



IGF Internet
Governance
Forum



2024

ABOUT THE INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM



TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

THE IGF PROCESS

COORDINATION OF IGF WORK

FUNDING

IMPACT

PARTICIPATE IN IGF 2024!



BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

THE IGF AS AN OUTCOME OF WSIS

Internet governance was a hotly debated topic during the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS-I), held in Geneva in December 2003. It was recognised that understanding Internet governance was essential to achieving the development goals of the Geneva Plan of Action, but defining the term and understanding the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders involved proved to be difficult.

The UN Secretary-General set up a Working Group on Internet Governance to explore these issues and prepare a report to feed into the second phase of WSIS (WSIS-II), held in Tunis in November 2005. Many elements contained in the working group's report - developed through an open process and multistakeholder consultations - were endorsed in the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society, one of the main outcomes of WSIS-II. These included, among others, a definition of the term Internet governance, and a recognition that the process of Internet governance involves many stakeholders in a variety of roles.

Internet governance is the development and application by governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes, that shape the evolution and use of the Internet (Tunis Agenda for the Information Society)

WSIS-II requested the Secretary-General to convene an Internet Governance Forum, as a multilateral, multistakeholder, democratic and transparent platform for discussions on Internet governance issues.

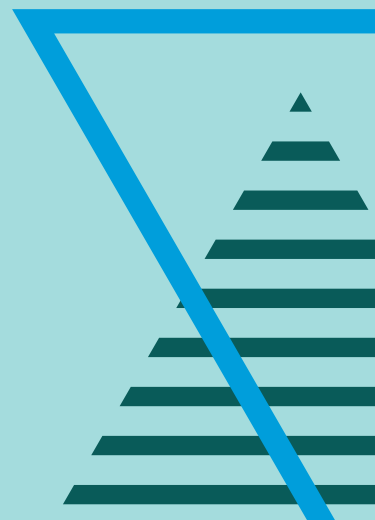


IGF MANDATE

Paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda sets the mandate of the IGF to:

- Discuss public policy issues related to key elements of Internet governance in order to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet.
- Facilitate discourse between bodies dealing with different cross-cutting international public policies regarding the Internet and discuss issues that do not fall within the scope of any existing body.
- Interface with appropriate intergovernmental organizations and other institutions on matters under their purview.
- Facilitate the exchange of information and best practices, and in this regard make full use of the expertise of the academic, scientific and technical communities.
- Advise all stakeholders in proposing ways and means to accelerate the availability and affordability of the Internet in the developing world.
- Strengthen and enhance the engagement of stakeholders in existing and/or future Internet governance mechanisms, particularly those from developing countries.
- Identify emerging issues, bring them to the attention of the relevant bodies and the general public, and, where appropriate, make recommendations.
- Contribute to capacity building for Internet governance in developing countries, drawing fully on local sources of knowledge and expertise.
- Promote and assess, on an ongoing basis, the embodiment of WSIS principles in Internet governance processes.
- Discuss, inter alia, issues relating to critical Internet resources.
- Help to find solutions to the issues arising from the use and misuse of the Internet, of particular concern to everyday users.
- Publish its proceedings.

The initial mandate of the IGF was for five years, between 2006 and 2011. Recognising the importance of the Forum in fostering the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet, as well as its role in building partnerships among different stakeholders, the UN General Assembly renewed the IGF mandate for five years, in 2010, and for a further ten years, in 2015.



THE IGF PROCESS



IGF ANNUAL MEETINGS

Each year, the IGF annual meeting brings together stakeholders from around the world to discuss some of the most pressing issues in digital public policy, such as Digital Divides, AI, Cybersecurity, Data Privacy & Protection, Promotion & Safeguarding of Human Rights Online, and much more. Participants represent governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, the technical community, and civil society (including academia). Spanning a week, IGF meetings facilitate the exchange of information and the sharing of good policies and practices related to the evolution, use and governance of digital technologies.

