

Input from the Swiss Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM) to the stocktaking consultation conducted by the IGF Secretariat

16 January 2023

OFCOM Switzerland thanks for the opportunity to take part in this stocktaking exercise and would like to share the following inputs:

A. General comments and suggestions for IGF 2023 preparations

Please allow us to share some general **suggestions for IGF 2023**, in the spirit of an “IGF+” as proposed by the **UNSG’s Roadmap on Digital Cooperation**, particularly the ideas outlined in Paragraph 93.

In this line, in January 2021 the **MAG Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy** (WG-strategy) developed concrete recommendations on strategic improvements to the IGF and operational measures in 2021. In our opinion, these recommendations are still very valuable and should be followed and implemented. Also, the WG-Strategy’s [Response to the paper on “Options for the Future of Digital Cooperation”](#) from September 2020 should be taken into account.

More specifically, we would like to share the following suggestions:

- We look forward to a stronger collaboration with the UNSG Tech Envoy. A good collaboration between this position and the IGF community should energize the implementation of many recommendations from the UNSG Roadmap, while helping to raising the profile of the IGF. The Tech Envoy should closely liaise with the IGF, particularly the MAG, the MAG WG Strategy and the IGF Secretariat.
- In addition, stronger synergies should be sought between the IGF activities and the implementation actions under the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. In this sense, we fully endorse the MAG Chair letter sent in November 2021 to the UNSG, available under https://www.intgovforum.org/en/filedepot_download/213/20526
- The personal, preferably physical, participation of the UNSG (as in 2018 and 2019 – and virtually in 2017, 2020, 2021 and 2022) as well as the personal participation of the Host Country President of Head of Government should be further enshrined as a permanent good practice, as it strengthens the profile and visibility of the IGF and its outcomes.
- The IGF 2023, both as an event as well as its intersessional and preparatory process, should further strive to serve as a key platform in the consultations to be held in relation with the “Global Digital Compact” envisaged in the UN-Secretary General’s “Our Common Agenda”. Delivering the IGF Addis Messages to the GDC co-facilitators, to the UNSG Executive Office and to the TEO should be an important first step.
- The program should be more “issue-based” than ever, with a maximum of four to five focus topics - all culminating in a maximum of five high-level main sessions.
- In addition, it should be more integrated than ever: NRI, DC, BPF, PNE should be integral part of the high-level main sessions, providing for integration of the respective intersessional groups into the corresponding four preparatory issue-groups.

- There should be a build-up during the year, with focused preparatory discussions leading to „draft messages“ to be put out for public comment and to be discussed in the high-level sessions.
- The “messages” should be short, concise and to the point and be timely and widely distributed.
- The IGF 2023 should be fully hybrid.
- The opening session should return to an interactive format, like e.g. a high-level roundtable. 2022 saw a fallback to a line-up of disconnected speeches, which should be avoided.
- The high level (ministerial) track should as well be an integral part of the program: two of the hl-main sessions could be explicitly targeted for ministers and parliamentarians. 2022 we saw that the program of these high-level and parliamentary tracks were not aligned with the overall IGF tracks: this should be avoided.
- There could be a small separate ministerial track: breakfast and dinner, while the rest of their program would be integral part of the IGF, in order to benefit from their participation in other sessions. All parts of the ministerial and parliamentary program should be open to observation by interested members of the community.
- The MAG would be leading on all the program aspects, with the IGF-Leadership Panel interacting closely with the MAG, and providing strategic input on main focus topics, suggesting speakers, commenting on „draft messages“, and contributing to bringing final messages to other high-level for a.
- The information sources at the disposal of the participants during the IGF (such as digital policy summaries, instant “session reporting”, “daily reports”, etc.) should be further developed, in particular through partnerships with, inter alia, the Geneva Internet Platform, GIPO, IG Schools, etc.
- The inclusiveness of the IGF can be further improved by including the voices and views of ordinary citizens – particularly from the global South – through citizens’ dialogues.
- Strengthening the links and synergies between the IGF and existing observatories and helpdesks active in offering quality information and capacity building in the field of digital governance, such as the Geneva Internet Platform, GIPO, and the various schools for Internet Governance. As discussed in the MAG WG-Strategy, the IGF Secretariat could maintain a dedicated website linking to partners that provide such observatory and helpdesk functions.

