

Input from the Swiss Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM) to the stocktaking consultation conducted by the IGF Secretariat
17 January 2025

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

A. General comments

In Switzerland's view, the IGF 2024 was a great success. The well-chosen theme, *Building our Multistakeholder Future*, underscored the commitment to ensuring inclusivity in discussions. This was complemented by good participation and a diverse range of engaging and meaningful sessions. The host country's warm hospitality and excellent organization contributed significantly to the event's positive outcome.

Switzerland acknowledges the host country's efforts to reduce barriers and ensure good participation at IGF 2024. However, concerns remained regarding the participation of civil society actors. We would like to refer to the NetMundial+10 Outcome Document as a useful framework for future improvement as it emphasizes that *"the process for selecting the host country should be further transparent and take into account human rights, inclusivity, accessibility, and equitable conditions for attendance. Free, safe, and open participation should be available to all, especially historically excluded groups"* ([NetMundial+10 Outcome Document](#), p. 17). Following this approach could strengthen the legitimacy of the process and foster greater trust among all stakeholders ensuring that future IGF events are even more representative and impactful.

A closer collaboration between the MAG, the hosts, and the Secretariat could have helped to streamline the program. Synergies and complementarity between the sessions organized by the MAG and others, particularly between the High-Level Sessions and the main sessions, were not always fully ensured, leading to some duplications and overlaps. Additionally, Day zero sessions, Open Fora, and Workshops would also benefit from a stronger and clearer programmatic streamlining. Moving forward, we should aim for a more integrated and well-structured program that avoids redundancies and ensures each session has a distinct and purposeful role. Given the limited time to prepare for IGF 2025 in June strengthening collaboration in the lead-up to the event will be essential. A close and coordinated partnership between the MAG, the hosts, and the Secretariat will be critical to ensuring an efficient and well-organized preparation process.

Inclusivity could be enhanced by revisiting the multistakeholder guidelines and process steps of the São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines (SPMG). We suggest considering the (SPMG) from the Outcome Document of NetMundial+10 as a valuable framework to be taken into account both by the various IGF intersessional work streams and in the overall preparation of the annual IGF 2025 meeting. The twelve process steps outlined in the SPMG offer useful guidance for an open and inclusive multistakeholder process. We encourage integrating these process steps into the intersessional activities of Dynamic Coalitions, Best Practice Forums, and Policy Networks to enhance their contributions and support greater inclusivity. They could particularly be helpful for Policy Networks in preparing and the developing "IGF Recommendations" (as foreseen under §72 of the Tunis Agenda). We invite in preparation of IGF 2025 to review these guidelines particularly the process steps as they are key to ensuring an inclusive event.

Looking forward: IGF 2025 as a crucial moment to showcase the IGF's relevance to digital cooperation efforts. The Riyadh event succeeded in reminding all of us of the importance of the WSIS framework, architecture and action lines, with, inter alia, CSTD, ITU, UNESCO, and UNDP organizing excellent sessions on the matter. The program at IGF 2024 also featured significant reflections on past processes such as the GDC and preparations for the upcoming WSIS+20 review.

The IGF 2025 offers a unique opportunity to showcase the important role of the IGF within the WSIS architecture. In this sense, it is uniquely placed to identify emerging topics, bringing key issues to the forefront and placing them on the global agenda, harnessing the wide-range of inputs and opinions from its multistakeholder community. Such issue-spotting is complemented and further enhanced by initial conversations during the annual meetings as well as network-building and intersessional work, which allow to develop and shape common approaches to addressing digital governance issues, sharing best practices and potentially developing non-binding recommendations. Such work is crucial to constantly evolving the field work under the diverse WSIS Action Lines, which in turn are considered every year during the WSIS-Forum, with their work and other relevant developments being subject to review and consideration by the CSTD in its annual reporting to ECOSOC and UNGA.

