

## IGF Dynamic Coalitions: Digital cooperation in practice

### *Key findings and issues to explore*

This is an abridged version of the [full report](#). It only includes key findings and issues to explore as discussions continue on how to strengthen Dynamic Coalitions (DCs) and enhance their contribution to the IGF.

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## I. Dynamic Coalitions: an introduction

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Dynamic Coalitions are strongly committed to their bottom-up, independent and autonomous nature, and believe that this needs to be maintained. As such, guidelines for DCs are not intended to be a form of control, but rather a way to establish clear expectations for DCs in their governance and practice. Moreover, the guidelines serve to provide predictability for the conduct of the work of a DC and help prevent it deviating from the established DC model.

### Issues to explore

#### **1. Encourage awareness of existing guidelines and rules applicable to DCs' work (including the IGF Code of Conduct (e.g., the *no ad hominem attacks* rule). Consider a stricter scrutiny of DCs' compliance with these guidelines. (DCCG, IGF Secretariat)<sup>1</sup>**

Some DCs are of the view that more needs to be done to ensure that all coalitions are fully aware of the guidelines.

Some coalitions argue that they could generally benefit from a stricter scrutiny and some level of 'quality control'<sup>2</sup> from the IGF Secretariat side. For instance, ensuring that the DCs which are listed as active are indeed engaged in some activities throughout the year would help maintain the overall credibility of coalitions.

One suggestion was made to consider including additional principles in the DC guidelines, such as balance, fairness and transparency.

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<sup>1</sup> These brackets offer an indication of who could take up the issues to further discuss and, potentially, implement them (e.g. DCs themselves, the DCCG, IGF Secretariat, MAG).

<sup>2</sup> Quotes included throughout this report come from responses to the DC survey, responses to the public survey or discussions with DCs.

## 2. Provide more clarity on what is expected from DCs throughout a year. (IGF Secretariat)

Some DCs felt that it is not always clear what is expected from them throughout a year, in terms of individual work and contribution to IGF processes. More clarity from this early in the IGF planning cycle would be helpful. Also, when DCs are requested to contribute to something, it would be useful to share information with them as early as possible (even only as a heads-up that something will happen and they will be invited to contribute) and offer broader timeframes for contributions.

At the same time, it is important to **find a balance between what is asked from DCs and what they can deliver**. Since DCs rely largely on voluntary work, attention needs to be paid to not overloading them with requests and tasks.

## 3. Devise mechanisms to support the transition of retiring DCs when they are near the end of their project or have become inactive. (DCCG, IGF Secretariat)

One option could be to have an outlined roadmap for the DC retirement process. Such a process would include steps for information sharing with active DCs, so the work of the retiring DC can be relayed on and put to use effectively.

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## II. Dynamic Coalitions under the magnifying glass

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### Objectives, focus and membership<sup>3</sup>

DCs are diverse in terms of their respective focus and objectives. Some DCs are primarily for stakeholders to share information and/or undertake research or analysis on certain Internet policy issues, while others have specific aims to deliver outputs in the form of policy recommendations or guidelines.

DC membership is usually understood as membership of DC mailing lists. There is, however, no clear definition or agreement among coalitions as to what constitutes membership.

Most DCs experience challenges with membership engagement.

### Issues to explore

#### 1. Clarify what DC membership means. (DCCG, DCs)

The DCCG could develop guidelines regarding DC membership. For instance, is it simply about being subscribed to a mailing list? Is it more? It would be up to individual DCs to decide whether they apply such guidelines to their own understanding of membership.

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<sup>3</sup> Subsections II.1.1. & II.1.2. in the full report.

## 2. Establish minimum standards of engagement for DC members. (DCCG, DCs)

The DCCG could develop a set of options for DCs to consider as minimum standards of engagement for their members. It would be up to individual DCs to decide whether and how they apply such standards to their members.

One suggestion was to introduce a rule that would lead to the automatic exclusion of a member if he/she has no activity in the DC for a number of years (e.g. two years). An opposing view was that members cannot be forced to contribute. Some join a DC list because they want to know what happens in a particular area, not necessarily because they want to contribute to the work.

