

Contribution to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Expert Group Meeting (EGM)

By the IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group's

Working Group on IGF Strategy and Strengthening

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1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The co-chairs¹ of the Internet Governance Forum Multistakeholder Advisory Group (IGF MAG) Working Group on Internet Governance Forum Strengthening and Strategy (WG-Strategy) express their gratitude to the members of the Working Group who contributed time and information to the development of this document.

¹ Concettina Casa, former MAG member, Amrita Choudhury, IGF MAG member, Roman Chukov former MAG member, Chris Buckridge IGF MAG member

2. INTRODUCTION

This document is a contribution from the Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy (WG-Strategy) of the Internet Governance Forum Multistakeholder Advisory Group (IGF MAG) to the [Expert Group process](#) initiated by the IGF Secretariat to convene a two to three-day expert-level working retreat from 30 March to 1 April 2022 in New York . The retreat aims to discuss how the IGF can contribute to advancing digital cooperation and implementing proposed initiatives in this area, within the broader context of the ongoing process on strengthening and improving the IGF as a space for global multistakeholder discussion on Internet policy issues.

3. THE MAG WORKING GROUP STRATEGY

The Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy (WG-Strategy) was established by the MAG in 2020. Its [charter](#) defines the main purpose of the WG that aims to develop proposals of actions implementable in the short and medium term on how to strengthen the IGF and position it strategically in the evolving digital cooperation landscape. Its action complement the MAG current activities (that are mainly focused on the organization of the next IGF) providing a long-term view and keeping a memory of the achievements of the past. In this sense the WG-Strategy involves expertise from past MAG members and IGF hosts.

The WG-Strategy's focus is two-fold:

- I. The mandate outlined for the IGF in the Tunis Agenda (2005) and how the IGF can best fulfill it with a forward-looking approach, taking into account that the IGF is more than halfway through its 10-year renewed WSIS mandate.
- II. Broader discussions on digital cooperation, in particular the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation launched on June 11, 2020, which identifies priority topics that broadly overlap with the issues discussed so far with regard to IGF improvements. The Roadmap reflects the strong support from stakeholders worldwide for the "IGF+" model identified in the report of the High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation (HLPDC), 'The Age of Digital Interdependence', and describes specific improvements to the IGF which the Secretary-General is committed to implementing (paragraphs 93-94).

The approach of the WG is to improve the IGF by responding to identified gaps in the functioning

of the IGF, focusing in particular on those improvements which can be implemented by the MAG/IGF itself, while at the same time analysing and responding to suggestions in the Roadmap, and liaising between the Roadmap process and the IGF MAG and Secretariat.

The WG-Strategy holds regular meetings every two or three weeks and has activated a close link with the Office of the Envoy for Technology that updates the WG on the ongoing activities related to the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and to the “Our Common Agenda” report. This link, formed on behalf of the MAG, needs to be strengthened and operationalized once the new Tech Envoy is appointed, with a view to ensuring that the IGF is considered one of the primary tools for implementing the UN strategy on digital cooperation.

4. ACTIVITIES AND PROPOSALS BY THE WG-STRATEGY

The results of discussions and the main documents drafted by this Working Group are available on the [IGF website](#).

They include several documents issued by the Working Group and shared with the IGF MAG, UNDESA, the UN Secretary-General’s team working on Global Digital Cooperation and the co-champions of Recommendation 5A/B of the HLPDC’s report.

- 1) The [Response to the paper “Options for the Future of Digital Cooperation”](#)
- 2) Three possible approaches on how to operationalize the IGF’s Multistakeholder High-level Body (MHLB, later known as the Leadership Panel) outlined in para. 93 (a) of the UNSG Roadmap for Digital Cooperation annexed to the above document.
- 3) The [“Non-Paper \(2nd Draft\): Building a Parliamentary Track in an IGF+ | Annex 1 | Annex 2”](#)
- 4) The [“MAG Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy \(WG-strategy\) proposal on IGF2021 design and process, December 2020”](#)

The Working Group has also undertaken an exercise that maps IGF activities to the Roadmap activities (see attachment) to discuss the roles of the IGF and the national and regional IGFs (the NRIs) in the Global Digital Compact included in the “Our Common Agenda” report.

