

## REPORT OF THE 2<sup>ND</sup> SIDS Internet Governance Forum 2024

The 2<sup>nd</sup> SIDS IGF took place in alignment with the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4). The theme of the IGF was “Leveraging Digital Governance for Resilient Prosperity in SIDS”. It was hosted by the CTU in partnership with the UNIGF’s Dynamic Coalition of Small Island Developing States, TT MAG and the Internet Society as well as through consultation with a multistakeholder group.

This year, the SIDS IGF took the format of a two-part event, a virtual session as well as an in-person official side event at SIDS4 which was also streamed online and facilitated questions and comments from our online audience. The virtual segment took place on May 28<sup>th</sup> with the side event being held on May 29<sup>th</sup>.

This year, there were 145 attendees at the first virtual session of the SIDS IGF. Participants logged on from a range of 32 countries worldwide and it was rewarding to have such a diverse audience present. The room was filled to capacity for the in-person segment, estimated at over 30 persons.

Building upon the foundational work of the inaugural SIDS IGF held virtually in 2022, this forum aimed to further enhance the dialogue and cooperation among SIDS in the realm of Internet Governance (IG), Internet Policy, and the Digital Economy. By focussing on how digital technologies and Internet governance can contribute to achieving resilience and prosperity in small island developing states, the 2<sup>nd</sup> SIDS IGF was closely aligned with the SIDS4 conference’s theme of “Charting the course toward resilient prosperity”. The IGF sought to leverage the collective experiences and challenges of SIDS, to foster a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable digital future for all. Notwithstanding time zone challenges in the virtual setting, the SIDS IGF set the stage for ongoing cooperation and identified initial governance, procedural, and operational mechanisms to address critical issues effectively.

Key thematic areas of discussion during the 2<sup>nd</sup> SIDS IGF included:

- **Building Digital Resilience**
- **Economic Diversification through Digital Innovation**
- **Digital Inclusion for Prosperity**
- **Governance and Policy for a Resilient Digital Future**
- **Leveraging Digital Solutions for Environmental Sustainability**

The agenda covered discussions on:

- National Strategies for Digital Inclusion
- The Role of ICTs in the Sustainable Development of SIDS

- The Global Digital Compact – An Update on the UN Process as well as a detailed analysis of the GDC thus far
- Enhancing Digital Resilience for Environmental Sustainability
- Digital Inclusion for Prosperity
- Whole-of-Society Approach to Digital Transformation and Sustainable Digital Solutions
- Identifying Vulnerabilities and Assessing Risks to Enhance Digital Resilience and Meet the SDGs in SIDS
- The Role of AI and 4IR Digital Technologies in Building Resilient SIDS
- SIDS in Global Digital Governance

We were honoured to have knowledge and information shared from experts from the:

- Tonga's Computer Emergency Response Team
  - UNDP Trinidad and Tobago, Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten as well as UNDP Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean
  - Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology
  - Diplo
  - The Dynamic Coalition of SIDS
  - The Caribbean Meteorological Organisation
  - The General Secretariat of the Indian Ocean Commission
  - The Department of Information & Communication Technology, Papua New Guinea
  - The Asian Development Bank (ADB)
  - The Internet Society
  - The Global Forum on Cyber Expertise
  - Netsafe NZ
  - Government of Antigua and Barbuda
  - Government of the Dominican Republic
  - The University of the West Indies, Five Island Campus, Antigua and Barbuda
- And of course
- ITU, ICANN and the Commonwealth Secretariat

Some main take away points which emerged during over the two days included conversations on:

- SIDS transitioning to become more smart island developing states
- The importance of sustainable development and ICTs in trying to cope with our current needs while ensuring the continuity to meet those needs in the future
- Whether ICTs in SIDS should this remain a commodity or rather be a right given the challenges of access

- ICTS and its significance in promoting economic growth, particularly in SIDS
- The need to renew and revitalise our digital cooperation and in doing so address:
  - Harnessing the benefits and addressing the risks
  - Having an honest conversation about the progress made over the last 30 years in terms of technological advancements, connectivity and access
  - Updating our digital cooperation and addressing gaps in WSIS and the Tunis Agenda
- Whether it is critical to move from the SDGs to the digital environment, having digital elements at the front and centre of the SDGs
- An agile approach to digitalisation of services
- The existing prerequisites for the international ICTs that are operating within SIDS and whether there should be prerequisites at the national level within SIDS
- Addressing that children and youth are given access to the technology but lack the knowledge to use it safely or independently
- (Discussions on) The promotion of digital inclusion
- The GDC and its commitments to:
  - Close all digital divides and accelerate the process of the SDGs
  - Expand inclusion in and benefits of digital economy for all
  - Inclusive, open, safe, secure digital space with protected human rights
  - Advance responsible and equitable data governance
  - Enhance international governance of emerging tech, like AI for the benefit of humanity

Through these conversations, we anticipated that the 2<sup>nd</sup> SIDS IGF contributed to charting a path forward for further engagement and for SIDS to leverage digital technologies and governance to achieve resilient prosperity, addressing both current challenges and future opportunities.

We look forward to deepening these discussions and advancing the key take aways from the 2<sup>nd</sup> SIDS IGF as we move towards the 3<sup>rd</sup> SIDS IGF at a date yet to be determined in 2025.