

Internet Governance Forum (IGF) 2023 – Stocktaking

The 18th Internet Governance Forum (IGF), held from October 8-12 in Kyoto, Japan, was a landmark event, marked by its theme "The Internet We Want - Empowering All People." It achieved a record-breaking 11,145 registrations, with 6,279 attendees on-site and over 3,000 participants online, underscoring its success in both organization and attendance.

We particularly want to highlight the exceptional planning by the Japanese hosts. Japan invested heavily to host an IGF that surpassed previous editions in physical participation, supplemented by broad virtual engagement. The venue and technical facilities were impressive. Additionally, the complimentary lunch and metro pass provision were notable and appreciated aspects.

However, there is also an opportunity for further enhancement and development. In this vein, we suggest revisiting and refining the following topics.

- **Agenda**

The IGF 2023 agenda showcased a diverse array of topics, encompassing over 300 sessions and panels. However, the intensive schedule also presented many participants with major challenges. Furthermore, it seemed it also led to redundancies. For example, a preliminary review suggests a potential overemphasis on Artificial Intelligence (AI), with more than 50 sessions focused on this area. It was also observed that numerous AI-related sessions were scheduled simultaneously, leading to overlap, and there was a recurrence of the same panellists in different sessions.

To enhance the effectiveness of the IGF, the role of the MAG as a central program authority should be reinforced. In particular, sessions for which the MAG is not responsible should be reduced (especially Open Forum and Town Halls). While AI is a recent and important topic that attracts significant attendance, it's crucial to avoid duplication and ensure that core issues of Internet governance continue to hold a prominent role.

- **Leadership Panel and "IGF Messages"**

The "IGF Messages" is the main output document of the IGF, however it seems that policy makers, businesses, the technical community, and academia rarely refer to the IGF Messages after a meeting nor take inspiration out of the messages. Therefore, it's crucial the Leadership Panel brings the IGF Messages to the attention of a diverse array of stakeholders.

The Leadership Panel should inform the IGF Secretariat and the global IGF community on where they have shared the IGF messages with policymakers, businesses and other relevant stakeholders.

- **Gender Balance Diversity**

Most sessions featured a gender-balanced panel, however, the representativeness of women and non-binary people should be increased, as well as representatives from Global South.

- **Youth**

Young people had their track and there were more sessions organised by youth than in previous years. However, especially panels in the main hall did barely feature young voices and views. It is recommended that there be a youth representative for/on all sessions.

Recommendations for the IGF 2024

- NRIs

The contributions from regional and national IGFs should be more prominently featured in the global IGF context.

The IGF Secretariat is encouraged to foster capacity building among partners, particularly those from the Global South, to facilitate their active participation in future IGFs and other internet governance processes.

- Logistics

Sessions very early in the morning (08:30) and late in the evening (17:45) should be avoided, as very few physical audience were present at these timeslots. Also, the room size should be considered for potentially promising sessions which might attract larger audiences.

In addition to thematic overlap and high parallelism of the sessions, inconsistent start times are challenging for participants, even more so if they need to physically change between meeting rooms. Therefore, the 2023 schedule should follow a grid model that aligns start and end times and adds "move time". Different session durations should be accommodated within that grid schedule.

Preference should be given to proposals for interactive sessions that involve the audience rather than to panels or presentations. In any case, session organizers should be strongly encouraged to add interactive elements like online polls, small group discussions, or interventions from the floor.