Taking Stock of the IGF 2016

Suggestions for improvements submitted by some of the NRIs

About

During the 2016 IGF annual meeting, the national, sub-regional, regional and Youth IGFs (NRIs) organized and hosted a main session and a coordination session. A joint booth was organized, as well.

Since the first meeting of the MAG, hosted from 4 to 6 April 2016, when the NRIs were invited to organize a main session, the preparations started. They were conducted in a form of open and inclusive virtual and onsite meetings, public calls and surveys, all in order to work in an open, inclusive, transparent and bottom-up manner.

As NRIs related activities during the IGF 2016, were jointly organized, this submission is a result of consolidated inputs from the NRIs colleagues that were involved in the preparatory process and post-IGF meeting feedback activities, such as participation at three NRIs virtual meetings, as well as engaging into this subject discussions on the NRIs mailing list and sending individual emails.

All NRIs that took active participation in providing inputs are indicated in Annex A1, attached to this document. Reports for all three virtual meetings are available at the IGF website/NRIs page (hosted on: 20 December, 16 and 17 January).

Summary of gathered inputs

A. Taking Stock of 2016 programming, preparatory process, community intersessional activities and the 11th annual IGF: What worked well? What worked not so well?

a) What worked well?:

- Many noted that the NRIs had a good, continuous communication with the IGF Secretariat and the IGF MAG, during the 2016 year. Regular virtual meetings on various subjects were in particularly useful.
- Recognition was given by several IGF initiatives to the work undertaken by the NRIs Substantive Coordinator and to the IGF Secretariat NRIs Focal Point.
- By being given the opportunity to organize a main session at the IGF, the NRIs, as a network, benefited from it, mostly in regards to establishing close linkages between the NRIs, and with that, creating a sense of community. On the other side, the work of the NRIs received much more visibility within the IGF community. It was explained that the main session created an opportunity for the NRIs to work together during year, and that culminated by continuing that work during the annual IGF meeting, for the final product to be presented at the session.
- NRIs had been given a three-hour main session, and while it might be seen as an overload to invite more than 40 speakers, it was a strong signal that the global IGF community recognises the value of independent NRIs. This important session was well organised, thanks to a joint effort between NRIs themselves, the IGF Secretariat, and the MAG.
- The coordination sessions, that took a form of a meeting between the NRIs, the IGF Secretariat, IGF Mag Chair and the UNDESA for the very first time, was a very

good opportunity for exchanging views, face-to-face. It helped deepening the understanding that the UN IGF and the NRIs work is based on mutual collaboration and partnership, where all sides act on equal footing.

- Throughout the year, the Secretariat was encouraging the NRIs to engage with other forms of the IGF community intersessional work. Indeed, some initiatives actively engaged in the other forms of the IGF community intersessional work, such for example is Connecting and Enabling the Next Billion, phase II and/or Best Practice Forums.
- The NRIs Toolkit, was a needed document for a long period of time. Having a publication that explains the essence of the NRIs organization and compliance with the key IGF principles is very important for the community. Many agreed that the work methodology was good, as it called for inputs and feedback from everyone.
- Some initiatives emphasized their appreciation to the IGF for allowing them to organize their informal, side meetings during the annual IGF meetings, and for the IGF official schedule reflecting those. This allowed for some NRIs respective communities to interact and show case their work.
- The NRIs booth was a very good meeting point for all NRIs and contributed both to creating bonds between the NRIs, and to informing many stakeholders about the NRIs activities and events.

b) What did not work that well?:

- Many of the NRIs are of an opinion that the NRIs main session would have benefited more from a room set up that could enable more interactivity between the speakers and the audience. In addition, many agreed that session would benefited much more if the room had a round table setting. Commenters recognized the importance of the inclusive approach to include all NRIs who asked to participate.

- Some comments stated that the success of the session depends on choosing the most appropriate format, and not on a room set up.
- While some of the IGF initiatives were given the opportunity to organize their side meetings that were reflected by the IGF official agenda, many however, were not. Therefore, the NRIs called for a more transparent process regarding the distribution of time slots in the official programme. It is needed to explain the procedures on related assignment.
- Individual work of the national, regional and Youth IGFs did not have enough visibility within the programme of the IGF annual meeting.
- The global IGF should have more presence at the national and regional annual meetings, where invited.
- In particular, the Youth IGFs communities felt that they did not have enough visibility during the preparatory work and the annual meeting. During the intersessional work, the community did not put enough focus on their activities and representation at the IGF annual meeting.
- In majority of countries and regions where there are organized IGFs, the MAG members from that region/country did not engage consistently with these initiatives and often did not attend the NRIs annual event.
- Many of the similar topics or high-interest sessions (like BPFs sessions) overlapped with the scheduled times for the NRIs session, that affected the total number of participants in the audience.

