdictions around the world have started working on regulatory frameworks for AI, and recommend that

processes focused on developing legislative approaches to governing the development and use of AI consider the following:

- Before regulation is developed, there has to be a clear understanding of what needs to be regulated and why. Also needed is an assessment of existing laws and regulations and the extent to which they already apply to AI systems or can be amended to cover such systems;
- Taking a holistic approach when considering what about AI needs to be regulated: look not only at how AI impacts or may impact individuals and their human rights, but also at broader societal implications (e.g. in terms of public interest and the common good);
- When requirements are set for the development and use of AI, clarity should be offered in terms of roles and responsibilities for implementing those requirements, as well as for monitoring the implementation;
- Ensuring that regulation is flexible, agile, future-proof as much as possible, and does not unduly stifle innovation;
- Paying attention to principles already embedded into guidelines and frameworks for AI developed at international level, such as those developed by the OECD, Council of Europe, and UNESCO (e.g. transparency, human oversight, accountability);

11. **Invite** parliaments to (a) encourage the responsible use of AI as a tool for

advancing sustainable development and improving governmental services, and an instrument for evidence-based policy making, where appropriate, and (b) promote the integration of AI in formal educational curricula and informal training programmes;

### Parliamentary participation in the IGF

12. **Call on** parliaments and parliamentarians to continue to build their capacity to engage with digital policy issues and to share experiences and good practices on a regular basis;
13. **Encourage** parliaments and parliamentarians from around the world to deepen their engagement with the IGF and to consider additional modalities to contribute to global processes dedicated to advancing digital cooperation;
14. **Encourage** UN DESA, IPU and the Host Countries of future IGF meetings to continue to convene and strengthen the IGF Parliamentary Track, including through carrying out related intersessional activities;
15. **Commit**, as participants in the IGF 2021 Parliamentary Track, to convey the outputs of our discussions to the parliaments we are part of, to integrate them into our parliamentary work, and to build on them as we continue our engagement with the IGF.

**Output document from the Parliamentary Track is available in [English](#), [French](#), and [Spanish](#) languages.**

# Intersessional Work Tracks

## Policy Networks

The Policy Network (PNs) are dedicated to identifying status quo and current issues including the policy gaps, existing capacity and conditions, local specificities, good and bad practises and possible ways forward through actionable activities led by identified implementation parties.

Policy Network on Meaningful Access, looking at why achieving meaningful and universal Internet access remains so challenging, [PNMA webpage](#)

Policy Network on Environment, exploring intersections between environmental sustainability and digitalisation, [PNE webpage](#).

## Best Practice Forums

The Best Practice Forums (BPFs) provide a platform to exchange experiences in addressing Internet policy issues. The objective is to collect existing and emerging good practises from community experience, not to develop new policies or practices.

BPFs are open, bottom-up and collective processes to produce community-driven outputs. BPF outputs intend to contribute to an understanding of global good practice, and to serve as a resource to inform policy discussions, standards development, business decisions, as well as public understanding, awareness, and discourse.

Best Practice Forum on Cybersecurity, The Use of Norms to Foster Trust and Security, [BPF webpage](#).

Best Practice Forum on Gender and Digital Rights, Exploring Gendered Disinformation [BPF webpage](#).

## Dynamic Coalitions

Dynamic Coalitions (DCs) are open, multistakeholder and community-driven groups dedicated to an Internet governance issue or set of issues. They emerged at the first IGF meeting in 2006.

At IGF 2021, 17 DCs held individual sessions to discuss Internet policy issues within their focus and present their work. A DC main session on the theme Digital cooperation in practice: IGF Dynamic Coalitions (a) showcased how coalitions contribute to advancing the debates on the IGF 2021 issue areas and (b) featured a strategic discussion on how coalitions could contribute to broader digital cooperation efforts and a strengthened IGF.

Throughout 2021, Dynamic Coalitions, supported by the IGF Secretariat, worked on a report documenting their history, providing insight into their work and processes, and analysing their further potential. The report – titled [IGF Dynamic Coalitions: Digital cooperation in practice](#) – is intended to facilitate a better understanding of the worth of coalitions and their contribution to current IGF processes, as well as to shaping the future of the IGF. It includes a series of suggestions and recommendations that could contribute to strengthening DCs and enhancing their contribution to the IGF and to broader digital cooperation efforts [Full report](#) | [Abridged version](#).



## National, Regional and Youth IGF Initiatives

National and Regional IGF Initiatives (NRIs) are organic and independent multistakeholder networks that are discussing issues pertaining to Internet Governance from the perspective of their respective communities, while acting in accordance with the main principles of the global IGF. To date, 141 NRIs are recognized by the IGF Secretariat.

At the 16th IGF in Poland, over 100 NRIs co-organized seven sessions, including five thematic collaborative sessions, main session and coordination session. Specifically, the main session focused on discussing local specificities of the role of the Internet in times of crisis, while the coordination session emphasised the need for sustainable funding for NRIs in order to build a more stable IG(F) ecosystem. More information about the NRIs collaborative sessions is available at the [IGF website](#).

