MAG Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy 2020, August 2020

Background document: Analysis of previous recommendations on Improvements to the IGF

The MAG Working Group on Improvements to the IGF collected recommendations that have been proposed in various fora. It worked from 2017 to 2019. Recommendations have been grouped into a single spreadsheet, together with the identification of the various sources. The complete spreadsheet is available here:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1TdxEe0Qit3qAMCaGeyOLOl4PvUIuY3Nv5hmBsq0_OfE/edit#gid=198699308

The spreadsheet contains proposals of improvements from five different sources:

1. The Commission on Science and Technology for Development - CSTD WG on IGF Improvements Report (2012)

2. Implementing WSIS Outcomes: A Ten-Year Review (2015)

3. Recommendations made by United Nations general Assembly - UNGA on renewal of the IGF mandate (December 2015)

4. Draft report from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs – DESA Retreat (July 2016)

DESA Retreat proceedings:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MoaGH8fNBDJa9q7nJ8yo2r1Yuu1_loheH-K030Niocs/edit?usp=sharing

Spreadsheet with recommendations coming from the DESA Retreat:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1lBnmgoa2E8jY00E1VI_Tp4VjgzuQX5II/view?usp=sharing

5. The NETmundial Multistakeholder Statement (April 2014)

These reference documents may be found here:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B4C745NEsGNqZWhIdlh3c1R0VGc

The implementation of the recommendations has been assessed by the WG members and their status has been marked as "completed", "in progress", or "to be implemented".

Selected recommendations

Considering the charter of the WG on Strengthening and Strategy, only selected recommendations are listed in this document, together with the assessment of their implementations. Please notice that this assessment has been performed mostly in 2018, so that it can be outdated in some cases.

These recommendations are related to the three following aspects: Outcomes; Link to IG Entities; Multi Year Planning.

The complete spreadsheet contains recommendations that cover many other aspects: Stakeholder Engagement; Funding; Intersessional Work; Capacity Building; MAG Structure and Methods; Broader Participation; Processes and Secretariat; Communication; Workshop Selection; and others.

I. Assessment of proposed Improvements regarding Outcomes

RECOMMENDATION	STATUS	ASSESSMENT
14. The IGF should continue to produce and enhance its current reports, including the Chair's report, the sessions' transcripts, the workshop reports and the overall proceedings.	Completed	The IGF is making publicly available all the reports in the IGF web page.

12. To focus discussions, the preparation process of each IGF should formulate a set of policy questions to be considered at the IGF, as part of the overall discussion. The results of the debates on these questions, with special focus on public policy perspectives and aimed at capacity-building, should be stated in the outcome documentation.	In progress	The IGF has been focusing the discussions on specific policy questions, which are formulated by the MAG, through different intersessional spaces, like the Best Practice Forums (e.g. in Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things and Big Data; Cybersecurity; Gender and Access; and Local Content) and the CENB (Connecting and Enabling the Next Billion) initiative. Specific policy questions are also formulated by the MAG and addressed at the main sessions. Workshop proposers are also invited to focus their proposals in selected themes. More work needs to be done in formulating a set of policy questions i.e. for the workshop proposals, but not limiting to others proposed by the community. The outcome documentation shall be improved to better reflect results from discussions in these various contexts.

66. All outputs and documents are on the IGF website but not always easy to find. There would be a need for better organization of these, to "librarianize" these documents. A search optimization, e.g. using indexed texts or tagged keywords, would also be useful. 69. Data mining, search tools, multimedia (photos, videos), multilingualism and taxonomy (tagging) are all elements that should be incorporated into the IGF website to enhance the accessibility, readability and attractiveness of the IGF's documents.	In progress	The IGF website has been improving over the last years, both in contents and in organisation. However, tools like the search engine of the site are not efficient and need to be improved. i.e. searching the terms "Accessibility and disability discussions" provides no results, but doing the same search at Google "Accessibility and disability discussions site:intgovforum.org" provides multiple results. Tagging will help to organize the information, i.e. like The friends of the IGF website does at http://friendsoftheigf.org. Further, IGF 2018 has introduced the "call for issues" public consultation in order to collect input from the community on the main themes and subthemes to be considered as reference for the workshops proposal. This could be used to integrate the archive of IGF events. For the next IGF 2018 archive content there could be a new section that states the main key messages coming from the workshops grouped by themes/subthemes. In 2020 a process to do a complete revamp of the IGF commenced with support from the UK government.