In this context, the IGF 2025 should be seized not only as a key platform for discussing the WSIS+20 review, ideally with the presence of the two Co-Facilitators of the process, but also to continue its leading role in addressing pressing issues such as meaningful connectivity, digitalization and its environmental impacts, human rights, as well as AI and data governance, delivering relevant outcomes to benefit the substantive discussions to be had in the WSIS+20 review later in the year. IGF's unique potential to tackle complex political and controversial issues like addressing Big Tech or platform regulation should be further strengthened and fully used. In this context, continuing engaging new stakeholders from emerging sectors such as AI experts and companies would enrich discussions and contribute to the development of more inclusive and forward-looking solutions.

Finally, we would like to endorse the vision and proposals contained in the document "A Vision of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Beyond 2025", available under https://www.intgovforum.org/en/filedepot_download/213/28513.

Further suggestions

Allow us to share some additional general suggestions, inspired by the vision of an "IGF+" as outlined in the UNSG's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation, particularly the ideas presented in Paragraph 93.

In this context, the MAG Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy (WG-strategy) developed practical recommendations in 2021 and 2023 to enhance the IGF both strategically and operationally. These recommendations remain highly relevant and deserve to be actively considered 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 IGF Leadership Panel, the MAG, the MAG WG Strategy and the IGF Secretariat.

- The program should be more “issue-based” than ever, with a maximum of four to five focus topics, culminating in a maximum of five high-level main sessions, avoiding unnecessary duplications between host-driven and MAG-driven main/high-level sessions.
- In addition, the program 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 SPMG process steps offer useful guidance how the IGF Messages could be best prepared in an inclusive, transparent and open manner.
- 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 should be a small separate ministerial track in order to attract high-level participation from Governments: breakfast and dinner as well as a limited number of sessions, 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.
- 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, 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, with IGF 2025 fast approaching in June, time is limited for preparation. To maximize its impact it is essential to streamline the program through close collaboration between the

IGF Leadership Panel, MAG, host country, and IGF Secretariat. This will help create a focused agenda while avoiding redundancies. Utilizing the São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines will be key to ensuring inclusivity particularly in strengthening civil society and Global South participation. By ensuring the active engagement of all stakeholders and addressing the most pressing issues, IGF 2025 can further strengthen its relevance and impact in the global digital governance landscape, showcasing its value to the current WSIS+20 process.

B. Specific comments to the questionnaire

1. Taking Stock of the IGF 2024: What worked well? What worked not so well?

a. IGF 2024 preparatory process (timeline, call for issues and session proposals, session selection, MAG meetings, capacity development etc.)

- overall sessions were well organized

b. IGF 2024 overall programme: thematic focus, structure and flow

- IGF 2024 featured a rich program with politically relevant discussions, addressing key challenges of digitalization
- It included reflections on past processes, such as the GDC, and preparations for future events like the WSIS+20 review.
- However, the program could have benefited from better coordination between the host country and the MAG, as there was some overlap between High-Level Sessions and Main Sessions.

c. IGF 2024 Hybrid format design and experience

- For the most part the hybrid format design is considered as crucial for inclusivity by letting people choose whether they want to participate physically or online.
- Unfortunately, the audio quality for onsite and online participation was quite poor

d. IGF 2024 logistics (website, mobile app, schedule, registration, access and use of online platform, bilateral meeting system, security etc.)

- Overall, the website worked quite seamlessly.
- The host country provided excellent hospitality, and the food was very good.
- The venue was spacious yet compact, creating a sense of proximity between sessions.
- Timelines for updating the schedule or website were not always adhered to.
- The page for bilateral meeting room reservations lacked clarity, as there was no overview available, and it was not possible to cancel bookings.
- Although we highly appreciate the compact venue format, where sessions were held in close proximity to the IGF village, the fact that the workshop rooms had no cover led to noisy conditions in both workshop (and bilateral rooms) – whilst the compact venue format should be maintained, measures for noise-reduction should be taken.
- The segmentation into VIP and other areas created a somewhat segregated atmosphere, as was also the case for the gala dinner, which was restricted to VIPs only.
- The number of washrooms was drastically too low.