B. Specific comments to the questionnaire

1. Taking Stock of the IGF 2021: What worked well? What worked not so well?

- a. **IGF 2022 preparatory process (timeline, call for issues and session proposals, session selection, MAG meetings, capacity development etc.)**
 - Overall, meetings were well organized, but not all of them focused on specific issues as conversations often went into many different directions.
- b. **IGF 2022 overall programme: thematic focus, structure and flow**

- The discussions proved to be politically relevant and in line with many of the world's most pressing challenges when it comes to digitalization, such as digital inclusion, tech regulation, sustainability, digital rights, cybersecurity, AI, and more. It was positive that the program of IGF 2022 was aligned with the topics of the GDC.

c. IGF 2022 Hybrid format design and experience

- For the most part, the hybrid format design was a success, as it made the event more inclusive by letting people choose whether they wanted to participate physically or online.
- It would have been easier to access the sessions simply by having the Zoom link in advance.

d. IGF 2022 Logistics (website, mobile app, schedule, registration, access, use of online platform, bilateral meeting system, security)

- The website was working quite seamlessly, however many people struggled to connect and log in to their page.
- The onsite logistics (badge pick-up, conference venue, bilateral meeting rooms, food etc.) generally worked very well. There were just some minor challenges with the technicians on site during hybrid sessions (due to language misunderstandings).

2. IGF 2022 programme: please comment on the content, speakers and quality of discussions

a. IGF 2022 Sessions

- The IGF 2022 had many different types of sessions, which were all suited for different purposes, such as open forums, town halls, lightning talks, and networking sessions. The number of sessions was high and should rather be reduced.

b. IGF 2022 High-level leaders track

- As other sessions at the IGF, also the high-level leaders' sessions should be as interactive as possible and also include the participants.

c. How do you see the IGF 2022 programme content from a gender perspective?

- « All male panels » were avoided, which is positive. But of course, there is still room for improvement for an even better representation of women.

3. What are your suggestions for improvements for IGF 2023?

a. IGF 2023 preparatory process (timeline, call for session proposals and session selection, MAG and Open Consultations meetings etc.)

For the implementation of the Common Agenda and the Roadmap, as well as for the consultations on the GDC, the IGF should be used as much as possible. Thus, the program of IGF 2023 should be aligned with the topics of the GDC, as it was the case in 2022.

b. IGF 2022 Overall programme structure and flow

- Maintaining the IGF 2023 in a hybrid format would be a good idea as it allows those that cannot travel to participate and contribute for the dialogue. However, to ensure a smooth process,

the issues with the website should be fixed so that it does not crash when its servers are overloaded.

c. IGF 2023 Programme content (thematic approach, session types, speakers profiles)

- While the participants to the IGF 2022 came from a diverse set of regions all around the world, Europeans and North Americans remain overrepresented in comparison to their counterparts in the Asia-Pacific, Latin American, or African regions. It would be beneficial to promote the IGF further in these regions to increase their participation and ensure a truly global dialogue for the next edition of the IGF. The improvement from the IGF 2021 has already been seen, as the IGF 2022 for the first time in many years took place on the African continent again.

d. IGF 2023 Participants: who to invite and how to inter-connect participants?

- It would be great to see more representation from the press/media, as well as the technical community. Many of the digital challenges that we are facing are difficult to understand from a technical perspective for people who are unfamiliar with them, so it would be useful to have more “explanatory” sessions from experts in the fields, as well as more press/media spokespeople to cover the event outside of the host country.
- The gathering and active participation of high-level leaders from all stakeholder groups throughout the meeting and in high-level formats should be maintained and further developed. Also, the innovation represented by the parliamentarians track and meeting (since 2019) should be continued and enhanced.