Alternatively, other ideas that draw from current governance frameworks employed by active DCs (e.g. the Youth Coalition on Internet Governance<sup>4</sup>) include giving individuals interested in a particular DC the option of having full member or observer status and/or adding a yearly 'check in' exercise to take stock of who is actively participating or passively receiving information. This way, no one who wants to merely receive updates would be penalised if they are not actively engaging.

## 3. Explore options that could help DCs attract more engagement from their members, on a more consistent basis. (DCs)

Building on the observation that DC members tend to react/engage when they are invited to contribute to a specific activity, it was suggested that one way to keep members engaged is to make sure there are ongoing activities/projects/initiatives they can contribute to. Here, however, it is essential to have a coordinator (of the full DC or of a specific work track within a DC) that can dedicate time and resources to keeping the activity going. Most of the time people don't know how they can contribute, so clear guidance from a dedicated coordinator would be key.

## Governance mechanisms<sup>5</sup>

Some DCs have written frameworks (e.g. terms of reference, charters) to articulate the ways they work, but most function on a more ad-hoc basis, while being bound by the general DC Guidelines.

DCs have various types of governance structures, including coordinators, chairs, steering committees (with or without limited terms). Some run elections for these roles, others have more ad-hoc processes for appointing holders of such roles. There are also DCs with no clear leadership/coordination roles.

Governance challenges sometimes occur (e.g. commitments not fulfilled, difficulties in securing new chair/coordinators when roles become vacant).

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<sup>4</sup> See the Youth Coalition on Internet Governance's charter for information on how this process is conducted: <https://yciqweb.wordpress.com/charter/>

<sup>5</sup> Subsection II.1.3. in the full report.

## Issues to explore

### 1. Recommend that DCs develop written governance frameworks. (DCCG)

Such a recommendation could be included in the DC Guidelines.

It was argued that having governance frameworks in place would provide clarity for DC members and others outside of the coalition on how the coalition is run and how work is expected to happen. It would also contribute to the credibility of DCs.

### 2. Develop a blueprint for DC governance frameworks, to serve as a source of inspiration for DCs that want to develop such frameworks. (DCCG, IGF Secretariat)

The blueprint would be based on the experience of DCs which already have governance frameworks in place, and would list options for interested coalitions to consider if they intend to develop such frameworks. The blueprint would not impose obligations on how DCs should govern their work, but rather list aspects that governance frameworks could cover: how the work is conducted, how coordinators/chairs/etc. are appointed, how outputs are developed, etc.

## Resources<sup>6</sup>

Most DCs conduct their work on a completely voluntary basis. This brings some challenges when it comes to the continuity and consistency of DC work. Some DCs benefit from support for various organisations (e.g. human resources to engage in DC work, administrative support).

Most DCs do not benefit from dedicated funds to support their substantive work. Some coalitions have managed to secure funds for activities such as production and translation of key documents.

Most DCs consider that they would benefit from funding, but are unable to find it. Others have deliberately decided not to seek funding, out of concerns that such funding might come with strings attached.

## Issues to explore

### 1. Set up a working group to explore fundraising options for DCs. (DCCG)

The working group could start from documenting the experiences of those coalitions which have managed to secure some funds. It could also build a repository of potential funding sources individual DCs could look into when in search for funds.

### 2. Open a discussion on whether and how the IGF could offer some financial support to DCs or assist them in their fundraising efforts. (DCCG, IGF Secretariat)

While acknowledging the financial constraints the IGF is dealing with, a few DCs have suggested that coalitions would benefit from some financial support from the IGF. One suggestion was for the IGF to do some fundraising specifically for DCs. Other coalitions,

<sup>6</sup> Subsection II.1.4. in the full report.

however, noted that caution would be needed in this regard, as funds from the IGF might have implications for the independent nature of DCs.

Another suggestion was for the IGF to consider allocating some funds to support the participation of DC members in annual IGF meetings. Should this be implemented, a mechanism for the allocation of such funds would be devised together with the DCCG.