The WG-Strategy has asked that all these documents be officially sent to the EGM, via the IGF secretariat, and that they (along with the proposals in this document) be considered as working documents to the EGM process.

EGM

5. SUGGESTIONS TO THE EGM FROM THE WG-STRATEGY

The expected outcomes of the EGM are outlined on the IGF website and they include two groups of recommendations (group A and B):

A. Recommendations on how the IGF can “adapt, innovate and reform” its work and contribute to implementing proposed initiatives dedicated to advancing digital cooperation and creating an ‘open, free and secure digital future for all’. These recommendations – which should take into account the availability of resources – could cover:

1. What improvements can be made to the format and work of the Forum in order to strengthen focus, relevance and improve links with decision-making fora, and develop effective and influential outputs?
2. How to improve the alignment of IGF activities with the action lines included in the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation (para 93a)?
3. What role could the IGF play in ensuring multistakeholder engagement and providing inputs in developing the Global Digital Compact proposed in the Our Common Agenda report?
4. How the IGF should work with various decision-making and discussion fora in the expanding field of digital development.

B. Recommendations on how to operationalise recurring proposals regarding IGF strengthening and improvement, in areas such as:

1. Implementing the IGF Leadership Panel
2. Growing the engagement of those stakeholders who are currently unengaged, with a view to expanding and diversifying participation in the IGF processes;
3. Ensuring sustained and regular funding to support the IGF and the IGF Secretariat.

In the last two years, the Working Group has addressed all these issues and considers it extremely important to share with the EGM its progress and recommendations as contributions to the discussions of these issues at the forthcoming retreat.

If any member(s) of the Working Group is/are invited to join the EGM, they will be asked to represent in that arena these ideas and suggestions. If not, the Working Group will request Anriette Esterhuysen, who has been engaged since the inception of this group, to share her reflections on the ideas and suggestions.

A1 - Improvements that could be made to the format and work of the Forum in order to strengthen focus, relevance and improve links with decision-making fora, and develop effective and influential outputs

The WG believes that while the linkages between the IGF and decision-making bodies and processes already exist, they should be more consistent, systematic and outcome-oriented. Some of the approaches adopted to strengthen the linkages with the NRIs and youth could be helpful in achieving this, for example, through the IGF Secretariat including staff whose primary function is to manage the links with decision-making bodies in all stakeholder groups, including governments and parliamentary bodies. The links with decision-making bodies should take place throughout the entire IGF annual work cycle, including the preparatory phase for the annual forum; its intersessional activities, notably the IGF's policy networks, dynamic coalitions and best practice fora; the annual forum itself; and the outcomes of the annual forum and the intersessional activities.

The WG-Strategy has engaged in extensive discussions on strengthening the interaction between the IGF and public and private sector decision-making bodies worldwide. The outcomes of these consultations are reflected in the [WG-Strategy's "priorities document"](#). Key recommendations made in this document include:

- The need to integrate a two-way communication between the IGF and decision-making bodies into the evolution of the IGF.
- MAG members from the different stakeholder groups should proactively engage with their communities in order to secure buy-in into the program-development process.
- Specific and continuous outreach to governments should be undertaken by the IGF Secretariat and the MAG to secure their active participation in intersessional work, main sessions and high level sessions, and workshops, e.g. with the occasion of intergovernmental events such as CSTD sessions, or of other multistakeholder arena such as the WSIS Forum etc.
- High-level sessions and main sessions should be an integral part of the program and aspire to secure the widest and highest-level representation from all stakeholder groups as possible.
- Invitations to secure the participation of high-level representatives from all stakeholder groups should be sent out as early as possible, and at least 6 months before the IGF annual event takes place.

A2 - Improve the alignment of IGF activities with the action lines included in the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation (para 93a)

The WG-Strategy has activated an exchange channel between the Office of the Tech Envoy and the MAG/IGF and started to draft the mapping document of IGF and Roadmap activities as an ongoing, rolling document. The WG suggests that this document be maintained and updated.