70. There should be more of an effort made - not just by the IGF Secretariat or the MAG, but by engaged IGF community members and stakeholders wherever possible - to carry IGF outputs into other international and intergovernmental fora.	In progress	The MAG Chair has been very much involved in other international and intergovernmental fora representing the IGF. Maybe the WG-OE should propose additional concrete efforts, for instance involving other relevant actors of the IGF community, such as current and former MAG members. It could be useful to promote partnerships between IGF and other international fora. I would also propose involving national communities, various stakeholders in the country and particularly NRIs would be of much help in raising awareness of the IGF work and its tangible outputs and hopefully influence nationally Internet governance related discussions.
107. Better communication packages, capturing and presenting the outcomes of the IGF could be shared with various organizations at opportune occasions, e.g. during the annual WSIS Forums, so that representatives can duly inform their stakeholders and communities. There is an opportunity for a multiplier effect.	In progress	The MAG Chair already participates at various fora, such as the WSIS Forum and the WEF. But communication and outreach efforts should be defined in a more systematic way and considering a much broader and diverse audience. The NRIs should be more involved in the communication and outreach efforts .This could be tasked to the WG-OE.
108. There should be better outreach efforts during the annual IGF meetings. The IGF is an opportunity for participants to get to know one another and to bring back valuable experiences and outputs to their respective organizations.	In progress	

13. The outcome documentation should include messages that map out converging and diverging opinions on given questions.	To be implemented	See assessment for recommendation 65.
65. It was noted that many of the IGF documents tended to be descriptive rather than substantive. It has been also remarked that – in addition to the detailed reports – there should be shorter and more concise synthesis documents, in particular if they are to be made usable for policy makers.	To be implemented	Outcome documents continue to be rather descriptive than substantive and, in general, do not map converging and diverging opinions on given policy questions. Guidelines should be defined for all processes that produce outcomes (BPFs, DCs, main session, workshops), so that their final reports necessarily reflect converging and diverging opinions.
68. In order to improve the IGF's outputs, it should be determined first what the purpose or purposes and "target audiences" of these documents are and what types of documents would be most useful to the different user groups and their specific needs.	To be implemented	The IGF does not produce different outcomes that are targeted at different audiences. Guidelines should be defined for all processes that produce outcomes (BPFs, DCs, main session, workshops, …), so that their final reports include messages that are targeted at different audiences, depending on each case (governments, civil society, technical community, international organisations, various industry sectors, etc.).
67. Translation, perhaps into French and other UN languages, should be considered for at least some selected important documents. Partnerships could be sought e.g. with UN specialized agencies that have translation and outreach resources and/or with private sector actors that may offer software tools e.g. for automated translation or other supporting services. Crowd-sourcing could be used for translation of IGF documents, perhaps even engaging the NRIs	To be implemented	This improvement should be considered collaboratively by various WGs of the MAG, such as the WG on Multi-Year Work Programme (WG-MWP), and/or the WG on Fundraising (WG-FUN), and/or the WG on Outreach and Engagement (WG-OE), so that they propose concrete steps towards this goal.

and the Friends of IGF collaborators.	7	
71. Given that the resources of the IGF secretariat are limited, it was proposed the IGF work on forming partnerships to address various aspects of improving outputs.	To be implemented	The WG-MWP and/or the WG-FUN should propose concrete efforts to form partnerships that address specific aspects of improving outputs.
72. Hackathons taking place during the IGF event could be used to see what interested parties could do with the IGF datasets – such activities have yielded innovative tools and approaches in similar circumstances.	To be implemented	The MAG should address this proposal and decide whether it is relevant and, if so, how it could be implemented.
73. IGF host country governments should be responsible for disseminating the outcomes of their respective IGF meetings in the relevant inter-governmental fora; UNDESA should disseminate the information through the UN system secretariats of relevant UN bodies; and non-governmental partners should do the same in their respective networks.	To be implemented	The MAG and/or the IGF Secretariat and/or the WG-OE should establish guidelines that define concrete responsibilities and propose concrete mechanisms that facilitate this dissemination. It's suggested that also NRIs should be more engaged in the dissemination process.

RECOMMENDATION	STATUS	ASSESSMENT
74. More clarity in defining the scope of the role of the MAG and the Secretariat in the production of outputs would be welcome. The information should be made publicly available.	To be implemented	This definition of scope needs to be proposed and discussed between the MAG and the Secretariat.
75. The IGF Secretariat / UNDESA could explore a partnership with the Friends of IGF website and integrate its methodology for presenting audio-visual material online.	To be implemented	The IGF Secretariat should contact the Friends of the IGF project and explore possibilities of partnership and complementary efforts.
76. In order for new ideas on improving communication and reporting of the outcomes to be implemented and to have an actual effect, it will be of key importance that responsibilities are clearly defined and that persons and/or organizations are identified that will actually lead the various efforts to further develop communication and the different types of outcome and reporting documents.	To be implemented	See recommendations regarding Improvements 12, 13, 65, 68, 70, 71, 73, 74.
Part 2.II. Improvements should include inter-alia: a. Improved outcomes: Improvements can be implemented including creative ways of providing outcomes/recommendations and the analysis of policy options.	To be implemented	See recommendations regarding Improvements 12, 13, 68.

