Contributions Taking Stock of IGF 2023 and Looking Forward to IGF 2024 Synthesis Paper

This paper summarizes inputs received from the IGF community from the Open Mic session at IGF 2023, as well as in response to an [invitation](#) from the IGF Secretariat for stakeholders to submit written contributions taking stock of the IGF 2023 meeting (18th IGF) and looking forward to the IGF 2024 meeting (19th IGF).

This synthesis paper is intended to form input for the First Open Consultations and Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) Meeting in the preparatory process for IGF 2024. This paper is a summary of the twenty-three (23) [contributions](#) received by the IGF Secretariat, either through an online form or by email. Of the eighteen (18) contributions by online form, the highest number came from countries in the Western European and Others Group, followed by the Asia-Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Intergovernmental Organizations. The Civil Society stakeholder group submitted the highest number of inputs, followed by the Private Sector, the Technical Community, and Governments.

The synthesis document outlines feedback and suggestions for improvements, structured as follows:

1. *Preparatory process*
2. *Intersessional work and NRIs*
3. *Programme structure and content*
4. *Technical matters, including hybrid features, and communications*
5. *Other logistics and host country role*
6. *Participation and stakeholder engagement, including with UN processes*

I. Preparatory Process

Comments regarding the preparatory process, in general, were very positive, describing it as "efficient". Emphasized were the timely announcement of the host country and Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) composition, as well as the sufficient time that was allocated to the preparatory process, including the session submission phase.

Some suggestions for improvement on specific areas of the process were as follows:

1. While some respondents praised this year's programme themes, it was also suggested to have fewer, more compact thematic tracks.

2. The need for more inclusion of Dynamic Coalitions (DCs), as well as intersessional work in programme building and MAG discussions was raised.

3. In case of any deadline extensions, making the announcement with more advance notice would help better plan the various submissions.

4. There were several calls for increased transparency in the selection of sessions from types other than workshops. The MAG should also be seen as taking more of a leading role in session selection

to avoid duplication amongst all types. Providing more time to MAG members to select sessions would also be welcomed.

5. A respondent suggested to include a wider range of selection criteria for workshops, as an attempt to identify and select sessions providing clear solutions and policy recommendations.

6. Including more elaborate feedback on a workshop and session rejection would help submitters better understand the rationale behind rejections.

7. As for the preparatory process of high-level sessions, some main session organizers would appreciate a better coordination with the IGF Secretariat and the host country.

8. Concerning the IGF 2024 timeline, it was mentioned dates, including the ones for Open Consultations and MAG meetings, should be announced with more advance notice. It would be welcomed to have an IGF 2024 timeline published on the website.

II. Intersessional Work and NRIs

NRIs and their participation in annual meetings continue to be an important aspect of the IGF experience for many stakeholders. Similarly, intersessional policy activities – namely, Best Practice Forums (BPFs), Policy Networks (PNs) and DCs – were held up as important community pillars before and during the annual meeting, as avenues for stakeholder participation. The main sessions of BPFs, PNs and DCs were appraised for their good quality in terms of content and speakers.

Further to the above, there were comments overarching the different intersessional and/or NRI groups:

1. Respondents asked for greater integration of the various NRI and Youth initiatives output in the global IGF programme. Specifically, NRIS should be further included in IGF strategic goals and discussions on global Internet governance processes.

2. It was felt that the work of BPFs, PNs, DCs and Youth should be better promoted, as their work is a central part of IGF activities.

3. DCs urged the IGF to take into account the outcomes of their intersessional activities in their strategic planning, meeting programme planning and IGF outputs advocacy. Also, DCs called for a more formal IGF recognition of their outputs.

4. Noting the increase in number of DCs and the competing pressure for slots in the IGF programme, DCs expressed their concern about the ability to integrate their key outcomes in the IGF framework. DCs stand ready to discuss options on the format of DC-related sessions at the IGF.

III. Programme Structure and Content

The high caliber and dynamism of discussions were a highlight of IGF 2023. This was remarked upon in several inputs and can be attributed to the preparedness and enthusiasm of session organizers.

Inputs also raised disparate issues in connection with the programme, having to do with themes, session typologies and selection, the conduct of sessions and structured tracks. These are as follows:

1. The programme's alignment with the Global Digital Compact (GDC) and WSIS+20 was lauded, and it was encouraged to adopt a similar approach for 2024. Few respondents, however, regretted the prominent status given to Artificial Intelligence.

2. There were various calls to improve the IGF schedule. The initial Excel sheet was hard to follow and not accessible for people with disabilities. It was reported that the interactive schedule did not provide a comprehensive overview of events, in few cases showing erroneous dates, times and Zoom links. Contributors often referred to a third-party application as an alternative.

3. Organizers and participants would greatly benefit from an earlier release of the interactive programme. It was also suggested to set a firm deadline to allow conducting changes on session pages, which would help participants better plan their personal schedule.

4. While there was a record number of participants at this year's IGF, some organizers reported a very low number of participants in their sessions, which were also allocated in large workshop rooms. Early start and late ending times of sessions should be reconsidered due to low attendance.

