

ICC BASIS input to IGF 2021 Taking Stock Consultation

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PART I: Taking stock of IGF 2021

This section invites feedback on the programming, outputs, preparatory process, community intersessional activities and the event itself: What worked well? What worked not so well?

IGF 2021 Preparatory process

Timeline, call for issues and session proposals, session selection, MAG meetings, preparatory and engagement phase, capacity development etc.)

- Thanks to a timely announcement of the host country and MAG composition, sufficient time was allocated to the preparatory process, which started in good time in early January. Unfortunately the global COVID-19 pandemic continued to present challenges in the way of the planning process. The significant turnover in the composition of the MAG also contributed to a slower than usual start of the planning process.
- These challenges were to a large extent surmounted by the hard work and dedication of the IGF Secretariat and consultants, the MAG and MAG Chair and supporters from the IGF community.
- The professionalism and support of the staff working at the IGF Secretariat was greatly appreciated both during as well as in the run-up to IGF 2021.
- However, taking and communicating decisions on the themes, event format, new session types and preparatory phase was slower than expected, significantly shortening the time for preparation of the event. Therefore, some crucial elements of the programme, especially some of those that required a more novel approach this year due to the hybrid format, were left to the last minute (e.g. preparatory sessions for the tracks, booth organization) which fuelled some uncertainty at times and diminished effectiveness. Communication and outreach efforts throughout the year and in the immediate lead-up to the event were also negatively impacted.
- Efforts should be made to communicate the planning process ahead of time with a clear timeline and guidelines so that prospective participants are aware of the topics, the planning process and engagement opportunities, and are well informed about the various opportunities to contribute. Decisions on the event and preparatory phase duration, structure and format should, ideally, be communicated ahead of workshop submission phase, so that stakeholders can plan and propose sessions accordingly.

IGF 2021 overall programme: thematic focus, structure and flow

- The overarching theme of IGF 2021 (Internet United), while pertinent for the current context and broad enough to include dialogue on major global Internet governance issues, was chosen with little community input and remained largely unused by the community.
- Going forward, the MAG's process to define and select sub-themes / issue areas should be formalized and communicated in advance, so that the community can accurately be informed on process and be ensured the programme reflects their responses to the call for issues.
- Concentrating the IGF programme into a few concrete thematic tracks worked very well in 2019 and 2020. The same approach was retained in 2021, however the themes chosen were very broad and sometimes overlapping. The attempt to further focus the IGF's programme by the separation of tracks into main focus areas and cross-cutting issues did not bring the desired effect and little to no distinction was observed during the annual meeting between these tracks.

- Attention must be paid to avoid adding further themes and topics to the annual IGF in order not to overcrowd the programme and maintain a lean and manageable agenda. For the future, we recommend no more than four tracks with clear, concise and easily understandable themes.
- Aligning workshop proposals under the thematic tracks continues to work well and is helpful to the MAG in choosing workshops for the programme and defining sub-themes under each track. However, attention must be paid that the number and focus of sub-themes remain manageable. It would be a welcome addition if the programme schedule featured those sub-themes in tags.
- Efforts should be continued to align other sessions that are part of the official IGF programme (Open Forums, DCs, BPFs, NRI collaborative sessions, etc.) under the thematic tracks, from the start of the submission and evaluation process.
- The *IGF 2021 Guide to Issues and Policy Questions*, as well as the *Issue Area Wikis* were very welcome and useful for participants, especially newcomers, to gather all necessary information in one place and prepare for the discussions. This practice should be retained in 2022, while paying attention for the documents to be produced well ahead of the annual event, and constantly updated along the MAG's planning progress to allow for community input and enough time for dissemination.