## Other sessions accommodated in the IGF 2021 Programme

The IGF 2021 Programme, in addition to the above-mentioned tracks, accommodated several other types of sessions, including:

**Open Forums**, sessions organized by governments, treaty-based international organizations, and global organizations with international scope and presence, with operations across regions, dealing with Internet governance issues;

**Town Halls**, sessions organized by entities dealing with Internet governance issues of international scope;

**Launches and Awards**, sessions to present and discuss Internet governance-related academic and/or research initiatives or outputs such as research or think tank work, book launches and similar;

**Lightning Talks**, brief, to-the-point, prepared presentation on a specific Internet governance issue;

**Networking Sessions**, gatherings of stakeholders interested in a same or similar issue; icebreaker sessions; social gatherings; gatherings of people and organizations from a particular region, stakeholder group, or area of activity;

**Pre-events**, sessions hosted on the day before the IGF official programme begins.

# Best Practice Forums and Policy Networks

The IGF Policy Networks (PN) and Best Practice Forums (BPFs)<sup>1</sup> provide a platform for all stakeholders to exchange experiences in addressing Internet policy issues. The work is done in an open, bottom-up and consultative manner to develop community-driven outputs. Both PNs and BPFs prepare their work in a series of intersessional discussions that culminate in dedicated sessions at the annual IGF meeting and a report published as part of the IGF outputs. The objective is to collect inputs from the community and not to develop new policies or practices. PNs and BPFs outputs intend to contribute to an understanding of global issues and good practices, and to serve as a resource to inform policy discussions, standards development, business decisions, as well as public understanding, awareness, and discourse. While the BPFs focus on looking into good practices, the PNs take a wider approach and provide an in-depth look into the status quo, issues, good and bad practices and help inspire ways forward. Additionally, open-to-all PNs' work is driven by the multistakeholder working group of experts.

During the IGF 2021 cycle, the following BPFs and PNs were implemented:

- BPF Cybersecurity
- BPF Gender and Digital Rights
- PN Environment
- PN Meaningful Access

Following are the summaries of the key takeaways for the IGF 2021 BPFs and PNs, while the full versions of their final output reports are available at the IGF website.

## Best Practice Forum on cybersecurity and the use of norms to foster security and trust

To enrich the potential for Internet Governance Forum (IGF) outputs, the IGF has developed an intersessional programme of Best Practice Forums (BPFs) intended to complement other IGF community activities. Since 2014, IGF Best Practice Forums have focused on cybersecurity related topics.

In the last four years, the BPF on Cybersecurity started investigating the concept of culture, norms and values in cybersecurity. In 2018 the BPF took a closer look at norms development mechanisms. In 2019, when the BPF ran in conjunction with the initiation of UN GGE and OEWG, the BPF looked at best practices related to the operationalization of cyber norms and started analysing international and cross-stakeholder cybersecurity initiatives for commonalities. In 2020, the BPF took a wider approach and explored what can be learned from norms processes in global governance in areas completely different than cybersecurity, and continued and further advanced the analysis of cyber norms agreements.

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1 <https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/best-practice-forums-bpfs>

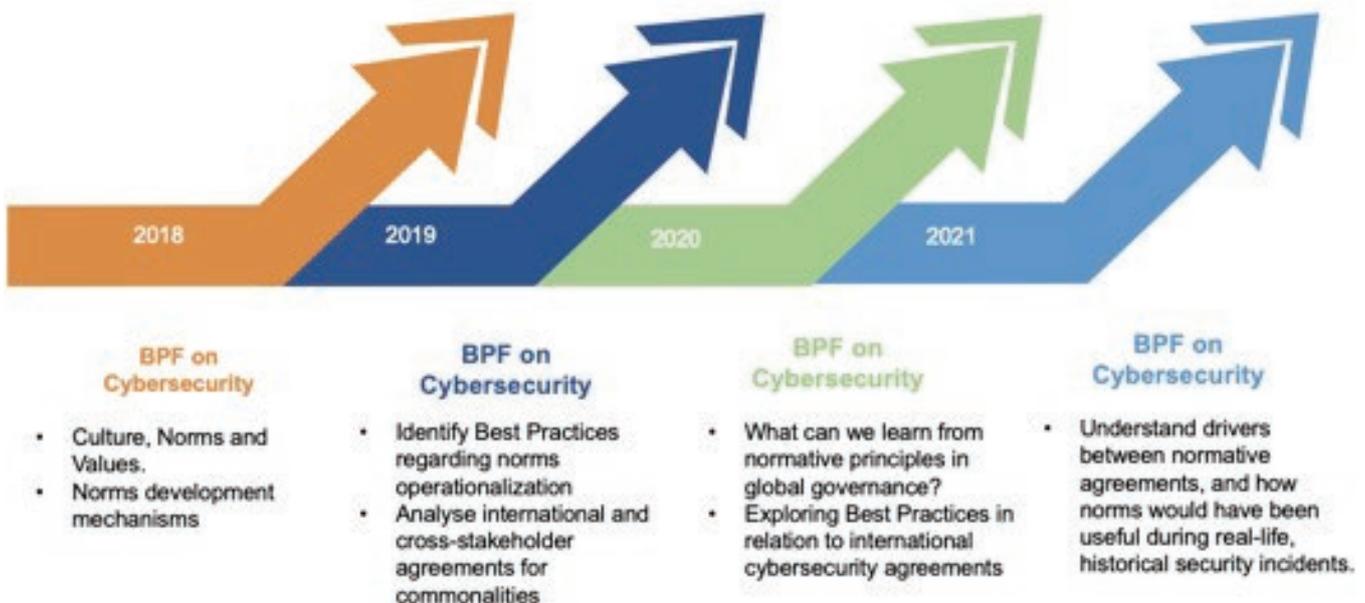
The 2021 BPF on Cybersecurity has continued work to support the ongoing development of cybersecurity norms in the UN and elsewhere. In our research product this year, we have worked to identify relevant cybersecurity norms agreements and investigated more deeply the drivers behind, and enablers of, cyber norms. The BPF also researched major historical cybersecurity incidents, with as goal to understand how they can help drive further norms discussions; and help us understand which norms would have been useful during their mitigation.