Past IGF Meetings

IGF 2006 | Athens, Greece

IGF 2007 | Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

IGF 2008 | Hyderabad

IGF 2009 | Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt

IGF 2010 | Vilnius, Lithuania

IGF 2011 | Nairobi, Kenya

IGF 2012 | Baku, Azerbaijan

IGF 2013 | Bali, Indonesia

IGF 2014 | Istanbul, Turkiye

IGF 2015 | João Pessoa, Brazil

IGF 2016 | Jalisco, Mexico

IGF 2017 | Geneva, Switzerland

IGF 2018 | Paris, France

IGF 2019 | Berlin, Germany

IGF 2020 | Global, Online

IGF 2021 | Katowice, Poland

IGF 2022 | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

IGF 2023 | Kyoto, Japan

Upcoming IGF Meetings

IGF 2024 | Riyadh,
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

IGF 2025 | TBD



IGF meetings are built through an open and inclusive process, with the voluntary involvement of actors from various stakeholder groups, disciplines, demographics and regions, and under the overall coordination of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) and the IGF Secretariat. This entails public calls for issues (to help determine the main topics to be covered during the meeting), calls for workshop and other session proposals, and several rounds of open consultations.

The annual meeting programme contains topical main sessions, workshops proposed and organized by stakeholders, open forums showcasing the work of governments and intergovernmental organizations, and sessions reflecting on IGF policy work. Recently, the programme has been extended to also include high-level sessions, a parliamentary track, and a youth track, with plans in place for judiciary and business engagement tracks in 2024.

IGF Messages are the main outcome of annual meetings. Offering a unique multistakeholder perspective, they provide high-level overviews of discussions and highlight the most important points raised, particularly concerning actions and steps needed to address critical digital issues. The proceedings of IGF meetings and the intersessional activities for the year are also contained in annual Summary Reports.

INTERSESSIONAL POLICY WORK

In between annual IGF meetings, stakeholders work on several substantive activities and present them at the annual IGF meeting. These activities are collectively called IGF intersessional policy work and are developed around:



Dynamic Coalitions (DCs)

These are open, multistakeholder and community-driven initiatives dedicated to exploring a certain digital governance issue or group of issues. DCs are self-organized, and their work – required to adhere to a series of guidelines and principles – spans multiple years. Currently there are 24 active dynamic coalitions focused on topics such as Internet rights and principles, innovative approaches to connecting the unconnected, accessibility and disability, digital health, child online safety, etc. The collective work of the DCs, including their participation at IGF annual meetings, is facilitated by the IGF Secretariat.



Best Practice Forums (BPFs)

These provide a platform for stakeholders to exchange experiences in addressing Internet policy issues and discuss and identify existing and emerging best practices. BPFs are expected to be open, bottom-up and collective processes, and their outputs to be community-driven. They are organized under the supervision of the MAG, which selects BPF topics, typically on an annual basis. Previous BPFs have dealt with issues such as spam, Internet Exchange Points, new technologies, and local content. The BPF on Cybersecurity, a multi-year activity, has been approved for 2024.



Policy Networks (PNs)

These are framework networks dedicated to broad digital governance topics. The networks are made up of interested stakeholders, while the topics are chosen by the IGF Secretariat through various public consultations during IGF meetings. PN's aim to provide in-depth understanding of the chosen topics, raise awareness of the particular issues, and prompt cooperation across regions and stakeholder groups in seeking improvements/solutions. Between 2015 and 2018, an intersessional workstream explored Policy Options for Connecting and Enabling the Next Billion(s). In 2023, the IGF Secretariat oversaw the work of Policy Networks Artificial Intelligence, Meaningful Access and on Internet Fragmentation. In 2024, these three PN's were re-chartered.

NATIONAL, REGIONAL, SUBREGIONAL & YOUTH INITIATIVES



Over the years, the IGF has triggered the launch of similar initiatives at national, regional and subregional levels, as well as for youth around the world, focused on facilitating dialogue and cooperation on digital policy issues of relevance to these communities. While organic and independent, NRIs act in accordance with the IGF's main principles and are bottom-up, open, transparent, inclusive, multistakeholder and non-commercial in nature. NRIs' collective work and cooperation are facilitated by the IGF Secretariat.