IGF 2021 Hybrid format design and experience

- We commend the work of the MAG working group on the hybrid format, who devoted a lot of time and effort to overcome the challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic to the organization of large-scale international events. The host country's efforts and investment in providing technical equipment and staff to support the engagement of both onsite and online participants were also greatly appreciated.
- We regret, nonetheless, that despite these considerable efforts, there was significant confusion around the hybrid format, with session organizers unsure of their role and responsibilities (especially when organizing sessions remotely or with all-remote speakers), onsite participants unaware that they were also required to connect to the online rooms and therefore feeling left out or technical difficulties in accessing the event website and dial-in links.
- Furthermore, a number of sessions at the event were interrupted by "zoom-bombing", causing a negative and disturbing experience for organizers, speakers and participants alike. While this is indeed a known risk of large-scale online events, such incidents might be avoided with some simple security settings and steps (such as not communicating session links publicly, controlling participant audio/video by the host, limiting screen sharing, setting meeting password, etc.), or at least promptly mitigated with specific training provided to the technical staff.
- The 3D venue was a very much appreciated idea, however, many participants were not aware of it, or had difficulty finding the link on the IGF website. Booth organizers had very little information on what was expected of them for the virtual booth, and how their booth would look like.

IGF 2021 logistics

Website, mobile app, schedule, registration, access and use of online platform, bilateral meeting system, security etc.

- While the IGF 2021 website contained comprehensive information on the event, finding the relevant information required some browsing.

- Registration to the individual sessions seemed laborious and confusing to many, at least in the initial stages of the event. Many did not realize that after registering to the overall event, individual registrations for individual sessions were also required by adding sessions to one's personal schedule. It was also confusing to many how to find the participation link, once the session was added to a participant's calendar. While it is very commendable that the highest level of precaution was taken to ensure only registered participants have access to the individual sessions, the process should be simplified and considered from a first-time participant's perspective, especially as these measures were not successful in keeping unwanted visitors away from the sessions (see above).
- The website, unfortunately not for the first time, also experienced serious difficulties (especially in the first days of the event), possibly due to server overload, making it impossible for organizers, speakers and participants to find dial-in links to their sessions. This significantly limited real-time engagement with the audience and was the cause of frustration and negative feedback from speakers (especially those attending the IGF for the first time).
- The ability to follow sessions live-streamed on the IGF's YouTube channel helped in increasing access and flexibility for participants to follow discussions.
- It was very welcome that recordings of individual sessions were made available immediately following the session. This practice should be maintained for upcoming IGFs as well, whether held in-person or remotely, but more attention should be paid to editing the recordings of sessions that experience inappropriate incidents such as "zoom-bombing".
- Communication activities between the IGF Secretariat, past and future host countries and the UN DESA Secretariat require better coordination, especially on social media, so that individual efforts can be reinforced and a wider audience be reached.

Intersessional activities and NRIs at IGF 2021

Best Practice Forums and Policy Networks at IGF 2021

Please comment on process, content, and in particular on how these intersessional activities were included in the IGF 2021 programme.

- The intersessional work of the BPFs and Policy Networks are strong examples of how the IGF can gather, catalogue, and share valuable tangible outputs without being prescriptive.
- Efforts to archive the outputs of the intersessional work streams and BPF documents and publish them on the IGF website are appreciated. They should continue to be promoted in a manner that is accessible and searchable to the lay user who may not be familiar with the IGF and its structure (or indeed with the terminology of "BPFs" and "PNs").
- Continued efforts should be made to better target communication and promotion efforts of these outputs.

Dynamic Coalitions at IGF 2021

- N/A

National, Regional and Youth IGFs at IGF 2021

- N/A

IGF 2021 programme

Please comment on the content, speakers and quality of discussions

IGF 2021 sessions

Workshops

- Once the IGF 2021 themes were established, the workshop proposal and selection process was well organized. However, workshop proponents seemed to have difficulty in understanding the difference between the focus areas and cross-cutting areas.
- Some session attendees noted they were unaware of the possibility of organizing workshops or the speaking opportunities this provides.
- The thematic approach helped to somewhat reduce the number of workshops on the same topics, albeit some overlap between workshops could still be observed, especially among themes that were very similar.
- Some sessions worked well because they combined people able to give global, policy perspectives with others able to share more operational perspectives as they are deployed on the ground.
- A number of workshops and other sessions were lacking in balance and diversity in terms of speakers, with one or more stakeholder groups not represented at all in the discussion.