### Mapping and Analysis of International Cybersecurity Norms Agreements

Recent years have witnessed a persistent escalation of sophisticated attacks in cyberspace, resulting in the rapid emergence of a new domain of conflict. As with other domains of conflict, expectations for responsible behavior to promote stability and security have necessarily started

emerging as well in the form of multilateral, regional, and bilateral agreements between states on voluntary and non-binding norms of conduct. The BPF included 36 such agreements in this year’s study, which each:

- Describe specific commitments or recommendations that apply to any or all signatory groups (typically governments, non-profit organization or private sector companies);
- Define commitments or recommendations in the agreement must have a stated goal to improve the overall state of cybersecurity;
- Are international in scope – intended to apply multiple well-known actors that either operate significant parts of Internet infrastructure or are governments and therefore representing a wide constituency.



- Include voluntary, nonbinding norms for cybersecurity, among and between different stakeholder groups.

The analysis provides deeper analysis of each agreement, but specifically noted the following findings of interest regarding the focus of cyber norms:

- When it comes to the most prominent norm elements reflected across all agreements, considerations surrounding “general cooperation” and “human rights” were the most frequently included norm elements.
- The emphasis on human rights across agreements is especially notable because not only is it the second most frequently recognized norm element, but also because this recognition has been consistently and noticeably growing over time.
- The two least frequently cited norm elements across all agreements included were both in the fifth norm category: “Restraint on the development and use of cyber capabilities”.

### **Testing norms concepts against historical Internet events**

The BPF’s second workstream focused on understanding the answer to the question “How would specific norms have been effective at mitigating adverse cybersecurity events?”. This was done through a detailed review of nine major cybersecurity events, selected based on their coverage in the media, demonstrable harm, successful mitigation

and their relationship to cyber norms. These events included incidents such as Ghostnet, Stuxnet, NSO Group’s Pegasus and Solarwinds.

For each of these incidents, a group of expert contributors sought to answer the central research question through desk research and analysis. In each case, an assessment is provided on which cyber norms could have been helpful at mitigating impact of the incident, or preventing harm.

The investigators found that the cyber norms we have today would have helped mitigate many of the notorious cyber events of the past. However, each analysis uncovered a missing nuance from deeper stakeholder involvement, to application of existing legal frameworks.

For instance, the case of the GhostNet event of 2009 highlighted that cyber resilience should be a community-level concern that when addressed at the hyperlocal level, lends capacity to at-risk groups to shift into monitoring mode and can respond to the evolution of threats over time.

There is certainly more qualitative research that could be done to understand better the barriers and benefits to focussing on normative frameworks for those closest to cybersecurity incidents, past and present, in order to better mitigate future events. It is clear from the differential in depth of analysis between the events with desk research only versus those for which qualitative interviews were also conducted: the voices of those most affected by cybersecurity events provide key nuance are not present in secondary source reports or tertiary source reporting.

Our distilled findings coalesce around two main themes. They point to a gap in understanding the roles of a wide variety of actors and stakeholders in mitigating cybersecurity incidents. And they show a persistent disclarity in the interplay of norms, policies, and laws.

To bridge this gap, we recommend future research work that is focussed on understanding the interplay of cybersecurity norms and cybercrime legislation, where they overlap, align or work in opposition, with an aim to introduce greater stakeholder participation in the creation, enforcement and response mitigation as outlined in cybersecurity norms. Download [Full Report](#) here.

### **IGF 2021 Best Practice Forum on gender and digital rights: exploring the concept of gendered disinformation**

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Best Practice Forum on Gender and Digital Rights, in 2021, explores the concept of gendered disinformation. Disinformation can be defined as false information deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organization or country<sup>2</sup>. The false character

of the information can also result from 'manipulated information' - disinformation campaigns often rely on true, distorted, or emotional content that doesn't have a truth value. Gendered disinformation then attacks or undermines people based on their gender, or weaponizes gendered narratives for political, social or economic objectives.

The IGF Best Practice Forums (BPFs) provide a platform for experts and stakeholders to exchange experiences in addressing Internet policy issues, discuss and identify emerging and existing good practices. The objective is to collect from community experience, not to develop new policies or practices. BPF outputs intend to contribute to an understanding of global good practice, and to serve as a resource to inform policy discussions, standards development, business decisions, as well as public understanding, awareness, and discourse.

While specialist discussions and research continue at different venues to define gendered disinformation, and understand its mechanisms and impact, the BPF aims to provide a space to bring the issue to Internet governance discussions, raise awareness about the problem, call for action and share experiences with possible ways to mediate.

In the report gendered disinformation includes disinformation against people on the grounds of their gender and social constructs, including their gender identity and/or gender expression as well as disinformation against people on the grounds of sexual orientation - which often has gendered dimensions and weaponizes gendered stereotypes in similar ways.

2 WARDLE, Claire; DERAKHSHAN, Hossein. Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making. Council of Europe, Aug. 2018, 2nd revised edition. Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/information-disorder-report-version-august-2018/16808c9c77>.

Journalism, 'Fake News' and Disinformation: A Handbook for Journalism Education and Training. <https://en.unesco.org/fightfakenews>

Misogyny, homophobia, and transphobia are common features of gendered disinformation.

Disinformation differentiates from misinformation as it has the deliberate intent to misinform and an objective to harm.

The concept of gendered disinformation means any false and manipulated information that is intended to cause harm to women or people of diverse genders and sexualities. Gendered disinformation campaigns often target individuals with higher public status or holding higher positions such as politicians, CEOs, public advocates, journalists etc. According to Professor Alana Moceris (IE School of Global and Public Affairs), gendered disinformation delegitimizes women's participation in political life, undermining democracy and human rights all over the world. Disinformation may also be used to harm gender diverse people as it takes on disinformation which may escalate to instances of hate-based crimes and killings in hostile environments against gender diversity and sexuality .