A3 - Define the role of the IGF in ensuring multistakeholder engagement and providing inputs in

developing the Global Digital Compact proposed in the 'Our Common Agenda' report

The WG-Strategy thinks that IGF should play an important role in ensuring multistakeholder engagement and providing inputs to the development the Global Digital Compact, and that the IGF could be used as platform for Roadmap implementation activities, be it in the annual event or in the intersessional work.

A4 - How the IGF should work with various decision-making and discussion fora in the expanding field of digital development.

IGF needs to strengthen and intensify its relations with all those fora where decisions could be taken on matters that concern Internet governance. A common agenda of Internet governance-related decision-making process needs to be elaborated and constantly updated, with the help of the Office of the Tech Envoy, so that the IGF can interact with these decision-making bodies and provide them with timely, accurate, and multi-stakeholder feedback, which could improve the quality of those decisions and verify the consensus across all stakeholder groups.

Further, today where there is a call for transparency and accountability related to digital development, the IGF can play a critical role in encouraging transparency and accountability when dealing with various decision-making and discussion bodies. The IGF should be the trusted platform always calling all actors to abide by best common practices.

B2 - Growing the engagement of those stakeholders who are currently unengaged, with a view to expanding and diversifying participation in the IGF processes;

IGF needs to revitalize and to improve the quality and level of participation of the network of the international organizations' representatives attending MAG meetings and participating in IGF activities. They need to become true "liaison officers" that act as two-ways communications conduits, informing of reciprocal initiatives and promoting active cooperation between IGF and those bodies.

B3 - Ensuring sustained and regular funding to support the IGF and the IGF Secretariat.

Fund-raising strategy and efforts are needed to sustain the IGF activities. The IGF Secretariat should expand the pool of donors and explore new ways of raising funds, such as potential partnerships with philanthropic organizations with interest in supporting work on Internet governance, including those that are engaging with the Roundtable process to implement the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation.

It would also be helpful to explore possibilities for enabling tax-deductible donations, and to ensure that stakeholders are aware of any subsequent arrangements put in place. According to the UN Charter and related legal instruments and financial regulations, non-governmental donor contributions to the UN are not permitted to be tax deductible.

It would also be valuable to look into possible mechanisms for “small contributions” in a way that would work under the UN’s legal instruments and financial regulations, without the administrative processes required for the 5 and 6-figure donations currently made to the IGF Trust Fund. It should not be underestimated that even small contributions (e.g., \$50-\$500) received from the global Internet Community can add up to a significant amount, as well as increasing the number of financial contributors who will feel further invested in the process by making a financial contribution.

ANNEX I: WORKING DOCUMENT – MAPPING IGF ACTIVITIES TO THOSE IN THE ROADMAP FOR DIGITAL COOPERATION, Nov. 2021

Area of work	Roadmap activities	IGF relevant past activities and ongoing activities	Comments/Synergies between Roadmap and IGF activities
<p>Global connectivity</p>	<p>https://www.un.org/techenvoy/content/global-connectivity one-pager and workplan: available under above link</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a baseline of digital connectivity that individuals need to access the online space, as well as a definition of “affordability”, including universal targets and metrics • Convene a global group of investors and financing and community experts to consider the development of a financing platform and find other new models for investment in connectivity, including hard-to-reach and rural areas • Promote new and potentially transformative models to accelerate connectivity, such as the Giga initiative of ITU and UNICEF • Promote the development of enabling regulatory environments for smaller-scale Internet providers, along with local and regional connectivity assessments • Accelerate discussions on connectivity as part of emergency preparedness, responses and aid, including working through the inter-agency Emergency Telecommunications Cluster 	<p>Policy Network on Meaningful Access (PNMA)</p> <p>Universal access and meaningful connectivity - IGF 2021 main issue area</p> <p>IGF Best Practice Forum on Local Content (focus on ‘local content as engine for growth and development of the local internet in 2018 and 2019)</p> <p>Dynamic Coalition on Community Connectivity</p> <p>Dynamic Coalition on Network Neutrality</p> <p>Dynamic Coalition on Public Access in Libraries</p>	<p>Outcome of roadmap activities can be discussed at IGF. At joint sessions, can share information and exchange views on what the IGF can contribute in terms of Roadmap implementation.</p> <p>The world is not on the same level of adoption and development of the Internet, and so, the work plan must be made keeping in mind the realities and the needs of the ground level situation in different countries.</p>
<p>Digital public goods</p>	<p>https://www.un.org/techenvoy/content/digital-public-goods one-pager and workplan: available under above link</p>	<p>Several workshops have been held at the IGF over the past 15 years that look at open source software, open</p>	