As of May 2024, there are more than 170 NRIs are recognised by the IGF Secretariat.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES



The IGF Secretariat, thanks to generous contributions from its donors, supports community-centred processes in developing digital governance capacity.

Activities for and designed in conjunction with developing country stakeholders include: support for community engagement in digital governance through dedicated workshops and special sessions for youth and IGF newcomers at annual meetings; financial grants to national and regional IGF initiatives (NRIs); financial support to eligible individuals, enabling them to take active in-person participation at annual IGF meetings; substantive and organizational support to Schools on Internet Governance (SIGs); and coordination of IGF remote hubs, including through provision of small grants.

PARLIAMENTARY ACTIVITIES



In recent years, the IGF has sought to strengthen the participation of parliamentarians in discussions on some of the most pressing issues related to the use, evolution and governance of the Internet and related digital technologies. Since 2019, the IGF Secretariat, together with the Interparliamentary Union (IPU) and other stakeholders, have developed the Parliamentary Track, which includes a series of activities for parliamentarians in the lead-up to and at the annual IGF meeting.

The track continues its global activities in 2024, with sessions organized for regional and the annual IGF meetings while expanding partnerships with various stakeholders.



COORDINATION OF IGF WORK



LEADERSHIP PANEL

Newly established in 2022, the Leadership Panel is a strategic and empowered high-level body which addresses urgent IGF issues, coordinates follow-up action on Forum discussions, and relays proposed policy approaches and recommendations to the appropriate normative and decision-making bodies. The 10 members of the Panel are appointed by the UN Secretary-General and represent the IGF's various regional and stakeholder groups, in addition to 5 ex-officio members.



MULTISTAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP

The MAG is appointed by the UN Secretary-General to advise on the programme and schedule of the IGF annual meeting as well as intersessional activities. The MAG comprises 40 members from governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and technical community, from the five UN regional groups (Africa, Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America & the Caribbean, Western Europe & Others). It holds meetings throughout the year to review IGF progress and to substantively plan the IGF annual meetings.





IGF SECRETARIAT

Secretariat support to the IGF and its MAG is provided by the IGF Secretariat, which physically resides at the UN Office in Geneva and is institutionally placed with UN DESA. In UN terms, the IGF Secretariat is an extra-budgetary project financed through voluntary contributions from the multistakeholder community. Its terms of reference are laid out in its project document.



UN DESA

The Under-Secretary-General of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) was entrusted by the Secretary-General to institutionally support the work of the IGF Secretariat.



FUNDING

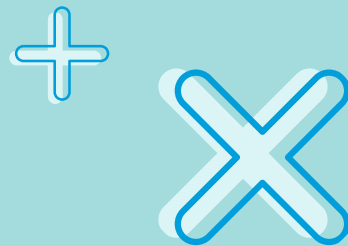


The IGF Secretariat is sustained financially through the extra-budgetary Trust Fund Account managed by UN DESA. The nature of the IGF Trust Fund is such that it is voluntary and multi-donor driven, with varying contributions from governments and non-governmental organizations from the technical community, the private sector and civil society. The IGF Trust Fund covers the administrative and operational costs of the IGF Secretariat including personnel, fellowships, and funds the travel costs of MAG members from developing countries. The Trust Fund also provides support to various intersessional activities, inter alia Policy Networks, Best Practice Forums or other major policy initiatives.

The Internet Governance Forum Support Association (IGFSA) has played an important role in aggregating and handling small donations to support the IGF. It supports NRIs and contributes to the IGF Trust Fund. The legal framework for the relations between UN DESA and IGFSA is set forth in an exchange of letters.

The organizational and conference costs of annual IGF meetings (other than those described above) are covered by the government of the host country, administered through a Host Country Agreement signed between the government and UN DESA.

Complete lists of donors and detailed financial information are continuously updated and available at intgovforum.org.