In its discussions, the BPF approached the concept of gendered disinformation from the definition compiled by Judson et. al :

The term "gendered disinformation" can be used to describe information activities (creating, sharing, disseminating content) which:

a) Attacks or undermines people on the basis of their gender.

b) Weaponizes gendered narratives to promote political, social or economic objectives.

Other working definitions are slightly different. Lucina Di Meo, for example, originally defined gendered disinformation as the spread of deceptive or inaccurate information and images against women political leaders, journalists and female public figures, following story lines that draw on misogyny and stereotypical gender roles.

Gendered disinformation comes in different forms, such as, harmful social media posts and graphics, sexual fabrications, and other forms of conspiracy theories, and is used in different situations and at different places. The BPF discussed instances of gendered disinformation that are recognizable and visible, and shed light on the potential direct and indirect impact:

**Everyday gendered disinformation** - Not only those in high profile positions, those taking up engagement very visibly in their communities as rights defenders, or those having or aspiring political careers, are targets of gendered disinformation. Also women and gender diverse people who prefer not being on the barricades, can feel the impact of gendered disinformation, and for example the stereotypes that are spread.

**Youth experiences** - Misinformation and disinformation online affect the lives, learning and leadership of girls and young women.

**Journalists** - Gendered disinformation campaigns – on both the individual

journalist as well as other journalists and women in general – are particularly effective if combined with other attacks, such as online harassment and abuse, which is often gendered and aims at silencing women's voices in the public sphere.

**Politicians** - Rather than directly attacking the policy decisions women make, gender stereotypical characteristics and physical appearance are used instead, to challenge female politicians. It ultimately aims to paint the picture that women are unfit for leadership. It portrays women nominated or assigned higher public offices as unfit/undeserving/incompetent of such a position, which undermines their capabilities to lead. Consequently, this discourages other women from pursuing political careers or other higher positions.

**Women Human Rights Defenders** - In a global environment of hostility and intolerance against civil society actors, women's human rights defenders (WHRDs) remain particularly affected by the rise of gendered disinformation.

While gender disinformation is prevalent and growing, it is still a concept under construction. Being an issue that is rapidly expanding and developing, there are yet no clearly identified best practices. Rather what has been observed is that most nations and communities are trying to respond or take action to address the issue based on their experience and resources.

The primary burden of tackling gendered disinformation needs to fall on the social media platforms amplifying the harms

rather than on the women targeted by such campaigns and the social media users viewing them. Addressing gendered disinformation requires a multistakeholder approach. A multistakeholder approach ensures that we work towards a balance of rights, in particular disinformation and freedom of expression, as well as that all stakeholders involved are part of the process.

Action against gendered disinformation must not only be reactive, or focused on how an individual 'ought' to respond to a campaign against them. We need much more proactive action to reduce the risk of gendered disinformation occurring and prevent it from being amplified, and to better support those individuals put at risk because of it.

At IGF 2021, the BPF on Gender and Digital Rights held an open roundtable discussion on gendered disinformation and formulated the following calls to action:

- There is a need to engage all political players, in particular political parties, to improve awareness of the existence of gendered disinformation and the understanding of the impact of gendered disinformation for reaching political equity.
- There is a need to connect gendered disinformation to other human rights violations such as freedom of association or safety of marginalised groups. Reaching out, engaging, and exchanging experiences with groups who have already been dealing with disinformation can benefit all.

- The multistakeholder process provides a mechanism where solutions beyond legislation and regulation can be developed and propagated. It would also see stakeholders recommending solutions based on their role in the digital ecosystem.
- The IGF and other UN Forums can play an important role to involve and commit stakeholders to take action.

### Policy Network on Environment

Climate change, biodiversity loss, increasing pollution and their catastrophic consequences for the planet and communities continue to unfold in tandem, with UN scientists sounding “code red for humanity” as they warn that the climate will heat up beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius within the next 20 years. Another megatrend characterising the 21st century is digitalisation; the entry of technological devices and applications of information and communication technologies (ICTs) - hardware and software - into various areas of life and business.

*Digital technologies present opportunities for climate protection.*

Environmental data can provide a more accurate and complete picture of the state of the environment, which can be used to drive more effective policy and decision-making. Economic sectors such as agriculture can also benefit - guided by technological innovations, farmers can boost productivity by using natural resources more efficiently. Digitalisation

can enable more circular business models with improvements in tracking, traceability and data analytics for resource management. Digitalisation increasingly impacts transport and mobility, where - in the long term and in a best-case scenario - increased efficiency due to automation and car-sharing might cut today’s energy use levels in half (IEA, 2017).

However, these resource and efficiency gains are threatened to be offset by more frequent or more intensive use of products or services, also called rebound effects.

*...but they also cause a large environmental footprint that needs addressing by the global community.*

Digital does not mean immaterial: we are witnessing an overproduction of devices and related overuse and loss of resources when devices have reached the end of their lifespan. The environmental footprint of the digital world is estimated to virtually amount to about a 7th continent (or up to 5.6% of humanity’s global footprint), and operations related to ICT are expected to consume up to 20 percent of global electricity demand by 2030, with one-third stemming from data centers alone [5]. In the form of e-waste, improperly discarded digital objects contribute to the degradation of the environment: in 2020, a record number of 53.6 million metric tons (Mt) of electronic waste was released into the environment. E-waste is the world’s fastest growing waste stream, and it is estimated that by 2030 the amount will reach 74 million Mt. Faced with these realities, the environmental impact



of technology needs to be thoroughly investigated and adequately addressed if we expect digital transformation to deliver on its promises. Adopting the vision that nature and the Internet are global public goods, and their supporting resource-systems must be governed as global commons to ensure they reinforce each other. The transformative effect of digitalisation can be seen in the efficiencies derived from it in nature, in caring for nature when developing digital technologies, infrastructures, data and services, and in the improved governance that digitalisation brings to the coexistence of people and nature.