II. Assessment of proposed improvements regarding Link to IG Entities

RECOMMENDATION	STATUS	ASSESSMENT

94. There could be more effective outreach efforts to engage with Governments, given their roles to champion some processes of Internet governance. This role has already been exercised in different contexts, including the preparatory process towards WSIS+10.	In progress	Efforts have been made by the MAG and the IGF Secretariat in recent years to engage with governments. High-level IGF sessions involving senior government officials are organized periodically. But more efforts are required targeting a more active participation of governments' representatives in the various IGF processes, including the MAG and intersessional work.
100. Some UN regional commissions have good involvement with the IGF and this should continue. Links with institutions such as the Council of Europe, European Commission, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and International Telecommunication Union (ITU), should be further strengthened.	In progress	A number of these institutions already participate in the IGF by sending staff and organizing and participating in sessions. It is unclear, however, the extent to which IGF staff engages with these institutions. A more robust, permanent and institutional relationship between the IGF and these institutions should be built. This can be done, for instance, through meetings, engagement of members and mailing lists.
51. It is important for the IGF to continue and improve its interaction and communication with other Internet governance-related entities in order to further global policy dialogue. This goal can be achieved by developing a defined outreach and communication strategy.	To be implemented	A MAG Working Group on Outreach and Engagement has been set up to help the Secretariat in its communication and outreach efforts. Current work of this WG, however, aims at communication with the global public through the usual channels of the IGF. This WG did not develop a concrete outreach and communication strategy targeting at specific entities of the Internet governance space.

93. Other actors and institutions that are not directly related to Internet Governance could also provide inputs or benefit from outputs of IGF, and therefore there is a need for the relevance of the IGF to be communicated to those that are both internal and external to the current IGF community.	To be implemented	Although outreach and communication efforts are underway, they are targeted at the global public, using the usual channels of the IGF. Despite some individual actions (such as the presence of the MAG Chair at the WEF), the IGF still lacks a concrete outreach and communication strategy targeting at specific, well-identified actors and institutions that are not directly related to Internet Governance.
98. The IGF could engage organizations that have a clear lead on specific issues (e.g. with the World Trade Organisation on IG related issues in trade should be engaged) or robust activities on specific issues (e.g. with IETF, APWG, ISOC, etc.).	To be implemented	See comments in recommendation 51 above. Furthermore, gender and youth organizations should also be engaged.
96. The IGF could engage more effectively with those organizations, including non-governmental ones, that have roles in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There could be an alignment of implementation timelines through 2025.	To be implemented	The IGF lacks a strategy and related actions to engage more effectively with organizations that have roles in the implementation of the SDGs. The IGF should gently guide these organizations to its website to access important information with regards to planning and implementing for the future. See also the assessment of recommendation 93 above.
99. A stronger relationship should be sought with decision-making processes in the UN General Assembly notably the First, Second and Third Committees on issues relating to security, development and human rights respectively, including primarily by sharing more information about the IGF (i.e. output products).	To be implemented	Though relevant resolutions in UNGA reference the IGF, there does not appear to be a strengthening of the relationship between the IGF and relevant committees of UNGA. Furthermore, people can be directed to UN websites through intermediary links.

101. Linkages between the IGF and the UN Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) should be strengthened.	To be implemented	Institutional, permanent linkages do not exist yet. As an example, a constant reminder to the UNGIS through websites and mailing lists should be practiced.
103. A Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General, if appointed by the Secretary-General, could engage missing actors at the senior level, including Governments.	To be implemented	The IGF already had a Special Advisor in its first years. The report of the UN High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation proposed the appointment of a Tech Envoy, which could have a similar role. This Special Advisor, or Tech Envoy, could for instance reach out to senior level representatives of Governments through missions in New York and Geneva and organize regular meetings.