Main sessions

- The Main Sessions play a useful role in the programme of providing a space for a potentially different and broader level of discussion and bringing in more high-level speakers. In this way, they help extend appeal beyond participants who regularly attend IGF meetings, and in particular among government and business constituencies who have historically had lower attendance levels. For this reason, it is imperative that enough time and careful attention is devoted to their planning.
- It worked well that Main Sessions were coupled with the IGF 2021 themes, but due to the large number of themes it was difficult to accommodate all main sessions in the program and certain days of the event were a little main session heavy.
- In some cases it was difficult to find synergies between the preparatory sessions and the main sessions.
- Main sessions were oriented to meaningful exchanges on topics of broad interest, especially those that focused on practical examples of applying policy or practices to address challenges and allow for capacity building across the range of discussants and participants, thereby reinforcing the commitment to the multistakeholder approach.
- Two hours / session seemed to be the right amount of time to allow for a deeper dive into discussions and allow for audience input, while still maintaining the interest of participants throughout the session. In the past there were occasions where no other sessions were running in parallel with Main Sessions, thus allowing for wider participation as well as elevating the status of these sessions on the IGF program – this should be an example to follow going forward.
- Providing synergies between main sessions and the IGF intersessional work, as well as the work of NRIs gives an extra opportunity to raise the visibility and impact of their work. This opportunity should be further explored in upcoming IGFs.

IGF 2021 High-level leaders track

- The efforts of the host country, the IGF Secretariat and UN DESA to attract government officials, legislators and business participants, especially for the high-level sessions was well received by the community. It was unfortunate that many high-level participants did not attend the IGF in person, due to the outbreak of the Omicron variant, this significantly limited their interaction with other parts of the IGF programme. In the future further efforts should be made to encourage high-level participants to engage with other the IGF sessions and events aside from the panel they speak on.
- Efforts could be made to communicate the participation of HL attendees ahead of time to drive the interest and participation of both IGF attendees and the media.

IGF 2021 Parliamentary track

- Continuing the tradition of the Parliamentary track started in Berlin was welcomed. Efforts should be made to better integrate this track with the other IGF activities and ensure the participation of parliamentarians in other IGF sessions and interaction with IGF participants from all stakeholder groups.

How do you see the IGF 2020 programme content from a gender perspective?

- Many sessions on the IGF programme have reported to have addressed gender issues as part of their discussion. Most, although unfortunately not all, session organizers have demonstrated efforts to strive for gender balance on their panels. Efforts must be sustained in this regard to ensure there are no sessions on the IGF agenda with a disproportionate underrepresentation of women.

IGF 2021 participants

- At over 10000 registered participants, the attendance of this year's event reached a new record high, the hybrid format allowing for many who could not have attended an in-person event to follow IGF sessions.
- It would be interesting to know whether this increased level of registration also brought increased level of active participation from new groups of attendees. Therefore, further statistics would be useful to help analyse not only registrations, but the participation of connected attendees to individual sessions.
- While participation of government and business representatives has improved slightly, efforts need to continue to attract these stakeholders groups to future editions of the IGF.

IGF 2021 village

- The IGF village is an integral part of the in-person IGF experience, providing opportunities for networking, information sharing and discovery. The efforts of the host country team to accommodate requests, set up and service the village were very much appreciated.
- Unfortunately, while significant efforts were made to provide a virtual space for booth organizers to showcase their work, little was done to promote the virtual booths or enable them to add some networking or interactive activities to the agenda.
- Looking ahead to 2022, if another online or hybrid event is considered, the virtual IGF village must be adequately advertised to allow for meaningful and interactive participation of attendees.

IGF 2021 communications, outreach and outputs

Overview of the IGF 2021 Outputs is available at <https://www.intgovforum.org/content/igf-2021-outputs>

- Showcasing the various IGF outputs promptly on the IGF website was very welcome and useful to demonstrate the value IGF discussions bring to the community. Capturing and promoting them successfully helps increase the reach of these conversations beyond the IGF session participants.
- Commendable efforts to attract journalists were made, especially on the side of the host country inviting national and local media. These efforts could be amplified through a systematic outreach and media strategy to identify relevant news outlets (especially on the international level) ahead of time and sharing information on topics expected to be covered at the IGF, as well as high-level participants in attendance.
- The IGF messages report has an important role in bridging consecutive IGF cycles and highlighting the various IGF outputs, and ensure consistency between them, therefore credibility of the IGF for the future. Efforts should be made to better inform participants on the process of drafting of the messages and how their session summaries contribute to the final IGF messages. Session participants should also be made aware of the possibility to comment on the draft messages. Sharing such information with session participants helps improve the balance in participation, which in turn increases the legitimacy of messages.