### **3. Consider introducing a requirement in the DC recognition process for a new DC to indicate how it plans to ensure the coalition's sustainability.** (IGF Secretariat, DCCG)

This process would make the financial wellbeing of Dynamic Coalitions more transparent from the beginning and allow for a better understanding of the financial needs and shortcomings of future DCs. This would provide clarity on whether and how the DC will be funded, by whom and for how long. It could also sensitise both the IGF and the DC organisers to the issues of financing as they think about setting up a dynamic coalition.

## **DCs activities<sup>7</sup>**

DCs conduct most of their work through mailing lists. Some hold more or less regular online meetings. A few have working groups to carry out certain activities.

The most common types of activities carried out by coalitions include the hosting of events (webinars, meetings with various stakeholders, meetings on the margins of NRIs and other events, etc.) and the publication of various documents (papers, reports, newsletters, etc.).

There is a concern that sometimes the main activity of certain DCs is represented by the sessions they host at the annual IGF. This seems to be contrary to the dynamic nature of coalitions and their status of intersessional work tracks, expected to carry out activities year-long.

### **Issues to explore**

#### **1. Develop guidelines on what constitutes DC activities.** (DCCG)

Such guidelines could help provide more clarity to DCs as to what is expected from them. For instance, is the exchange of updates on the DC mailing list considered an activity?

#### **2. Set more expectations for DCs regarding their dynamic and intersessional nature.** (DCCG, IGF Secretariat)

One option could be to **require DCs to demonstrate that they are truly active intersessionally**, for instance by producing a substantive output document on the focus issue (other than the annual report), running a project, hosting various events, etc. It would be up to DCs to choose how to demonstrate their dynamic and intersessional nature, as long as they can show that they do more than simply hosting a session at the annual IGF.

Such a requirement could have other implications as well, such as pushing DC members into

<sup>7</sup> Subsection II.2.1. in the full report.

being more active or raising the profile of DCs and, implicitly, of the IGF.

## DC outputs<sup>8</sup>

DCs have different experiences when it comes to whether, how often and what kind of outputs they produce. When DCs produce outputs, these take various forms: papers, studies and reports on focus topics, policy guides, recommendations, compilations of good practices, statements.

Usually, output documents are drafted by DC coordinators/chair/steering teams and are then subject to review by the broader membership. Some DCs form working groups to take the lead in drafting documents, which are later open for discussion within the membership. In a few cases, DCs share their draft outputs for feedback beyond their membership.

Only a few DCs have written procedures on how their outputs are developed.

DCs feel that more could be done – both by themselves and the MAG/IGF Secretariat – to promote coalitions and their outputs within and beyond the IGF ecosystem.

### Issues to explore

#### 1. Develop guidelines on what constitutes DC outputs. (DCCG)

For instance, such guidelines – dedicated to those DCs that develop outputs – would look into how to make a difference between DC outputs and work produced by DC member organisations.

#### 2. Encourage DCs to have written procedures on how their output documents are developed. (DCCG)

A recommendation to this aim could be included in the DC Guidelines.

It was said that transparent, inclusive and consensus-based procedures for taking decisions about DC outputs would offer clarity and predictability both to DC members and to the outputs' target audiences.

#### 3. Create a working group to develop recommendations on what can be done to improve the visibility of DCs and their work. (DCs, DCCG, IGF Secretariat, MAG)

The group could start by exploring the following suggestions.

For DCs themselves:

- Develop strategic plans with key events and engagements on a yearly basis.
- Run awareness campaigns on the focus issues; organise press and online media updates/briefings.

<sup>8</sup> Subsection II.2.2. in the full report.

- ❑ Promote DCs output in other fora, events and meetings outside the IGF.

For the IGF:

