MAG Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy

Online Meeting 68
14 December 2023 at 14:00 UTC

Summary Report

The 68th virtual meeting of the IGF MAG Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy (WG-Strategy) was held on 14 December at 14:00 UTC. The meeting was moderated by Amrita Choudhury, and a recording of the meeting is available upon request.

The co-chair opened the meeting by introducing the agenda:

Agenda
1. Finalising plan of activities for 2024
2. Update on GDC/SotF consultations
3. Update from Second meeting of WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event Open Consultation Process
4. Update on drafting of submission to CSTD
5. Updates on Netmundial +10
6. Update from the IGF Secretariat
7. AoB

Discussion

1. Finalizing plan of activities for 2024
Amrita provided an overview of 2023 activities w/ a focus on the 2024 proposed activities. Two more points were added to the list. Suggested that all WG Members add suggestions and review the document today so Bruna and Chris can present it tomorrow to the broader MAG.

2. Update on GDC/SotF consultations
Chris Buckridge highlighted the series of events in the past weeks - UNCTAD, GDC Consultation in UNCTAD. Believes the consultation held in GVA was useful, had different stakeholders and so on. Some points that jumped out were (a) strong interventions to avoid the creation of new bodies, rely on the existing structures, protect what's already in place and created through WSIS; (b) Environment and Sustainability will be a cross-cutting topic that will be addressed throughout the GDC Process; (c) Zambia made an urgent request to make the GDC go viral, and spread the word about engagement.

Bruna Santos highlighted the lack of opportunities for CSO engagement, focusing on the CS Summit. The GDC timeline is getting shorter. The G20 might have a track on global governance and it's important to follow.

Jorge Cancio supported the previous points about timeline. Informal consultations in NY about the pact for the future this past monday, where there might have been some confusion about engagement and inclusion of substantive issues. Confusion whether it's the Pact or GDC that will address the topics and so on. Switzerland will aim for adding this to the GDC umbrella. Everything that has something to do w/ the infrastructure related to the GDC follow up should be separated from WSIS. We should avoid architectural discussions within the GDC about the WSIS structures.

He further noted that the Swedish Ambassador mentioned some gaps between technical discussions and the policy level. Questions about the current system being efficient enough

to address the issues. Jorge thinks we should start considering WSIS+, an updated framework to address newer challenges.

Ana Neves has underlined that the Swedish Ambassador mentioned the report from HLAB on Multilateralism. Wanted to make a point, and highlighted the relevance of MS participation, but co-facilitators showed that they are also considering the fragilities of the system and further gaps. And there is still something that should be done about the system.

Anriette Esterhuysen noted that the HLAB report is interesting but shows that there's very little knowledge of any kind of innovation that emerged from WSIS processes. Reflects some of the critiques on how the UN has taken onboard collaboration from the private sector. She believes there's far more recognition of the WSIS relevance nowadays, in a way that puts an aim for the GDC process to start something new. But there are some of the same mistakes being made. The structure of the Pact is a concern as there's already some indication about the separation between the discussions between science and innovation x digital cooperation. We should be developing ideas to integrating these discussions instead;

Jorge mentioned the consultations in the past weeks. Connections between GDC and WSIS and relevant to think about the future and so on, in order to integrate the spaces. Need to develop the WSIS structures into something we could call WSIS Plus. Believes we need to update the current structures and within them, the IGF which needs to continue to transition towards the IGF Plus and take over the role as a follow up structure to the GDC.
When asked about possible opportunities for engagement: agreed that it would be important to do a panel or something like that.

Bruna agreed on the need for a more meaningful and unified voice in the WSIS consultation process. And also added a plus one on the need to keep tabs on the Pact for the Future debates as HLAB debates seemed to be more present there.

Valeria Betancourt highlighted the need for consultation submissions and so on. Had a meeting w/ ITU to discuss the ongoing questionnaire that's supposedly aimed at shaping the May Event.

Comments from the Chat
→ Anriette: I think we need an update of the WSIS action lines and IGF renewal - but we also need far more effective integration of digital/internet etc. into SDG implementation.
→ Wolfgang Kleinwächter: 1+ to Anriette. UNSG argues that the "Pact on the Future" is a "once in a Generation opportunity". This is probably correct for the "big Picture", but not for the GDC and digital cooperation related issues. Here we have a process which started 2002 and will continue after 2030. GDC and Chapter 3 will be just one complementary step to this process. The risk is indeed that groups from other areas - from security to development to environment - who have just recognized that "digital" is an issue, re-invent the wheel and undermine the achievements of the whole WSIS process, including its principles, approaches and institutional arrangements. This would be a step backwards.