5. It was suggested to have a more focused schedule, allowing less sessions on the programme, subsequently avoiding duplications and overlaps.

6. Although the variety of session types within the programme was praised by a few as an advantage contributing to a diverse programme, there were several calls to reduce the number of session types and improve distinctions between types. Respondents mentioned the confusion the various session types could leave to during the session submission process and week of the IGF.

7. Contributors urged to include more youth, gender-diverse individuals, as well as representatives from the Global South as (in-person) speakers especially in sessions taking place in the main hall. Disabilities should also be included as a diversity factor, next to gender, stakeholder groups and geographical distribution.

8. The further development of the high-level and parliamentary tracks was positively highlighted. However, the high-level track should include more panelists from regions other than WEOG and include more young speakers.

9. The Parliamentary Track should engage communities more widely and be better integrated in the overall IGF programme (e.g., by opening Parliamentary Track sessions to all participants, including Parliamentarians as panelists in other IGF sessions).

10. Not only high-level and Parliamentary Track sessions should have more time allocated to open discussions with participants, but also Leadership Panel events.

11. It was noted that some speakers were repeated several times in IGF sessions and contributors called for more diversity amongst panelists, even suggesting a limit to speakers' interventions.

12. More time was requested for the open mic session, which was scheduled for 60 minutes.

IV. Technical Matters, including Hybrid Features, and Communications

The hybrid nature of IGF, specifically its extensive virtual access to programme sessions and even to side or social events, continues to be highly appreciated by respondents. The 3-D rendered venue of the annual IGF, in 2023 used for the fourth year running, was described as "a very much appreciated idea".

On technical matters and communications, suggestions for further improvement are summarized as follows:

1. The hybrid component and excellent execution from the host country's technical team was widely lauded. Two respondents suggested to explore the possibility of holding fully virtual events, some others welcomed the requirement of having onsite panelists. Another contributor called for the use of encrypted platforms and the execution of UN-led digital security trainings.

2. While the IGF mobile app is an excellent feature, it could be better promoted. Contributors suggested to enhance displaying session details, as well as to include a chat or networking function for participants to easily connect.

3. It was suggested to develop a set of instructions to navigate through the website and edit session pages, as the user interface was not straightforward.

4. The access to remote links was easier compared to previous years and it was welcomed to have the Zoom links published already ahead of the IGF. However, registration for the individual sessions seemed laborious and participants would benefit from detailed instructions.

5. It was suggested to produce, during the week of the IGF and with the support of IGF partners, more information material, such as event summaries.

6. More effort should be made to secure the presence of international media at the annual meeting.

7. There were several calls to enhance communications activities and develop a solid communications strategy and tools, which could be used by session organizers to widely promote their events.

8. The 3D venue and virtual booths should be better advertised. Contributors claimed that organizers would benefit from more detailed support, starting preparations earlier in time.

V. Other Logistics and Host Country Role

The onsite logistics and arrangements provided by the host country, including hospitality, venue and social programme, were widely lauded, describing it as "impeccable", "excellently organized" and

"exceptional". A few comments also pointed to some logistical matters that could be handled differently in 2024. These are as follows:

1. Acquiring a visa to travel to Japan proved to be challenging for nationals from some countries, especially from the Global South. Steps for obtaining a visa to Saudi Arabia should be clear and communicated as early as possible. It was also suggested to provide a better formatted registration letters.

2. Towards improving transparency, a call was made to publish the host country agreements, including privileges and immunities, as well as summaries from country assessment missions.

3. Signage to rooms at the venue was confusing due to the reference of two different room names.

4. The IGF village and host country's efforts were widely lauded. There was a natural flow of participants through the Village area coming from the entrance hall. However, contributors suggested placing the village closer to workshop rooms or coffee corners to increase attendance.

5. There were calls to forbid the organization of receptions and social gatherings during meeting hours to avoid any overlaps with on-going sessions.

6. There were several calls to enhance accessibility of the IGF, starting early on with the preparatory process. This should include access on the website as well as at the venue, ensuring that various types of disabilities are taken into consideration. Experts should be consulted in the process.

VI. Participation and Stakeholder Engagement, including with UN Processes

Many inputs underscored the increased participation of private sector and government representatives. Overall, less women participated in the IGF 2023 compared to the previous annual meeting, however, due to increased efforts, sessions had a more diverse line-up of panelists.

Looking ahead to the 19th IGF, respondents made a few suggestions as follows:

1. The notable presence of youth could be improved and built upon in a few important ways, ensuring their visibility and active participation across the programme, without silo-ing them in a youth track or assigning less visible roles (e.g., online moderators).

2. It was felt there should be much wider outreach to legislators from the Global North.

3. There were calls to enhance business participation, in particular from big tech companies, by creating a dedicated space for interactions between business representatives and other stakeholders.

4. Contributors urged to raise wider awareness of existing IGF outputs and support their dissemination, amongst, but not limited to, the UN system.