- ❑ **Enhance the visibility of DCs** and their activities and outputs on the IGF website, as well as their promotion via IGF social media channels. One suggestion was to set up a DC Twitter account to share DC news and outputs.
- ❑ Include the DCs in the **development, implementation and periodic review of IGF communications strategies**.
- ❑ **Facilitate dialogue between DCs and other processes and initiatives within and beyond the IGF**. For instance, regular meetings between the DCCG and NRIs could help make DCs work and outputs more visible among NRIs. Identifying opportunities for connecting DCs with relevant UN processes, bodies and initiatives was also suggested.<sup>9</sup> Another point was related to the envisioned creation of an IGF Multistakeholder High-Level Body: It was said that having a communication channel with such a body could be useful to DCs and help increase the visibility of their outputs.
- ❑ Support the development of a **booklet with short summaries of DC outputs**, to be published as a stand-alone document – with a note explaining that the outputs are independently produced by DCs. The summaries could be produced by DCs themselves and ‘verified’ by the Secretariat to ensure compliance with the IGF Code of Conduct.
- ❑ Devise a **framework for the IGF to showcase major DC achievements**. For instance, an award scheme could be instituted to highlight achievement, similar to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) prizes.
- ❑ Devise a **framework for the IGF to ‘endorse’ some DC work and make it a formal part of IGF outcomes**, in line with some predetermined criteria.
  - ❑ While a few DCs have called for their outputs to be integrated into the main output documents of the IGF, others noted that, should there be a desire to change the current approach, a discussion involving DCs, the MAG, the IGF Secretariat and the general community would need to be started, to fully understand and assess the conditions and implications of such a change.

One recurring argument coming up in discussions with DC was that, if outputs are given more weight and visibility, this could act as an incentive for coalitions to be more active and for members to be more engaged.

## DC coordination and cooperation activities<sup>10</sup>

The DCCG is generally seen as an important cooperation mechanism for DCs, allowing them to advance common objectives, strengthen cooperation, better understand IGF processes and

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<sup>9</sup> For example, the DC on Small Island Developing States in the Internet Economy said they would benefit from linkages with the UN system’s work on small island developing states.

<sup>10</sup> Subsection II.4. in the full report.

coordinate DCs participation in IGF processes.

DCs sometimes also cooperate on topics of common interest, for instance through organising joint sessions, issuing joint statements and collaborating in the framework of various projects.

## Issues to explore

### 1. Identify additional modalities to strengthen cooperation between DCs. (DCs, DCCG)

- ❑ Host online collaborative sessions a few times a year where several DCs come together and discuss crossover issues.
- ❑ At the annual IGF, have both a formal session for DC coordinators and some social engagement/informal network opportunities for DCs to get together, share good practices and build a stronger sense of a community.
- ❑ Have regular calls for DC coordinators/chairs to exchange experiences and discuss what they do. These could happen in the framework of DCCG calls or in addition to them.
- ❑ Enable DCCG meetings to offer more opportunities for DCs to talk about their own substantive work. Encourage all DCs to actively contribute to DCCG work.

## Relations with the MAG and the IGF Secretariat<sup>11</sup>

DCs are relatively satisfied with their relations with the Secretariat, noting that Secretariat support has improved in recent years and highlighting the usefulness of a dedicated focal point for DCs.

Notwithstanding the independent nature of DCs, many would welcome seeing the MAG and the coalitions work closer together on certain issues. More clarity on how the MAG generally perceives DCs would also be welcome.

## Issues to explore

### 1. Maintain, and, where possible, expand IGF Secretariat support for DCs. Foster closer relations between the two. (IGF Secretariat, DCs)

- ❑ Continue to have a focal point for DCs within the Secretariat.
- ❑ Make it a practice to have 1:1 calls between Secretariat and DCs, maybe once or twice a year.
- ❑ Considering that the IGF ecosystem can be difficult to understand and navigate, support from the Secretariat in this regard would be welcome. Such support could take the form of intro guides explaining the IGF processes and/or regular calls where the Secretariat can provide updates on what else is happening at the IGF and how DCs could contribute.

<sup>11</sup> Subsection II.5. in the full paper.



- ❑ Consider ways in which the Secretariat could support (for instance, through capacity development initiatives) DCs to strengthen their internal capacities and widen their impact, including beyond the IGF.

## **2. Foster a closer relationship between the MAG and DCs. (MAG, DCCG, DCs)**

- ❑ Improve the communication between the MAG and DCs. Encourage MAG members to learn more about DCs and to provide more clarity on how the group generally perceives DCs.
- ❑ The MAG to consider 'advocating' for more inclusion of DCs in IGF processes.
- ❑ Encourage MAG members to join and actively participate in the DCs that are working on issues relevant to their interests and expertise.
- ❑ Consider a system of liaisons between the MAG and DCs that could assist DCs in reaching out to specific communities and stakeholder groups.
- ❑ An additional suggestion was to explore a potential role for the MAG in the process of recognising DCs.