3. Update from Second meeting of WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event Open Consultation Process

Chris highlighted that there is a small group for these efforts. The plan is to add ideas to the document and then organize a call in the 2nd week of Jan to finalize the submission and then present it to the group.
Link to working document: 📄 CSTD Survey - WG-Strategy draft

Amrita agrees with some focus on the IGF Model.

Wolfgang highlighted the risk of other groups diving into the debates surrounding Digital Cooperation and is concerned about some things being under risk. WSIS has wonderful language.

Chris confirmed that there was no mention about the letter and we might not receive any sort of response. Consultation did address the chance of using the IGF as the follow up mechanism. IGF was framed as a good marketplace of ideas, but thats all.

Adam Peake agrees about the fragmentation of spaces and so on. But highlighted that theres fragmentation on the broader GDC process too.

Jorge answered and reactions of the Swedish co-fac revealed a certain gap in the process and issues paper. Co-Facs can't react now and confirm the IGF as the place with which we can fill up the gap since its up to the member-states. But its important to continue to make that point and have more people educated and socialized about the IGF relevance and so on. During 2024 we should continue to build on this connection between the policy level and the marketplace of ideas. Some of the ideas might be implementable without the need for a green light from anyone

Bruna suggests that this WG could produce some mapping of relevant issues and connections between different processes.

Abdulrahman Almutairi let me get back to a question about the role of this group. Should there be an international group or one that's different than the WG-Strategy?

Justin Fair touched on the point about current mainstreaming of digital topics in spaces, proliferation of processes and spaces, as well as the notion we cant follow everything. Not every org can deal with everything all the time and that's ok. We need to think about how to have focused and managed conversations at a time. Suggests that the IGF dedicates some time to adding clarity to these discussions and adding focus.
Initial Idea was for the LP to take some of the policy discussions held at the IGF to the policy making bodies in the shape of recommendations. How do we help filter, funnel and elevate the issues ?

Carol Roach pointed out the need of better communication with the missions using focused messages so that they could advise the ministers properly.

Bruna made a suggestion of using the IGF space of OCs to convene all of these processes together .

Chat
Anriette: There is a much fragmentation - not of the internet, but of processes around how to govern and other digital processes and tech. There is also fragmentation in this community - as in less collaboration between governments, civil society, tech, business (and perhaps within these groups as well). This is where I believe NETmundial can play a powerful role. To revitalise the belief and commitment in investing in inclusive multistakeholder governance.

4. Update on drafting of submission **to CSTD**
(not discussed)

5. Updates on NETmundial+10
(not discussed)

6. Update from the IGF Secretariat

Anja cleared the fact that the call for input is still open and the list is defined based on the taxonomy developed by Diplo. Reinforced that the MAG has agreed a while ago on the use of the taxonomy and the call has been run in the same way over the years. Added a request for reconsidering changing the slot to one hour later.

All the comments and suggestions in the consultation on the messages and IGF summary will be shared on Dec 15th.

7. AoB

List of participants

1. Anja Gengo, IGF Secretariat
2. Chris Buckridge, Group's Co-Chair, IGF MAG member
3. Concettina Cassa, Group's Co-Chair, Government of Italy
4. Bruna Santos, Group's Co-Chair, IGF MAG member
5. Carol Roach, IGF MAG Chair
6. Timea Suto, ICC Basis, former IGF MAG member
7. Ana Christina Neves, Chair of the CSTD
8. Lynn St Amour, former IGF MAG chair
9. Christine Arida, Government of Egypt
10. Adam Peake, former IGF MAG member
11. Anriette Esterhuysen, former IGF MAG Chair
12. Philippe Schulte, BMDV, German Government
13. Flavio Wagner, CGI.br and University of Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil
14. Jorge Cancio, Government of Switzerland
15. Mark Carvell, EuroDIG
16. Muriel Alapini
17. Saba Tiku
18. Alisa Heaver, IGF MAG Member
19. Abdulrahman Almutairi, IGF MAG Host Country Co-Chair
20. Justine Fair, IGF MAG member
21. Kenneth Merrill, NTIA
22. Valeria Betancourt, Independent Expert
23. Markus Kummer
24. Fiona Alexander
25. Vessela Karloukovska
26. Wolfgang Kleinwächter
27. Dino dell'Accio
28. Wim Degezelle
29. Ola Bergstrom
30. Tracy F. Hackshaw
31. Wout De Natris