104. Relations with Governments and organizations should be a shared responsibility of the MAG Chair and Co-Chairs (if appointed), and/or Special advisor to the SG on Internet Governance (if appointed). Special attention should be paid to entities that do not have current representation in the MAG.	To be implemented	As already commented in previous recommendations above, the IGF lacks a structured strategy to engage with governments and other organizations in a systematic way, both with those already participating at the IGF and those not yet engaged. It is important that organizations are made aware of the IGF and have access to the MAG policies and guidelines, so that they can also follow the various IGF and MAG tracks and even candidate to the MAG. Improvements for link to IG entities should be activated specially through the Secretariat, MAG members and NRIs. The Secretariat should be strengthened and part of it should be focused in pushing partnerships with other IG entities at international and national level (NRIs). The MAG should have a stronger role in bridging the relationship with governments and other IG stakeholders. It's important to create a more active IGF communication network.
105. IG coordinators in various institutions could act as effective focal points for communication with the IGF.	To be implemented	As already commented in the previous recommendations above, the IGF lacks a structured strategy to engage with governments and other organizations in a systematic way. Finding the right focal point for communication in each organization should be an important part of this strategy. IG coordinators in various institutions, when identified, could be connected to the IGF through mailing lists and websites, for instance.

III. Assessment of proposed Improvements regarding Multi Year Planning

RECOMMENDATION	STATUS	ASSESSMENT
11. IGF keeps a strong and narrow emphasis on issues that are directly related, or unique, to the Internet centered in technology or medium and not in conduct. This would allow the IGF to concentrate more effectively on the issues where it can have more, and more exclusive, impact.	In progress	Recent years have already seen a strong shift of attention of the IGF towards issues that are centered in conduct. Emerging issues are being constantly brought to the programme. In 2018, for instance, a BPF on IoT, AI and Big Data has been chartered by the MAG. Various efforts are being made to strengthen the IGF. In particular, the Multi-Year Work Programme Working Group, which has been created by the MAG in 2017, is working towards more tangible outcomes, such as proposing mechanisms for approving recommendations on issues of large consensus by the IGF community, so that discussions in the IGF have a more visible impact on the society.
34. IGF does not need to cover "all" issues every time and discussions should happen when needed. A multiyear year work plan identifying a roadmap with more concrete outputs at the end might help in bringing in new stakeholders (e.g. the financial sector, content producers, local SMEs, etc.). This should still allow for enough flexibility to adapt it to new and emerging situations. Such a process would need to be communicated clearly and widely.	In progress / To be implemented	A Multi-Year Work Programme Working Group has been created by the MAG in 2017 and continued working in 2018. It currently concentrates on the development of more tangible outcomes and on the formalization / improvement of the various processes that lead to the definition of the various components of the IGF (workshops, main sessions, Open Fora, intersessional work, etc.). But this Working Group is not targeting the selection of specific issues that could be discussed on a given IGF in order, for instance, to engage new stakeholders.

111. More could be done to take a strategic, long-term view of the role and activities of the IGF, such as through a predictable multi-year programme of work. Even if not undertaken generally, it might be possible to reinvigorate the IGF by taking a longer-term view of particular issues, dedicating time and resources to progressing discussions and achieving concrete outcomes on these over time. A longer time horizon such as this could help to bring in new collaborators, including international agencies, and new funders.	In progress	A Multi-Year Work Programme Working Group (WG-MWP) and a Fundraising Working Group (WG-FUN) have been created by the MAG in 2017 and in 2018, respectively. These two Working Groups partially cover this recommendation. The WG-MWP, in particular, is specifically dealing with ways to improve tangible outcomes. The MAG chair is also chairing both WGs, so that a coordinated action is to be expected.
118. To accelerate implementation of the recommendations of the CSTD Working Group on Improvements to the IGF, which reported in 2012, would require development of an implementation plan for Working Group recommendations, with clear targets established for achievement of recommendations, linked where necessary to fundraising or to identify support required from existing resources.	In progress / To be implemented	The Working Group on Improvements to the IGF (WG-IMP), which was created in 2017 by the MAG and continued working in 2018, is assessing the current progress of the recommendations done in 2012 by the CSTD WG on Improvements to the IGF, as well as recommendations coming from various other sources. However, it is not a goal of the WG-IMP to establish clear targets, nor to propose a link between targets and fundraising / support from existing resources. The implementation of this recommendation (118) seems to require a concerted action between the Multi-Year Work Programme Working Group (WG-MWP) and the Fundraising Working Group (WG-FUN), also created by the MAG in 2017 and 2018, respectively.

106. The MAG could step-up its outreach efforts. If a multi-year work programme were developed (i.e. annual or 3-year/5-year/9-year programme with specific themes), there could be an opportunity to strengthen and promote the sustainability of relations with other organizations.	In progress / To be implemented	Outreach efforts and engagement of other organizations are part of the charter of the Fundraising Working Group (WG-FUN), which was created by the MAG in 2018. The WG-FUN could work in concertation with the Multi-Year Work Programme Working Group (WG-MWP), which was created by the MAG in 2017, towards the achievement of this recommendation. But neither the WG-MWP nor the MAG are targeting the selection of specific themes in a multi-year perspective.