## **3. Ensure there is a balance between what DCs ask from the Secretariat and the MAG and what they are ready to 'offer in return', keeping in mind the autonomous and independent nature of DCs. (DCs)**

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# **III. Dynamic Coalitions' wider integration into IGF processes**

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## **Participation in annual IGF meetings<sup>12</sup>**

Both DCs and community members generally see value in the individual sessions and the main sessions that DCs host at the annual IGF. The coalitions are aware, however, that improvements are needed to increase the visibility of such sessions and attract more participation.

Many believe that more can be done to enhance the presence of DCs at the annual IGF and further integrate them into the annual programme.

### **Issues to explore**

#### **1. Improve the planning, running and promotion of DC sessions. (DCs, DCCG, IGF Secretariat)**

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<sup>12</sup> Subsection III.1. in the full paper.

- ❑ Better promote DC sessions. For instance, the participation of DCs in the newcomers track and in the IGF Village (e.g. through a joint booth) could offer an opportunity to raise visibility on their IGF sessions and their work in general.
- ❑ Make DC sessions more attractive so they secure more participation from beyond the coalition network. For instance, the sessions should not only showcase how DCs have tackled certain IG issues to date, but also highlight further actions and approaches.
- ❑ Encourage each DC session to remind participants about the broader network of DCs and point them towards more information.
- ❑ Encourage DCs to attend each other's sessions – in particular when they cover similar or related topics – and support each other.
- ❑ Foster more cooperation between DCs with regard to the sessions they host at the IGF, to avoid duplication and explore synergies/complementarity. DCCG calls could be used to facilitate discussions on these sessions and encourage DCs to work together on topics of joint interest.

## **2. Create more opportunities for DCs to make use of the IGF meetings to advance their work.** (IGF Secretariat, MAG, DCCG)

For instance, additional space could be provided for DCs to run interviews, hold break-out sessions, allow their working groups to meet, etc. As an argument, it was said that 'the need to gather data and to attain the expert input and reach consensus on a sensitive topic may take more than the one hour a DC receives'.

## **3. Enhance the presence of DCs at the annual IGF meetings.** (DCs, DCCG, IGF Secretariat)

This could be done through further integrating DCs into other elements of the IGF meeting programme, to 'break down silos and foster collaboration between actors working in adjacent areas'. Options to consider include:

- ❑ Encourage DCs to have joint sessions at the IGF meeting (beyond the main session), 'to emphasise and explore the reality that issues do not exist in silos'.
- ❑ Foster more connections between DCs and other IGF sessions. For instance, inform organisers of workshops and other sessions that they can reach out to DCs for expertise in certain areas.
- ❑ Create linkages between DCs and the main sessions, the high-level leaders track and the parliamentary track. For instance, host a session for parliamentarians to meet DCs.
- ❑ Encourage and support joint sessions between DCs, BPFs, PNs and NRIs when they tackle similar or connected topics.

## **4. Consider approaches to increase the involvement and contributions of DCs in the planning of IGF annual meetings.** (DCs, DCCG, MAG)

- ❑ Encourage and enable a more active participation of DCs in MAG meetings, so they could contribute their views and experiences to the discussions.

- ❑ Seek input from DCs on the selection of themes, emerging issues, policy questions, tracks and format of sessions. This could be done, for instance, through consultations with DC representatives; surveys/polling the DCs for issues; and having representatives of the DCCG contribute actively throughout the year to the MAG working groups that define these issues. This would be especially important when the major themes of the IGF specifically reflect the subject matter of one or more DCs.
- ❑ Invite relevant DCs to contribute to the shaping of other main sessions and support the MAG in this regard.

## Relations with other IGF intersessional workstreams<sup>13</sup>

DCs generally welcome collaboration with other IGF intersessional workstreams, acknowledging the related benefits. However, such collaboration often requires additional resources, which DCs may not have.

### Issues to explore

#### **Actively encourage more collaboration between DCs and other IGF intersessional workstreams.** (DCs, DCCG, IGF Secretariat, BPFs, PNs)

This could be done through offering more opportunities for the workstreams to interact with one another.