### **Recommendations on using digital technologies for the common good**

The authors of the Policy Network on Environment and Digitalisation (PNE) would like to offer guidance in proposing a spectrum of 15 concrete, actionable

policy recommendations (see Fig. 1 for an Overview) to ensure that the opportunities processes of digitalisation present can take full account of the challenges. The recommendations are sorted thematically by four issue areas: Environmental Data, Food & Water Systems, Supply Chain Transparency and Circularity, and Overarching Issues.

For **Environmental Data**, the authors stress the importance of Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Re-usable (FAIR) data. For existing and new datasets to be leveraged ethically and effectively, strong data governance guidelines and regulations from both people-centered and technical perspectives are deemed to be essential. The data must be accessible and presented in forms that make sense for diverse stakeholders. The technologies used to gather, manage, prepare, analyse, and distribute the data should be designed to support

cooperation between all stakeholders as well as producers and distributors of the data to maximise the impact of digitising environmental information.

Regarding **Food & Water Systems**, it is recommended to apply digitalisation with contextual specificity and sensitivity, respecting and complementing traditional systems. Governments are encouraged to commit significant resources to local community-based initiatives that are increasing capacities at local levels to collect and use data to inform decision-making for food and water security, and climate resilience. Furthermore, the authors call for the implementation of risk management policies regarding the vulnerabilities associated with the digitalisation of food & water systems.

On **Supply Chain Transparency and Circularity**, the authors expand on how digital technology products depend on a very complex supply chain. The digitalisation of the details and chain of custody of materials, parts, production of devices, use and reuse, recycling and recovery of secondary materials, can bring transparency and accountability to the ICT supply chain. By enhancing supply chain transparency, ICT stakeholders can demonstrate their determination and accountability to sustainability. International standards are pointed out to be vital tools to achieve transparency and traceability in all supply chains; by knowledge sharing, best practices can be elevated from the local to the international level, and environmental requirements and specifications for ICTs can be

identified. Finally, it is emphasised that the circular design of ICT products should be complimented with the implementation of circular business models such as offering refurbished second-hand products, ICT products as a service (e.g., leasing, collective ownership), product sharing and product buyback which incentivises producers to maximise the lifetime and durability of their products.

Finally, on the **Overarching Issues** identified - Competing Interests, Participation and Trust, Allocation of Resources, Technology Interoperability and Standards and Capacity Building - three more recommendations are suggested. One, to strive towards increasing inclusivity for individuals and communities. Two, to use data and digital technologies to foster evidence-based decision-making. And three, to have the courage to experiment with new approaches for participatory governance.

**From policy recommendation to implementation: including a multitude of stakeholders is vital for public value creation.** UN Member States are expected to play a leading role in acting on these recommendations. However, if the fight against climate change wants to be successful, a multitude of actors need to assume responsibility. Adapted to a given context, the inclusion and cooperation of other public, private and civil actors in the process of determining which instruments are best suited to operationalise, and eventually implement the policy objectives proposed in this document, is therefore vital in order to generate real public value. [View the full report here.](#)

## Policy Network on Meaningful Access

We have come a long way with local, national and global efforts towards universal connectivity and meaningful access, from a wide number of organizations across all stakeholder groups. However, the implementation of policies around meaningful access remains challenging.

The concept of meaningful access has emerged in response to the growing body of evidence that even when people have connectivity, they might not have been fully benefiting from the Internet. **Meaningful access is a combination of three key elements: affordable access, meaningful connectivity, and the social environment.** How one gets connected to the Internet is an equally important challenge to the experience that person will have once they are online.

While access to infrastructure is critical, without this access being inclusive, useful, sustainable and affordable, and linked to human capacity development and relevant content that can make it so, it will not achieve its full potential.

The Policy Network on Meaningful Access (PNMA) is a new type of intersessional activity under the United Nations Internet Governance Forum to establish an expert-led framework networks on broad Internet governance topics that create spaces for in-depth multistakeholder efforts, grounded on the:

- IGF mandate at paragraph 72 of Tunis Agenda, for the exchange of information

and engagement of stakeholders in particular from developing countries as well as capacity development in Internet Governance;

- Paragraph 93(e) from the United Nations Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation in para 93 (e) as it envisages a strengthened IGF with a view to making it more responsive and relevant to digital issues, and streamline the priority areas (global connectivity, digital inclusion, capacity building);
- More recently, Our Common Agenda 1st Commitment: Leave no one behind.

A Multistakeholder Working Group (MWG) has been created to steer the PNMA's work and provide linkages with ongoing relevant discussions in other fora. This group is composed of 25 high level experts representing leading intergovernmental and international organisations, research academic institutions, private sector companies, technical communities, as well as national, regional and thematic IGFs (NRIs).

In 2021, the PNMA MWG has decided not to concentrate its work on mapping or definition tracks since it is already covered in other fora. We will build on those work from a number of current and past efforts. The MWG agreed to explore concrete actions the members of the PNMA could support so that the main outcome of the PNMA is not only a set of recommendations. It has focused on the three overarching workstreams: Connectivity (Infrastructure & Business Models), Digital Inclusion (accessibility &

multilingualism) and Capacity development (technical skills training).

In addition, the PNMA MWG has actively collected concrete stories, case studies and local experiences, including contributions from ICANN, CITEL/Organization of American States, the ITU and UN Tech Envoy/ Roundtable 1A champions, UNESCO, APNIC, A4AI, IGF Italy, RIA, ISOC Youth Ambassadors, among many others. The group has also reviewed a number of current efforts to better describe the experience with and benefits from meaningful access. The current efforts are not looking at producing a unique definition, but to identify, map and understand the properties that those in the field identified as key, such as: Affordable, Reliable, Sustainable, Usable

(languages, bandwidth for applications), Useful (content, applications), Safe, Secure, Private, Autonomy (not only the access, but the how), Permanence (once connected, always connected), Willingness (or choice), Resilience (meaning the capacity or ability of networks to resist or survive crisis - accidental, political, operational etc - without loss of service).