	<p>launch of five-year strategy of Digital Public Goods Alliance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish working definition and a general understanding of “digital public goods” as described in the Roadmap • Establish a go-to digital public goods platform, which share digital public goods, engage talent, and pool data sets • Promote robust human rights and governance frameworks and inclusion for such “goods” • Promote digital public goods, including through greater investment, amplified efforts and strengthen coordination • Deploy digital public goods as part of their immediate responses and in the future, approaches to achieve the SDGs • Continue working closely with other emerging digital public goods initiatives 	<p>educational resources and the development of local content. The work of the Best Practice Forum on Local Content has captured best practices on building the digital information and cultural heritage commons.</p> <p>"Local and indigenous content in the digital space: Protection, preservation and sustainability of creative work and traditional knowledge"</p> <p>There have also been workshops at the IGF exploring considering the internet itself as a public good.</p> <p>The Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace used the IGF to get feedback during the development of its norm on the protection of the public core of the internet.</p>	
<p>Digital inclusion</p>	<p>https://www.un.org/techenvoy/content/digital-inclusion one-pager and workplan: available under above link</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of an overarching framework towards a definition, metrics and measurement of digital inclusion and literacy, including developing annual scorecards • Establish a multi-stakeholder digital inclusion coalition – an informal network of like-minded 	<p>IGF Priority issue for 2021- Inclusive Internet governance ecosystems and digital cooperation</p> <p>IGF Best Practice Forum on Gender & Access : The BPF covered different aspects of digital inclusion related to women and</p>	<p>See comments in global connectivity</p>

	<p>Member States, civil society groups, the private sector and other stakeholders on digital inclusion, highlighting local ownership and including communities themselves in processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map out all digital inclusion initiatives, mechanisms and programmes, and make them available online and through other, easily accessible platforms • Help Resident Coordinators (RCs) working with host Governments to develop action plans to improve digital inclusion 	<p>gender-diverse people since it first convened in 2015. Most recent reports 2019 (participation in digital economies) 2018 (supplementary models of connectivity) 2017 (challenges to meaningful Internet access)</p> <p>Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability</p> <p>Dynamic Coalition on Public Access in Libraries</p>	
<p>Digital capacity building</p>	<p>https://www.un.org/techenvoy/content/digital-capacity-building one-pager and workplan: available under above link</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand mapping of existing digital capacity development initiatives • Launch a broad multi-stakeholder network to promote holistic, inclusive approaches to digital capacity development for sustainable development, including a new joint facility for digital capacity development led by ITU and UNDP • Strengthen capacity building support, at the country level, in particular in areas such as increasing Internet connectivity and growing digital economies • Pursue initiatives at the country level that strengthen capacity-building support 	<p>Draft IGF Capacity Building Framework</p> <p>Cybersecurity capacity development for developing countries</p> <p>Dynamic Coalition on Schools of Internet Governance</p> <p>Dynamic Coalition Internet Standards, Security and Safety (DC-ISSS)</p>	<p>The annual report on the DC on Internet & Jobs available at our DC page has a list of recommendations to consider. This is based on a multi country survey conducted in 2020</p> <p>The DC-ISSS strives to provide all organisations around the world with recommendations and workplans on how to make the Internet safer for all users. Part of the workplan is a capacity building programme on how to achieve this level of security and safety.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to build on the existing United Nations Volunteers programme 		
Digital human rights	<p>https://www.un.org/techenvoy/content/digital-human-rights one-pager: available under above link</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare an action plan Develop system-wide guidance on human rights due diligence and impact assessments in the use of new technologies Place human rights at the centre of regulatory frameworks and legislation on the development and use of digital technologies Acknowledge the importance of protecting the right to privacy and other human rights in the digital space and take clear, company-specific action to do so 	<p><u>Economic and Social Inclusion and Human Rights</u> - IGF 2021 main issue area</p> <p><u>IGF Best Practice Forum 2021 on Gender and digital rights, with focus on gendered disinformation</u></p> <p><u>Dynamic Coalition on Internet Rights and Principles</u></p> <p><u>Dynamic Coalition Sustainability</u></p> <p><u>Dynamic Coalition on Children's Rights in the Digital Environment</u> (former DC Child Online Safety)</p> <p><u>Best Practice Forum on IoT, Big Data and AI</u></p> <p><u>BPF on Data and New Technologies in an Internet Context</u></p>	
Artificial intelligence	<p>https://www.un.org/techenvoy/content/artificial-intelligence one-pager: available under above link</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare an action plan Establish a multi-stakeholder advisory body on global artificial intelligence cooperation to provide guidance on artificial intelligence that is 	<p>Addressed in IGF 2021 emerging and crosscutting issue areas in particularly in "<u>Emerging regulation</u>" and "<u>Environment and climate change</u>"</p> <p>IGF Best Practice Forum on Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data, and Artificial Intelligence (AI): <u>2018 - 2019</u> (focus on establishing stakeholder dialogue and</p>	