- ❑ Regularly share relevant information about the work of BPFs/PNs across DC channels, and the other way around. Include clear information on how DCs can contribute to BPFs/PNs work (while ensuring that such opportunities exist in the first place).
- ❑ Invite BPFs and PNs to DCCG meetings, to enable exchanges between these groups. Or organise separate meetings (e.g. DCs–BPFs, DCs–PNs) to raise awareness about each other’s work and foster more collaboration.
- ❑ PNs and BPFs, which benefit from dedicated Secretariat support on an individual basis, could proactively reach out to DCs and suggest forms of collaboration (e.g. joint events/webinars, jointly responding to consultations, organising a workshop together).

## Relations with IGF initiatives<sup>14</sup>

Generally, DCs are interested in cooperating with NRIs and some linkages have already been established in this regard. However, the challenges DCs face in terms of resources and members engagement also have implications for their ability to engage more with NRIs.

### Issues to explore

<sup>13</sup> Subsection III.2. in the full report.

<sup>14</sup> Subsection III.3. in the full report.

**Actively encourage more collaboration between DCs and NRIs.** (DCs, DCCG, IGF Secretariat, NRIs)

- ❑ Encourage NRIs to provide timely information about the timing of their meetings, and to include slots for DCs in their agendas (for instance, as part of the 'Day 0' which most NRIs host before the formal start of their meetings).
- ❑ Encourage DCs to use NRIs events to extend their outreach and promote awareness, to invite new members and enhance their diversity, and to gather input and data for their work.
- ❑ Facilitate meetings between DC coordinators and NRIs coordinators, allowing them to exchange information about their work and discuss opportunities for cooperation.
- ❑ Regularly share relevant information about NRIs activities across DC channels and the other way around.

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## IV. Dynamic Coalitions and the future of the IGF

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DCs generally consider that they can contribute to the efforts towards a more inclusive, focused, relevant and outcome-oriented IGF, e.g. due to their ability to raise certain issues and to act as 'entry points' for newcomers, as well as their independence and flexibility.

There is general support for a more effective integration of IGF intersessional workstreams and the IGF programme.

While further aligning DC work with the broader IGF processes was welcome, this should not affect the independent nature of DCs.<sup>15</sup>

### Issues to explore

#### 1. Continue discussions on how DCs could contribute to the future development of the IGF. (DCCG, DCs, MAG, IGF community)

Build on ideas already raised:

- ❑ Have DCs more involved in the planning of IGF meetings and in identifying focus topics and policy questions because they can flag current trends and emerging issues.
- ❑ Leverage DCs as resource and knowledge hubs for the MAG and the wider IGF community. DCs could also act as think tanks or research/policy incubators to explore new(er) digital issues and help inform related policy making processes.
- ❑ Leverage DCs to disseminate IGF outputs and work towards DCs having more

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<sup>15</sup> Sections IV.1 and IV.2 in the full report.

actionable outputs themselves.

- ❑ If the IGF moves towards developing policy recommendations, DCs could contribute through collecting inputs from their networks and feeding them into the recommendations-development process.

## **2. Continue discussions on how DCs could contribute to a better integration of the IGF programme and intersessional work. (DCCG, DCs, MAG, IGF community)**

Build on ideas already raised:

- ❑ Identify links between DCs' work and IGF tracks/themes/policy questions/focus areas and then facilitate the integration of DCs within these tracks/themes.
- ❑ Connect DCs' work with IGF main sessions, high-level sessions, workshops, etc.
- ❑ Continue discussions on how DCs could contribute actively to the development of the proposed multi-year plan/strategy for the IGF and what this strategy would mean for DCs themselves.
- ❑ Make better use of the annual IGF meeting to promote the outputs of DCs (and other IGF intersessional activities).

## **3. Make sure that in discussions on how to strengthen the integration of DCs into IGF processes and how to enable DCs to contribute to shaping the future of the IGF, a balance is achieved between what is asked from DCs, what DCs themselves ask from the IGF Secretariat and the MAG, and how all this is aligned with the voluntary, independent and autonomous nature of DCs. (DCs, DCCG, IGF Secretariat, MAG)**

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