PART II: What are your suggestions for improvements for IGF 2022?

IGF 2022 preparatory process

Timeline, call for session proposals and session selection, MAG and Open Consultations meetings etc.

- Given the continued global health crisis and persisting domestic turbulence in the 2022 host country, we urge the IGF Secretariat and UN DESA to carefully consider the possibility to hosting IGF 2022 as planned and make a final decision on the location and dates of the annual event as soon as possible, but no later than six months ahead of the event.
- As the hybrid format has notable benefits for accessibility and participation, organizers should consider retaining (elements of) this format. Even once full in-person events return, session organisers should be encouraged to include remote participants where that helps provide a geographic or policy perspective not necessarily possible because some relevant experts do not have the time and / or money to travel to an overseas meeting. Before COVID-19, remote participants were largely secondary in practice, even if organisers were encouraged to make time and use tools to provide space for questions from remote participants, the 2021 IGF proved that it is possible to host successful sessions and fruitful discussions with many (or all) speakers spread across the globe. Benefitting from the experiences of the virtual IGF in 2020 and the hybrid IGF in 2021 we should increasingly think in terms of hybrid events that will allow for a broader range of people to participate.
- To support the profile of the IGF and to recognise the considerable investment by host countries, a high-level leaders' event (or similar) should continue to be on the agenda.

Agenda

- A more focused set of topics and policy questions would be preferred to support a more streamlined agenda, with session formats that allow for greater participation from non-panel members. The IGF should not have more than four tracks with clear, concise and easily understandable themes that do not overlap.

Planning process:

- There is an increasing need for a clear and easily understandable process, through which the community can contribute to the IGF agenda in a bottom-up fashion. A calendar and a visual representation of the process, such as an updated version of the [IGF Programme Framework](#) should be made public to outline the planning cycle for the IGF in a simple, yet comprehensive format, to illustrate the agenda and programme-setting process and mark deadlines and engagement points for the community.
- Such a framework could also form the back-bone of a communication and outreach strategy, creating a year-long calendar for outreach messages and social media content where relevant updates can be shared on the preparatory process and track narratives and input from the community can be invited at each milestone.
- The IGF Programme framework, including improvements made in the past years, should be used as a base for the preparatory process in 2022 and should be further strengthened through clear measures of success, standards of work, and a critical number of people committed to lead/support the activity across all stakeholder groups. This would require an analysis of required resources and responsibilities, including of the Secretariat and any consultants, to ensure that any initiated work (traditionally part of the IGF or newly proposed) will be successful. There should also be clear mandates of authorization for each intersessional work stream.

Communication

- There is an ever increasing need to raise wider awareness of existing IGF outputs and support their better dissemination.
- Further discussion should be encouraged on what defines success for the IGF, what is meant by tangible outputs and what problem the outputs are intended to address. The IGF Secretariat should develop a work plan to identify, gather and better market existing outputs of the IGF. This would roughly follow the steps below:
 - Identify existing outputs and outcomes, both written products and success stories of collaboration / impact
 - Organize and cross-reference these by topic, and possibly with tags, so that these can be easily searched
 - Identify potential audiences
 - Targeted outreach and communication to better market the outputs
- This work plan should be supported by a timeline, an analysis of required resources and responsibilities, and indicators and measures of success. The Secretariat should be equipped with resources to be able to execute this plan.
- To improve the marketing of IGF outputs, the following should be considered:
 - Pare down intersessional work streams to allow for more concentrated effort and better support for selected work.
 - Task the IGF Secretariat (not a recurring MAG Working Group on Outreach and Communication) with outreach efforts and dissemination of existing

outputs (policy material, reports, and case studies of successful cooperation/projects that rooted in IGF meetings and discussions). Guest blogs or interviews about IGF success stories.

