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

In Switzerland's view, IGF 2023 was an excellent IGF with a wide range of topics, some really good sessions and very good participation. The hosts were organized, efficient, generous and welcoming.

Closer collaboration between the MAG, the hosts and the Secretariat on the content of the programme: There was a time when Day 0 sessions were quite distinct, so were Open Forums. Now many of them just feel like workshops under another name. The same goes for the "high level track". It used to be different from main sessions, and quite contained. There was no apparent difference between sessions organized by the MAG and others. In this sense, we should all strive for a fully integrated program, that is clearly structured, and avoids duplications.

Innovation in format/design and capacity that would enable the IGF to play the role in supporting other processes (including GDC follow up and implementation): To put forward the IGF as the most appropriate platform to fill some of the gaps identified in Our Common Agenda and what came out of it (including the Summit of the Future and the GDC) is not enough. This should be further operationalized. In this sense, we endorse the proposals contained in the IGF-Leadership Panel and MAG letter of October 16th (https://www.intgovforum.org/en/filedepot_download/24/26649), where the following ideas are suggested:

- *The annual IGF meeting could include a dedicated work track, incorporating workshops, open fora, and main and high-level sessions, focused on review and follow-up on the needs and gaps identified in the GDC.*
- *UN departments and agencies, as well as other interested stakeholders, can be invited to prepare annual/periodic reports on GDC progress that would be presented within this event track, culminating in a debate on "The State of Global Digital Cooperation", convened by the IGF Leadership Panel, and bringing the UN Secretary-General together with multistakeholder leaders from across the globe.*
- *The IGF Leadership Panel and MAG can call upon the global network of NRIs to dedicate specific conference tracks to GDC follow-up, as appropriate, and report on these discussions; we can also call upon the community to dedicate IGF intersessional work at the global level to GDC issues.*
- *A synthesis of the outcomes of relevant intersessional work, the annual IGF, debates and agreements relating to GDC review and follow-up can be summarized in a dedicated section of the annual "IGF Outputs" and communicated to all UN departments and agencies, as well as other stakeholders, for appropriate follow-up actions;*

The 2024 IGF could be used as an occasion to implement these suggestions as far as feasible.

Furthermore, the Kyoto event really succeeded in reminding people of the importance of WSIS. CSTD and the ITU, UNESCO and UNDP, did brilliantly at this and organised some very good sessions on the topic. Now it is for the IGF to work with these institutions on a collaborative strategy. And for the IGF

community to use the WSIS process for side events, research, inputs etc. There is not much time left. These plans need to be made before year end if they are to be implementable in time.

Finally, we welcome the prominent role the IGF Leadership Panel had during the Kyoto IGF, especially as high-level embodiment of the plural and diverse IGF community, as well as visible faces that are in a position to interact with leaders from countries, IGOs, and other organizations. We also welcome the initiative of the IGF-LP to prepare a leading document, "The Internet we want", although we would have welcomed a more interactive preparatory process of such document together with the MAG and the wider IGF community.

Further general suggestions for the 2024 IGF

Please allow us to share some additional general **suggestions for IGF 2024**, 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, 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 and 2023. In our opinion, these recommendations are still very valuable and should be followed and implemented.

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 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 and 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 opening session should maintain an interactive format, like e.g. a high-level roundtable.

- 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 parliamentarian program should be open to observation by interested members of the community.

- Similarly, there could be a small CEO business-track, allowing them to mingle amongst each other, but maintaining a coherence with the overall IGF program.

- 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.

- Finally, the organization of the 2024 IGF has to take all necessary steps to ensure a safe and free space for discussions, debate and interaction during the proceedings of the meeting, addressing as soon as possible the concerns expressed, inter alia, by civil society representatives.

B. Specific comments to the questionnaire

1. **Taking Stock of the IGF 2023: What worked well? What worked not so well?**

    a. **IGF 2023 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.

    - Many sessions were very panel heavy not leaving much space for questions and comments from the audience, and discussions.

    b. **IGF 2023 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 2023 reflected the upcoming GDC and WSIS+20 review.

c. IGF 2023 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.

d. IGF 2023 Logistics (website, mobile app, schedule, registration, access, use of online platform, bilateral meeting system, security)

- The website was working quite seamlessly.
- The programme was not kept up to date on the IGF website, and the excel was complicated to follow. It would be great to find a new, and clearer system. Maybe something similar to what is used for the ICANN meetings.
- The onsite logistics (badge pick-up, conference venue, bilateral meeting rooms, food etc.) generally worked very well. I would refrain from renaming the rooms, it had too many names, and got slightly confusing.

2. IGF 2023 programme: please comment on the content, speakers and quality of discussions

a. IGF 2023 Sessions

- The IGF 2023 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 showed the different interests and topics covered by the IGF.

b. IGF 2023 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. As said above all tracks should be part of a fully integrated program.

c. IGF 2023 parliamentary track

- As other sessions at the IGF, also the parliamentary sessions should be as interactive as possible and also include the participants. As said above all tracks should be part of a fully integrated program.

d. IGF 2023 Youth track

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e. How do you see the IGF 2023 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 and gender non-conforming people.

f. IGF 2023 Village

- The IGF village was well organized, however we believe it was not very well visited.

g. IGF 2023 communications, outreach and outputs

- 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 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.

h. Any other comments on the IGF 2023

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i. What are your suggestions for improvements for IGF 2024?
  a. IGF 2024 preparatory process (timeline, call for session proposals and session selection, MAG and Open Consultations meetings etc.)

See the general comments above.
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 2024 should be aligned with the topics of the GDC, as it was the case in 2022 and 2023.

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  b. IGF 2024 Overall programme structure and flow

- Maintaining the IGF 2024 in a hybrid format would be a good idea as it allows those that cannot travel to participate and contribute for the dialogue.

  c. IGF 2024 Programme content (thematic approach, session types, speakers profiles)

- While the participants to the IGF 2023 came from a diverse set of regions all around the world, Europeans and North Americans remain usually 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.

  d. Community intersessional activities and National, Regional and Youth IGFs: how these could best connect with the IGF 2024 process?

- See general comments above.

  e. IGF 2024 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.

   f. Any other comments on the IGF 2024? You are welcome to comment on possible improvements of the IGF as it pertains to the IGF mandate, UNSG Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and out common agenda.

As suggested above, the IGF 2024 may beginb implementing, as far as possible, the suggestions contained in the IGF letter to the GDC co-facilitators, especially the following:

- The annual IGF meeting could include a dedicated work track, incorporating workshops, open fora, and main and high-level sessions, focused on review and follow-up on the needs and gaps identified in the GDC.
- UN departments and agencies, as well as other interested stakeholders, can be invited to prepare annual/periodic reports on GDC progress that would be presented within this event track, culminating in a debate on "The State of Global Digital Cooperation", convened by the IGF Leadership Panel, and bringing the UN Secretary-General together with multistakeholder leaders from across the globe.
- The IGF Leadership Panel and MAG can call upon the global network of NRIs to dedicate specific conference tracks to GDC follow-up, as appropriate, and report on these discussions; we can also call upon the community to dedicate IGF intersessional work at the global level to GDC issues.
- A synthesis of the outcomes of relevant intersessional work, the annual IGF, debates and agreements relating to GDC review and follow-up can be summarized in a dedicated section of the annual "IGF Outputs" and communicated to all UN departments and agencies, as well as other stakeholders, for appropriate follow-up actions;