IMPACT

As a platform for discussions, the IGF brings various stakeholder groups to the table as equals to exchange information and share good practices. Over the years, it has identified a wide range of issues to be addressed by the international community and has shaped decisions taken throughout the world.

The IGF does not adopt resolutions or create any binding treaties. Its importance lies in its ability to facilitate discourse between governments, intergovernmental organizations, private companies, the technical community and civil society organizations that deal with or are interested in digital governance-related public policy issues. The IGF – through its annual meetings and intersessional activities – facilitates discussion on proposed regulatory frameworks, potential risks, global trends, as well as best and worst practices that have been adopted or are currently under discussion. Participants also examine the impact of treaties, recommendations and other documents adopted in various international venues within the digital governance ecosystem.

The IGF has championed the SDGs since their adoption. Commitments to inclusive, bottom-up collaboration, bridging digital divides, policies that foster innovation, and accountable digital governance, are only some of the ways it has contributed to reduced inequalities, sustainable growth, quality and parity of education, gender equality, and building partnerships for the goals.

While the Forum may not have decision-making mandates, it informs and inspires those who do. It facilitates a common understanding of how to maximise digital opportunities and address risks and challenges.

The IGF also ensures that stakeholders from developing countries are equally able to engage in the digital governance debate. Supported by contributions from its donors, the IGF aids local communities (provides grants and facilitates the organization of workshops, webinars, and town halls) to build knowledge and skills that will facilitate their participation in existing digital governance institutions and arrangements. Ultimately, the involvement of all stakeholders, from developed as well as developing countries, is necessary for advancing dynamic digital public policies.



PARTICIPATE IN IGF 2024!

RIYADH, KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA | 15-19 DECEMBER

As digital technologies evolve, they will continue to be the subject of policy debates.
All stakeholders must take an active role in addressing governance challenges.

This is why the IGF is open to and encourages the participation of anyone interested
– free of charge – both in its annual meetings and intersessional activities.

The 19th annual IGF Meeting will be held at the King Abdulaziz International Conference Center in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, from 15 to 19 December 2024 under the overarching theme, "Building Our Multistakeholder Digital Future".

The programme will be structured around four themes:
“Harnessing innovation and balancing risks in the digital space”
“Enhancing the digital contribution to peace, development, and sustainability”
“Advancing human rights and inclusion in the digital age”
“Improving digital governance for the Internet We Want”

All are invited to attend the annual meeting in Riyadh and participate in discussions, in-person or online.

Further opportunities for learning about and participating in the 19th IGF - such as outreach events and planning meetings of the IGF's Multistakeholder Advisory Group - are continuously made available on the IGF website.



Another excellent way to engage ahead of Riyadh is through the IGF's intersessional activities, whether they be one of more than 30 issue-specific Dynamic Coalitions, or the four policy streams activated in 2024: Policy Networks on Artificial Intelligence, Internet Fragmentation, and Meaningful Access, and the Best Practice Forum on Cybersecurity.

Open mailing lists and online discussions for each mean anyone can join from anywhere at anytime.

With more than 170 National, Regional & Youth IGF Initiatives, there is an IGF for almost everyone in the world. Being part of the IGF initiative closest to one's country, region or demographic is an opportunity to contribute to local digital policy discussions that become key inputs for the global IGF. Joining a local initiative is some of the best preparation for interested stakeholders to engage on the issues at the annual IGF in Riyadh.

Since its early days, IGF has been dedicated to facilitating the participation of those who, for various reasons, cannot attend meetings in person. Online participation has been part of all IGF meetings, relying on and selecting for optimal virtual participation tools as they became available.

All IGF events follow a model of multistakeholder, open, inclusive and bottom-up participation.

The IGF looks forward to meeting you, in person or online!







SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER



FOLLOW US



UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT OF THE INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM (IGF)

VILLA LE BOCAGE

PALAIS DES NATIONS

CH-1211 GENEVA 10 | SWITZERLAND

IGF@UN.ORG

+41 (0) 229 173 411

