

IGF 2024 SECOND OPEN CONSULTATIONS AND MAG MEETING

Discussion about the international digital governance processes and initiatives

26 June 2024, 16:30 to 17:45, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The title of this session is “international digital governance processes and initiatives”, so our intervention is crafted around this theme. This title alludes to the fact that so many processes in the digital space are ongoing – we can’t seem to name just one alone, and all have synergies. The IGF is an important forum for discussion on the myriad initiatives underway – from AI to data. However, it is pertinent for us to consider how the IGF can best feed into this ever-growing list of initiatives.

One, the IGF, and the MAG by extension, can add value by focusing the annual IGF on the links between digital processes and Internet governance specifically. The IGF’s focus on Internet governance is a unique opportunity to examine how digital developments relate back to the Internet and its continuous evolution. Rather than looking at this as a limitation, we should look at the IGF’s remit as an excellent opportunity to provide expertise in a way that newer fora, which focus on specific technologies, can’t. In particular, the IGF has been a hub of discussions on governance processes for years – we have real expertise we can bring to conversations on new digital technologies. We certainly can share lessons learned from the initial development of frameworks for Internet governance.

Two, the IGF can add value by sourcing a wide range of perspectives on an equal footing. The IGF is a truly multistakeholder forum, convening governments, private sector representatives, civil society representatives, technical community experts and academic experts from all over the world. This is a real strength, and bringing the views of IGF participants, including the views of NRI participants, together to meaningfully contribute to the WSIS+20 Review process will be an essential task for the MAG over the next 18 months.

Three, the IGF and the MAG can add value by prioritising engagement carefully. The IGF, in truth, has limited human and financial resources. We should work together to make a plan of action to properly resource the IGF, but we also need to be realistic about what we can achieve. The IGF could make the most impact by focusing on one or two core processes, rather than scrambling to feed in everywhere. It is paramount that the IGF particularly focuses on WSIS+20 – this process is at the core of the IGF’s mandate, and indeed, the Tunis Agenda specifically sets out the IGF’s mandate. To lose sight of the WSIS process, or not fully contribute to it, would be a mistake. The MAG should prioritise its resources over the course of the next 18 months to make proactively engaging with WSIS+20 the top priority.

Thank you for the opportunity to intervene in the important discussions we have had today. The UK looks forward to attending the 2024 IGF and actively realising this year’s theme: “Building our multistakeholder digital future”.