At IGF 2021, the PNMA held a main session to promote this debate and formulated the following calls to action: There is an urgent need to understand why policy solutions already known and proven to be effective are not being more widely implemented. We have now established the network. The next phase of the PNMA should be to create a plan of action to bring it all together and in motion.



# NRIs Discussion Priorities in 2021

In 2021, 89 NRIs had hosted their annual meetings. It is an established procedure that the NRIs annual programmes are developed in a bottom-up manner through public calls for inputs issued to all stakeholders of their targeted communities. Usually, issues received are clustered within thematic discussion areas, subject for further consideration of the NRIs multistakeholder organising committees.

In order to understand global Internet governance issues' priorities, the IGF Secretariat analyses digital policy discussion areas through agendas of the NRIs annual meetings hosted during the mapped time period. Below is an overview of the 2021 discussion areas gathered across 89 NRIs annual meetings for 2021 IGF cycle.

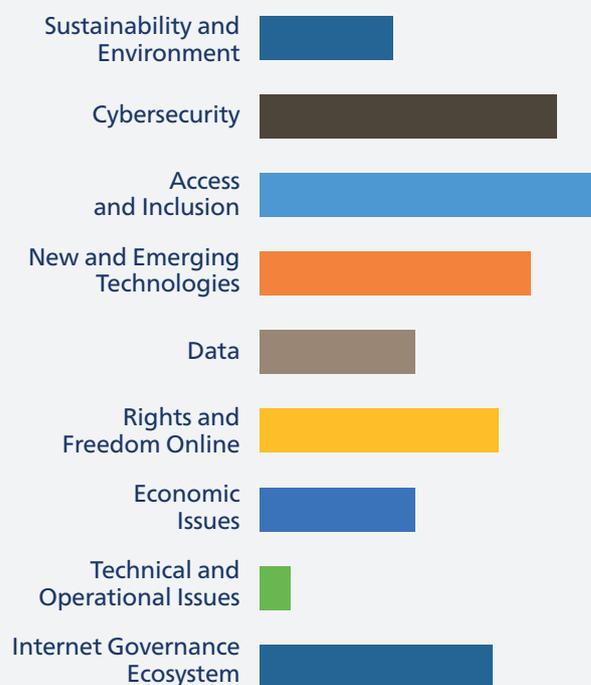
## Internet governance discussion priorities

By looking into the substantive orientation of the NRIs annual meeting programmes, it is evident that several discussion areas emerged as priorities across the majority of the NRIs. The discussion narratives mostly related to areas of access and digital inclusion, followed by cybersecurity, new and emerging technologies as well as rights and freedoms online. The processes for Internet governance discussion and decision-making framework also featured prominently the NRIs agendas.

In comparison to [2020 digital policy trends](#), it is evident that safety and security regained attention, while the biggest policy shift happened in respect to new and emerging technologies becoming the second top priority of the NRIs people-shaped agendas. However, it is worth of

noting that the majority of the issues discussed under the thematic clusters are crosscutting and discussed in correlation with each other, depending on the context.

**Graph 1: Priority discussion areas across 89 NRIs annual meetings in 2021**



A more in-depth review of the particular discussion areas shows that digital inclusion and access mostly related to affordability of broadband and mobile Internet access; digital skills and all-stakeholder inclusion, especially of vulnerable and marginalized groups. On the latter, a number of NRIs recognized people in rural areas, youth and women and girls as groups that require tailored action to be meaningfully included in digital dynamics.

Cybersecurity frameworks' prioritized issues related to the overall concept of cybersecurity public policy, safety online,

cybercrime and trust. The last year's trend of child and youth protection online continued to grow this year, as well.

NRIs communities also extensively discussed matters related to new and emerging technologies. The most represented issues related to introducing and benefiting from 5G technologies to governance of artificial intelligence. Notable were specific discussions about the way algorithms are designed and interact with people's rights and freedoms. Further, discussions developed around the governance of artificial intelligence, smart devices and the role blockchain technologies have in overall societal development.

Rights and freedoms online were also a thematic area highly prioritized by many NRIs. Close to 40% NRIs multistakeholder discussions focused on human rights, such as the right to privacy and freedom of expression, but also the ways digital identity reflects on economic and social rights.

Areas related to the Internet governance ecosystem focused on the current 'state of play' of national, regional and global Internet governance processes. This domain discussion a myriad of topics, from reflecting on the past 18 years of the WSIS processes, to the role big tech companies plan in the discussion and decision-making process to the online culture developed so far.

Unlike last year, economic issues were slightly reduced in terms of the explicit representation on the NRIs 2021 agendas. But, it is important to underline that issues related to the digital economy overall were crosscutting many other thematic

clustered analysed. This is especially related to cybersecurity and trust, where the safety of e-trade and e-commerce was broadly discussed, to access and digital inclusion where economic benefits were discussed as one of the most important consequences of digital inclusion and transformation.

Data discussion areas continued to relate to data protection, data governance and data privacy. Unlike last year, where data localisation was part of many NRIs agendas, this year's overview did not note explicit focus, although it emerged as part of the overall data governance context.

Sustainability, and especially matters related to intersections of environment and digitalisation continue the last year's trend of growth. Especially, NRIs discussed how Internet-based technologies could help environmental sustainability including mitigating or preventing harmful effects of natural disasters, managing e-waste and reducing the carbon footprint of ICTs.