2. Intersessional activities and NRIs at IGF 2024

- a. Best Practice Forums and Policy Networks at IGF 2024: please comment on process, content, and in particular on how these intersessional activities were included in the annual IGF programme.**
- b. Dynamic Coalitions at IGF 2024: please comment on process, content, and in particular on how these intersessional activities were included in the annual IGF programme.**
- c. National, Regional and Youth IGFs at IGF 2024: please comment on process, content, and in particular on how the NRIs were included in the annual IGF programme.**

3. IGF 2024 programme: please comment on the content, speakers and quality of discussions

a. IGF 2024 Sessions

- IGF 2024 featured a wide variety of session types, including High-Level Sessions, Main Sessions, Open Forums, Workshops, and Networking Sessions, catering to diverse interests and topics. However, there was a need for clearer distinctions between the different session types. In the past, Day 0 sessions and Open Forums were more clearly defined, but now many of these seem to overlap with workshops, making it harder to distinguish between the formats.

b. IGF 2024 High-level leaders track

c. IGF 2024 Parliamentary track

d. IGF 2024 Youth Track

e. How do you see the IGF 2024 programme content from a gender perspective?

f. IGF 2024 Village

g. IGF 2024 communications, outreach and outputs

h. Any other comments on the IGF 2024

4. What are your suggestions for improvements for IGF 2025?

a. IGF 2025 preparatory process (timeline, call for session proposals and session selection, MAG and Open Consultations meetings etc.)

b. IGF 2025 overall programme structure and flow

- Maintaining the IGF 2025 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 2025 programme content (thematic approach, session types, speakers profiles)

- While the participants to the IGF 2024 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. For reference the SPMG can be utilized ([NetMundial+10 Outcome Document](#)).
- d. Community intersessional activities and National, Regional and Youth IGFs: how these could best connect with the IGF 2025 process?**
- e. IGF 2025 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. In this sense, we welcome efforts for a targeted inclusion of independent media, through the provision of travel support to journalists from the global south.
 - 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.
- 5. You are welcome to comment on possible improvements of the IGF as it pertains to the IGF mandate. Specifically: How could the IGF 2025 contribute to WSIS+20 Review given the General Assembly resolution A/70/125 calls for a high-level meeting end of 2025 to review the overall implementation of the WSIS outcomes? How do you see IGF supporting implementation of the Global Digital Compact?**

We would like to take the opportunity to emphasize the importance of innovation in format, design, and capacity to enable the IGF to effectively support other processes, including the follow-up and implementation of the GDC. Simply positioning the IGF as the ideal platform to address gaps identified in *Our Common Agenda* and the outcomes from the Summit of the Future and the GDC is not enough. This concept must be operationalized further.

In this regard, we fully support the proposals outlined in the IGF-Leadership Panel and the MAG letter of October 16th 2023 (https://www.intgovforum.org/en/filedepot_download/24/26649), which suggest several actionable ideas:

- 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;

Further, we would like to revisit some ideas (already mentioned above) on how IGF 2025 could contribute to the WSIS+20 review. As mentioned above, IGF 2025 offers a unique opportunity to showcase the important role of the IGF within the WSIS architecture. It is uniquely placed to identify emerging topics, bringing key issues to the forefront and placing them on the global agenda, harnessing the wide-range of inputs and opinions from its multistakeholder community. Such issue-spotting is complemented and further enhanced by initial conversations during the annual meetings as well as network-building and intersessional work, which allow to develop and shape common approaches to addressing digital governance issues, sharing best practices and potentially developing non-binding recommendations. Such work is crucial to constantly evolving the field work under the diverse WSIS Action Lines, which in turn are considered every year during the WSIS-Forum, with their work and other relevant developments being subject to review and consideration by the CSTD in its annual reporting to ECOSOC and UNGA.

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