B. Suggestions for improvements in 2017? (programming, preparatory processes, community intersessional activities and improvements for 12th annual meeting)

- The NRIs should continue to have a dedicated focal point within the IGF Secretariat.
- Engagement with the NRIs, through the regular virtual meetings, should be continued. However, the Secretariat should invest continued efforts in reaching out to other NRIs, and encourage them to join the virtual meetings, to increase participation and diversity.
- MAG members from the regions and countries where there are existing NRIs should be actively engaging with the organizing teams, when invited.
- The UN IGF could help support the NRIs annual meetings, by participating in some sessions, when invited.
- Linkages and cooperation between the IGF Secretariat, MAG and NRIs should remain horizontal, with NRIs continuing to keep their independence and their freedom to choose how they plan and run their processes, as long as they comply with the main principles.
- The NRIs should have a main session at the IGF 2017, as clearly there was a positive feedback from the broader communities. Additionally, it is to be noted that many of the NRIs benefited from this session in a way that a stakeholder participation and interest within their respective communities has increased. This is due to the fact that now it is known that the global IGF recognizes the NRIs and gives stronger credibility to their work.
- The main session should be as interactive and as inclusive as possible. The coordination session should also continue.
- In addition to the improvements of the NRIs representation at the IGF annual meeting, some suggested that other types of joint sessions should be explored (like an Open forum for all NRIs).
- Some participants suggested that, for the community to fully benefit from the NRIs work, and for the individual work of the NRIs to be more visible, the NRIs track

should be reorganized, as a set of continuous sessions. Suggestions were made toward NRIs organizing sets of flash sessions during the annual meeting. *[An example of the IGF-USA organizing a 30-minutes long 'scenario' session at some of the previous IGF annual meetings, was given. It was said that this session created a bond between their initiative and the Russian IGF, including a team from IGF-USA to participate in a special session at the Russian IGF. From this example, it could be learned that these 30-minutes long sessions were a way for two IGF initiatives to partner with each other. The MAG should think deeper about this suggestion.]*

- Consider the inclusion, in the agenda of the Open Consultations and MAG Meetings, of a dedicated time slot for NRIs to share messages, developments, challenges, good practices (such as new innovative approach to the sessions for e.g.). This would give them additional visibility also with the MAG and others during the Open Consultation (to add up to their presence at the annual IGF meeting).
- Intensify efforts to encourage online participation/engagement of the NRIs at the annual IGF meeting (e.g. at the main NRIs session and others).
- Continue with the meeting practice between the NRIs and the IGF Secretariat, IGF MAG Chair, and the UN officials.
- Onsite coordination meeting between the NRIs at the annual meeting to be practice.
- The NRIs should also focus on the importance of the Youth IGFs. It is advised to develop a set of relevant guidelines and practices. They should have more visibility within the annual IGF. Organization of dedicated sessions is one approach.
- Some of the NRIs suggested to gather report card on Youth, similar to the IGF gender report card. However, some shared their experiences that this is a challenging formality, that does not contribute effectively to having gender balance at sessions. Some initiatives did allow for the Youth stakeholder group to be indicated in the registration form. However, the majority of young people decided to indicate other than the Youth as their stakeholder group. It was advised to continue discussion on this.
- The NRIs need to have projection images of the room settings before the meeting, for planning purposes.

- The Secretariat should carefully balance the agenda, to avoid scheduling the high-interest sessions at the same time.
- The NRIs should be consulted on the room capacity prior to scheduling, as the rooms they were given were too small. NRIs Coordinators should be encouraged to register for the sessions, so that staff have needed information about the potential attendance.
- NRIs contributions to the IGF community intersessional work should be consolidated and made visible at the IGF website/NRIs page.
- There should be dedicated time slots for the interventions coming from the online participants.

Additional reminders for the NRIs:

- The NRIs booth should be a continued practice. However, resources need to be explored to have more facilities at the booth, such as: more NRIs related publications, info-material, coffee, TV etc. The NRIs will need to engage more in booth schedule.
- It was advised to take appropriate steps to motivate other NRIs colleagues to actively join the preparatory work through virtual meetings and other ways of preparing the NRIs activities.

Annex A1

Members of the following IGF initiative have been actively engaged in a process of developing this joint submission, by providing inputs during the dedicated virtual meetings, through emails, NRIs mailing list as well as during the NRIs sessions at the IGF 2016 meeting:

- Albania IGF
- Arab IGF
- Armenia IGF
- Asia Pacific regional IGF
- Asia Pacific Youth IGF
- Chad IGF
- Colombia IGF
- Ecuador IGF
- EuroDIG
- Finland IGF
- German IGF
- Hong Kong Youth IGF
- IGF 2016 Host Country, Government of Mexico
- IGF-USA
- Indonesia IGF
- Italy IGF
- Japan IGF
- LAC IGF IGF
- Mexico IGF
- Nepal IGF
- Nigeria IGF
- SEEDIG

- Sri Lanka IGF
- Sri Lanka IGF
- UK IGF
- Ukraine IGF
- West Africa IGF
- Youth IGF Uruguay