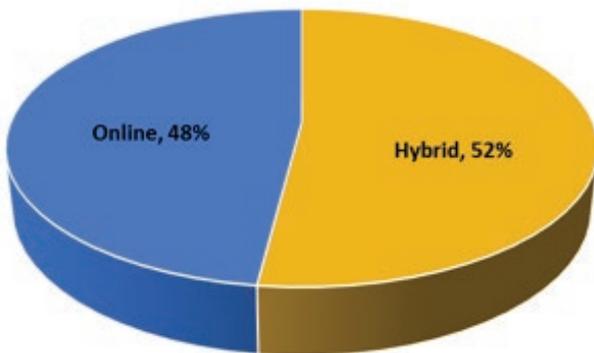
Significantly less than last year, present across the NRIs agendas were also technical and operational matters, such as the core Internet infrastructure and domain name system (DNS).

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to impact discussion narratives. While not many NRIs included a direct reference to the pandemic in their discussion agendas, the discussion contexts notably reflected also the pandemic's impact, especially in respect to the proven need of everyone to have meaningful access to the Internet and the fact that digital divides are now more illustrated, globally.

### COVID-19 impact on NRIs

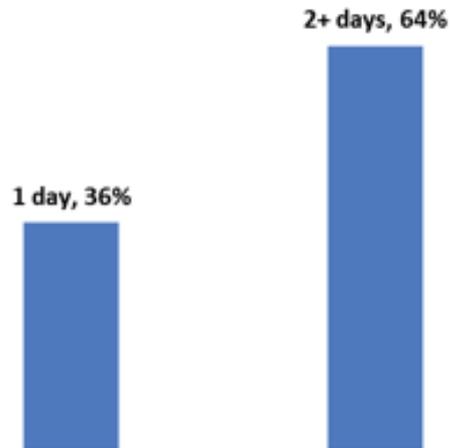
As noted above, substantively, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the 2021 NRIs discussion narratives. However, the biggest impact still occurred in the domain of procedures, specifically how the meetings were hosted. Last year, the pandemic reduced the ability of many NRIs to host the annual meeting at all. This year, more NRIs managed to host their meetings: from 71 in 2020 to 89 in 2021. Unlike last year, when less than 3% hosted their meetings in person, while all others were hosted online, this year, despite the pandemic’s presence globally, 48% NRIs hosted their annual meetings completely online, while 52% hosted their meetings in a hybrid format, which means with onsite and online participation possibility.

**Graph 2:** Format of 89 NRIs annual meetings in 2021



2021 also saw an increase in capacity development activities across NRIs. These took different forms, from webinars to producing written publications on substantive and process-related Internet governance matters, to workshops, seminars and schools on Internet governance. Youth engagement was discussed broadly across 89 NRIs annual

**Graph 3:** Duration of NRIs meetings in 2021



meetings which took place this year.

Given the online format of NRIs meetings, there were variations also in the overall design of the meetings. While 36% hosted 1-day long annual meetings, 64% of meetings’ discussions spanned across 2 or more days. There were cases where NRIs hosted workshops and other session types over several weeks’ time periods. The main goal of this creative and strategic approach to meeting formats was to reduce the overall fatigue noted by many and allow for a balanced and easier manage schedule of important and complex discussions.

The average participation across all 89 NRIs meetings in 2021, indicates that around 15,000 individuals directly participated in the IGF-like discussion processes around the world.

# Annex A: Statistics

## Breakdown of Registrations

The 16th IGF annual meeting gathered 10,371 participants. Below are the breakdowns by stakeholder and regional groups.

By stakeholder (percentage)		By region (percentage)	
Government	19%	African Group	19%
Legislator	2%	Asia-Pacific Group	13%
Intergovernmental Organisation	8%	Eastern European Group	32%
Civil Society	35%	Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC)	6%
Private Sector	25%	Western European and Others Group (WEOG)	23%
Technical Community	12%	Intergovernmental Organisation	7%
Press/Media	1%		
By gender (percentage)		Newcomers (percentage)	
Female	47%	Newcomers	67%
Male	52%		
Other	1%		

## Remote Hubs

### 39 remote hubs at IGF 2021

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Represented 4 regions

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59% from Africa

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13% from Latin America and Caribbean

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8% from Asia Pacific

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13% from WEOG

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8% from Eastern Europe

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## IGF 2021 preparation

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40 Members of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG)

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3 Open Consultation and MAG Meetings

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20 Virtual MAG meetings

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4 MAG Working Groups

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## Sessions

### 318 sessions at IGF 2021

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1 Opening session

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8 Main Sessions

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83 Workshops

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35 Open Forums

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28 Town Halls

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10 Launches and Awards

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30 Lightning Talks

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6 Networking Sessions

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18 DC Sessions

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7 NRI Collaborative Sessions

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72 Pre-Events (Day 0 Sessions)

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9 High-level Leaders Track

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4 Parliamentary Track

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1 Global Youth Summit

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2 BPF sessions

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2 PN sessions

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1 Closing session

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1 Open Mic

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## Media

### YouTube

Live stream	9,481 views
Videos uploaded	13,818 views

Close to 2,300 media articles produced in 85 countries, major coverage in the Host Country of Poland.

Top media coverage in the Host Country: Polish public broadcaster TVP, the two largest private broadcasters (TVN and Polsat), all five largest daily newspapers in Poland, the two largest radios (RMF FM and Radio Zet), the largest online portal ONET and many more, topping 1,800 articles in total.

Top media coverage globally: the Russian press agencies Lenta and Tass, Milenio (Mexico), Prensa Latina (Cuba), Devdiscourse, EurActiv, the Syrian News Agency SANA, Saudi Gazette, TeleSur (Venezuela), Sputnik, Noticias RTV (Nicaragua), Malaysia News, AnnaBaa (Iraq) and many more.