	trustworthy, human rights based, safe and sustainable, and promotes peace	on enhancing justified trust in the technologies to stimulate their use to address societal challenges). <u>Dynamic Coalition on Platform Responsibility</u>	
Digital trust and security	<p><u>https://www.un.org/techenvoy/content/digital-trust-security</u> one-pager: available under above link</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare an action plan • Continue to explore with Member States if and how to take forward a broad and overarching statement outlining common elements of understanding on digital trust and security 	<p><u>IGF Best Practice Forum Cybersecurity</u>, in particular the BPF's work on cybersecurity norms and international cybersecurity agreements in <u>2018</u>, <u>2019</u>, <u>2020</u>, which continues this year:</p> <p><u>IGF Priority issue for 2021</u>. Emerging and crosscutting area.</p> <p><u>Dynamic Coalition Internet Standards, Security and Safety (DC-ISSS)</u></p> <p>DC-Blockchain: multi-stakeholder task forces on Trust, Confidence & Blockchain; Legitimacy & Blockchain</p>	<p>The work of the BPF on norms since 2018, and continued this year, relates to point 1 b & c in the briefing paper</p> <p>The outcomes of the DC could support all three points mentioned in the paper.</p>
Global digital cooperation	<p><u>https://www.un.org/techenvoy/content/global-digital-cooperation</u> <u>Options Paper on Global Digital Cooperation</u></p> <p>Implement measures to enhance the IGF as appropriate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a strategic and empowered multi-stakeholder high-level body • Have a more focused IGF agenda based on a limited number of strategic policy issues • Establish a high-level segment and ministerial or parliamentary tracks • Forge stronger links among the global Forum and 	<p><u>MAG Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy (WG-Strategy)</u></p> <p><u>Inclusive IG ecosystems and digital cooperation</u> - IGF priority issue for 2021</p> <p>DC-Blockchain: <u>Model Law for Decentralized Autonomous Organizations (DAOs)</u></p>	

	<p>its regional, national, sub-regional and youth initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better integrate programme and intersessional policy development work • Address the long-term sustainability of the Forum and the necessary resources for increased participation • Enhance the visibility of the Forum 	<p>The report 'Strengthening Cooperation Within the Context of the IGF: A Roadmap For 2018', presented to the MAG in 2018 shows a broad support for cooperation within the IGF context and includes recommendations that are reflected upon in the SG's Roadmap. The report holds comments from all stakeholder groups represented in the IGF.</p> <p>More focused IGF 2021 agenda: IGF2021 Issue Areas</p>	
Digital environmental sustainability	<p>https://www.un.org/techenvoy/content/digital-environmental-sustainability</p> <p>Coalition for Digital Environmental Sustainability (CODES)</p> <p>Report "A digital planet for sustainability"</p>	<p>Policy Network on Environment (PNE)</p> <p>Environmental sustainability and climate change - IGF priority issue for 2021</p> <p>Dynamic Coalition on Internet Rights and Principles</p> <p>European Dialogue on IG</p>	

Sources:

<https://www.un.org/techenvoy/content/ongoing-work>