- Equip IGF participants with a communications / social media toolbox or guidance on how they can help disseminate messages. This would help increase outreach and enable participants to act as multipliers to official IGF communication.
- Ensure close coordination on communication activities between the IGF Secretariat, the UN DESA communications team and the host country communications team to avoid duplication of efforts and mutually reinforce messages.
- The legitimacy, accountability and balance of IGF outputs must be held to the highest standards:
 - The balance of stakeholders needs to be maintained in every work stream of the IGF in order not to undermine their legitimacy, and to implement the multistakeholder approach which is intrinsic to the IGF
 - Outputs of any intersessional work must ensure accurate reflection of all opinions
 - The MAG should consider ways to raise profile of the IGF and strengthen the participation of underrepresented groups and regions and enhance the credibility of IGF work streams by addressing their balance and ensuring representation of regions and stakeholders. Capacity building programs aimed at underrepresented groups can help ensure meaningful participation.

IGF 2022 Overall programme structure and flow

- Concentrating the IGF programme into a handful thematic tracks in 2019 and 2020 was a very welcome idea and translated well into the final programme of the IGF. The 2021 edition seemed to move away from this precedent. The idea of three-four (but not more) thematic tracks should be maintained going forward to help streamline the agenda.
- It is important to continue the practice of consulting the broader IGF community on issues to be discussed at the IGF, that will inform the MAG's decision on the topics for thematic tracks.
- Aligning workshop proposals under thematic tracks works well. Efforts should be continued to align other sessions that are part of the official IGF programme (Open Forums, DCs, BPFs, NRI collaborative sessions, etc.) under the thematic tracks, from the start of the submission and evaluation process.
- To ensure that the preparatory phase and Day 0 event as well as the high-level portion of the IGF programme continue to fulfil their potential going forward, efforts should be made that these also support the tracks and themes of the annual event.
- An exchange between past and future host countries and MAG members on potential improvements and ideas for preparatory, Day 0 and high-level events and the overall IGF programme would be welcome.

IGF 2022 Programme content

Thematic approach, session types, speakers profiles

- IGF communities and intersessional work should continue to be included and featured as appropriate in topical main sessions on topics of interest and relevance to

them, to contribute to a more cohesive and thematic agenda, as well as overall a more collegial atmosphere.

- Clear guidelines and timelines are useful both for session proposers and evaluators on the process of how session proposals finally make it onto the programme of the annual meeting (tracks, sub-themes, etc.). Clearer guidelines are also needed on how other sessions (open forums, DC and NRI sessions) fit into the thematic programme, as well as on their evaluation.
- A reinforced communication campaign would be helpful ahead of the workshop proposal process to ensure those new to the IGF are aware of the various possibilities to be actively involved in the upcoming IGF well in advance of the annual meeting. This should also include information on the possibility of proposing other types of activities for the IGF programme that are not suitable for a workshop format (networking, publication launch, hackathon, etc.)
- Such a communication campaign should be supported by a rigorous timetable, guidelines and toolkits and build on the network of NRIs as well as that of MAG members to act as multipliers.

Community intersessional activities and National, Regional and Youth IGFs: how these could best connect with the IGF 2022 process?

- IGF resources are not as unlimited as the appetite for groups to come together to work on new issues. The MAG should discuss and consider a mechanism to anticipate how to deal with the increased interest in DCs, BPFs, PNs, NRIs as well as MAG working groups. These activities all compete for the same limited IGF staff support, and at times stakeholder representatives' support, all of which only stretch so thin.
- A turnover policy should be considered, activities that have reached their goals or have lost the support of the community should be sunset to allow resources for new ones. There is value in exploring new and innovative ideas, but this should be about quality over quantity – there needs to be a clear focus on the quality and strategic goals of such activities. In addition, efforts should be made to ensure that any new activity has not just the interest, but the active support and foreseeable engagement of a critical mass of people from the wider IGF community, and particular attention is paid to stakeholder, regional and gender balance. The work of the BPF on BPFs in 2020 and the 2021 DC report both resulted in welcome guidelines in this regard.

IGF 2022 participants: who to invite and how to inter-connect participants?

- Efforts need to continue to attract government and business stakeholders to the IGF. Participation of high-level policymakers drives interest from their counterparts from other regions and stakeholder groups. Efforts should be made to continue the trend for the involvement of top-level actors.