9,600 mentions of the IGF on social media, potentially reaching 728 million accounts and evoking 23,300 engagements (clicks, likes, shares, comments etc.)

The headline video was viewed around 7,800 times and the Facebook Live streams on the UN DESA account were seen over 3,900 times so far.

Major influencers for the IGF on social media included:

- Official UN accounts: UN Secretary-General António Guterres, the flagship accounts of UN, UNESCO, UN DESA, IGF
- Host-Country-run accounts of IGF2021, the Chancellery of Poland's Prime Minister
- IT community and civil society: GitHub, Electronic Frontier Foundation, Jan Zygmuntowski
- Official accounts of global policymakers: The ITC Ministry of Colombia, Member of the Pakistan National Assembly Naz Baloch, Tanzanian MP Neema Lugangira

The #IGF2021 hashtag has been used in over 9,000 and #InternetUnited in over 1,600 social media posts.

# Annex B: Documentation and Process

## Outputs

IGF 2021 outputs, including IGF 2021 messages, session reports, press releases, and IGF participant statements, can be found [here](#).

## Session Reports, Recordings and Transcripts

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[Reports](#)

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[Transcripts](#)

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[Recordings](#)

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## Intersessional Work

The community-led intersessional activities that occur throughout the year offer the IGF community the opportunity to work on substantive and concrete longer-term projects in the field of Internet governance:

### Best Practice Forums (BPFs):

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[Cybersecurity](#)

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[Gender and Digital Rights](#)

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### Policy Networks (PNs):

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[Environment](#)

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[Meaningful Access](#)

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### Dynamic Coalitions (DCs):

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[Accessibility and Disability](#)

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[Blockchain Technologies](#)

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[Children's Rights in the Digital Environment](#)

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[Community Connectivity](#)

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[Core Internet Values](#)

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[Data and Trust](#)

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[Data Driven Health Technologies](#)

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[DNS Issues](#)

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[Gender and Internet Governance](#)

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[Innovative Approaches to Connecting the Unconnected](#)

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[Internet and Jobs](#)

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[Internet of Things](#)

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[Internet Rights & Principles](#)

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[Internet Standards, Security and Safety](#)

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[Internet Universality Indicators](#)

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[Network Neutrality](#)

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[Platform Responsibility](#)

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[Public Access in Libraries](#)

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[Schools of Internet Governance](#)

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[Small Island Developing States in the Internet Economy](#)

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[Sustainability of Journalism and News Media](#)

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[Youth Coalition on Internet Governance](#)

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## National, Regional and Youth IGF Initiatives (NRIs)

National, Regional and Youth IGF Initiatives (NRIs) are organic and independent formations that are discussing issues pertaining to the Internet Governance from the perspective of their respective communities, while acting in accordance with the main principles of the global IGF.

The status of NRIs in 2021:

- 141 NRIs recognised in total
- 105 NRIs represented at IGF 2020
- 9 more countries/regions have established IGF processes since IGF 2020

Below are the sources where to find more information about the NRIs and their work.

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[About the NRIs](#)

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[National IGFs](#)

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[Regional IGFs](#)

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[Youth IGFs](#)

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[Preparatory work of the NRIs](#)

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## Preparatory and Engagement Phase

An overview of sessions held during the IGF 2021 preparatory and engagement phase is available at <https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/igf-2021-preparatory-and-engagement-phase>.

The IGF meeting programme is prepared by the MAG and the IGF Secretariat over the course of the year. Key decisions on the programme are taken in the face-to-face meetings as well as regular virtual meetings of the MAG leading into the IGF.

Following an approach that was introduced in 2019, the preparatory processes started with the identification of the issue areas. These were developed by the MAG based on input and contributions submitted by the community. The programme for IGF 2021 was then built around these tracks, while additional elements were added throughout the process (such as high-level sessions).

Key elements of the preparatory processes included:

- A call to [Take Stock of IGF 2020 and Suggest Improvements for IGF 2021](#) was open until 20 January. The contributions were summarised in a [synthesis output document](#).
- A [call for thematic inputs](#) was open until 31 January. The [list of received inputs](#) and an [analysis](#) are available.
- The MAG identified [main focus areas](#), which were later detailed in the [IGF 2021 Guide to Issues and Policy Questions](#).

- A call for session proposals was open until 26 May, inviting all stakeholders to consider applying for the type(s) of session that best fit their interests. Stakeholders were also able to apply to host a networking session at the IGF 2021.
- A [Pre-meeting guide](#) was developed to help participants navigate through the IGF 2021 programme.

In addition to the overall collective work, the MAG worked on particular segments of the Forum's preparations to advance the overall process through four working groups:

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[Working Group on Outreach, Engagement and Communications Strategy \(WG-OEC\)](#)

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[Working Group on Hybrid Meetings \(WG-Hybrid\)](#)

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[Working Group on IGF Strategy \(WG-Strategy\)](#)

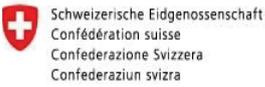
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# Annex C: IGF 2021 Donors

The IGF project and its Secretariat is funded through donations from various stakeholder groups. While host countries bear the majority of the costs associated with holding the annual IGF meeting, the IGF Secretariat’s activities are funded through extra-budgetary contributions paid into a multi-donor Trust Fund administered

by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). IGF 2021 was primarily funded by the Host Country – the Government of Poland, as well as the Trust Fund and in-kind support.

In 2021, the following donors supported the IGF:

	Government of Finland		The Internet Society (ISOC) Foundation
	European Commission		Government of the Netherlands
	Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)		Government of the United Kingdom
	Number Resource Organization (NRO)		Government of Switzerland
	IGFSF		Google
	European Registry for Internet domains (EURid)		CISCO
	Microsoft		