2019: Strengthening Cooperation within the Context of the IGF

Proposed approach for determining pilots within 2018 IGF cycle for work in 2019 IGF cycle

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Introduction

In March 2017 the MAG asked to learn more concerning the proposal for a Best Practice Forum on strengthened cooperation within the context of the IGF. This request was followed by a study and a day 0 session at the Geneva IGF. In practice and outcome the work of a BPF had, successfully, been taken care of. The result was presented to the MAG in February 2018 in the form of a report: 'Strengthening cooperation within the context of the IGF: A roadmap for 2018'[1]. The report presented several suggestions and recommendations, some are currently contemplated by the MAG.

The report's recommendations were discussed extensively in the MAG WG – Multi-Year Strategic Work Programme (WG-MWP). This paper reflects the outcomes of the WG MWP and presents, in short format, the choices and options that are open to the MAG and decisions needed, including a timetable allowing for successful intersessional pilots. One of these is to stage one or more pilots in 2019. Before proceeding towards the different suggestions presented here, it is important to spend a few thoughts on the process preceding individual topics.

Decisions and procedures, a solution

IGF experience shows how hard it is for individuals to agree on basic principles, on the selection of topics and to express commitment to or to provide time at the right moment to IGF-based work. Simply because most involved do so voluntarily and outside of regular workhours. Current experience also shows that the ensuing work can, as a consequence, become time constrained and caught between the necessary due diligence, IGF procedures, financial restraints or a late dissenting opinion, all making satisfactory and timely conclusions hard to achieve. In order to proceed at a steady, successful pace, it is critical not only to agree on the what and how, but to do so well before outcomes have to be decided upon.

Professional facilitation can help assure respective positions are clear within the first weeks of starting a pilot/intersessional work, so that immediately afterwards work can focus on content and those involved work together from there. Commitment from stakeholder groups and individuals is provided for, as well as expectations managed, through the focus and urgency established in this short timeframe. As a thought: The MAG itself could contemplate professional facilitation in decision

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[1]

http://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/sites/default/files/webform/strengthening_cooperation_within_the_context_of_the_igf_report_0.pdf

making prior to its meetings. Positions can be made clear online well before (virtual) meetings and decided upon through a digital forum. Leaving ample time for decisions on content at the MAG meetings.

The questions and options presented below, partly, mark a change to how the intersessional work within the IGF (cycle) and sessions at the IGF itself are organised, thus part of the IGF program comes about. As the aforementioned report shows, in the MAG all information, trends and issues come together. Many participants mentioned that the MAG has an unique position to connect dots between stakeholder groups, Internet bodies, urgent issues, etc. A form of insight that may be unique in the world. By acting on this overview the MAG could create circumstances in which these dots are connected, urgent issues discussed between stakeholder groups, etc. In fact many desire the MAG take this role upon it. (Urgent) issues can be identified and developed per (virtual) MAG meeting and not on principal once a year. The MAG would become a more pro-active body compared to the relative passive body it is now -mainly aimed at shaping a conference. The IGF an environment of active deliberation where stakeholders are brought together and discuss: ways forward; potential outcomes or solutions; recommendations; best practices; etc. This is a change, a change that could be piloted in 2019 by selecting a few mature and/or urgent topics. The options to do so, are presented below.

Suggestions on piloting

The report on strengthening cooperation put several suggestions to the MAG. In the following they are presented per topic, topics that need to be addressed over the coming weeks and months. The goal of this paper is to highlight the most important open questions and thus to assist the MAG in its decision making process where pilots for 2019 are concerned.

A pilot is seen here as facilitating a trial process for intersessional work working towards a form of conclusion, "tangible outcome", at the 2019 IGF conference that allows for "recommendations", which might be a recommendation to continue the work (in a focused manner with involvement requested from other organizations), or the instigation of a working group, or handing over a topic to another body, or the publication of findings or conclusions from the intersessional work, etc. The aim of the pilots is to learn from them and determine how best to use these experiences in future IGF cooperation processes. Of course all in line with the Tunis Agenda.

At the core of each suggested pilot this question could be held in mind: Can the IGF assist the global Internet community in advancing international Internet public policy issues by bringing the right individuals/communities/stakeholders/organisations together and assist them towards producing tangible outputs that can be advanced inside or outside the IGF? And if YES, how? A goal to focus on could e.g. be to assist stakeholder communities in speeding up multistakeholder processes, and here some of the deliberative tools that exist could be useful. The work carried out within the IGF can

assist different stakeholders in shortening preliminary steps in talks or negotiations because people already know each other, have built trust and are aware of each other's positions. One example is how the IANA transition was discussed at a very early stage at the IGF, so all involved knew of each other's existence and points of view before the actual work started.

How to identify a topic that qualifies for a pilot? Most likely they must meet several of the following criteria, perhaps even be prerequisites:

- there is a global impact in the outcome;
- majority of individuals profit from outcomes;
- involvement of different stakeholder groups;
- potential to change course and direction;
- speeds a process up;
- a topic that "goes over the top", that not one group can solve;
- connects dots between stakeholders by facilitating interaction between current processes;
- supports and/or compliments the work of others;
- creates synergies;
- .....

These (sort of) criteria help select (pilot) topics. They will show that the work done so far or the discussions having taken place are "mature" or "urgent". Determining criteria upfront assists pre-selection. (It goes without saying that these criteria could be translated into regional and national initiatives for the NRIs as well.) Of course it is of importance to remain transparent as MAG. After the pilot phase it is deemed necessary to have policy guidelines in place that to ensure overall balance and quality of evidence on the selected, proactive intersessional topics. E.g. based on Political Economical Social and Technological (PEST) impact assessment criteria.

How to find these mature and/or urgent topics? The MAG has several ways to establish mature and urgent topics. An obvious one is the workshop proposal system. When a topic comes forward multiple times and from different stakeholder communities it could be urgent. By proposing intersessional work or an informative/working session at the IGF the cooperative process between stakeholders is assisted. Not all topics reach the MAG through the workshop process. Several communities are (more) passive here. To balance the IGF better it is of importance to find out what stakeholder communities are working on and ask questions. How does the work in one silo affect or impact others, is cooperation needed, can intersessional work within the IGF assist in producing useful and/or more broadly supported outputs?, etc.? A liaison system with other (Internet) bodies could be set up for this purpose. Within the technical community this is standard procedure. The outcomes of an IGF cycle will suggest topics. The recent Call for Issues within the IGF community is another indicator, as is the list of key topics within NRIs, etc. Finally, the UN itself has identified a short list of "frontier issues" that are challenging many aspects of our lives, organizations and institutions.

What would assist the MAG in making these kind of choices is if it asks relevant representatives directly what they would like to achieve through the IGF, what would give them cause for celebrating a success within or through the IGF processes. The answers set goals. By joining them with a time frame, the MAG provides the much called for focus and priority. Identifying a short list of topics for a multiyear approach is expected to increase the quality of outputs from the IGF, and draw in additional participation and support. It also will provide a balance between different stakeholders' priorities and allows for some form of measurement of results and effectivity of the IGF multistakeholder process.

Several topics have been suggested by the community that are considered to be mature and/or urgent enough to allow piloting in this context in 2019:

- child online protection and notice and take down procedures;
- Internet of Things security/(Duties of Care concerning the) Internet of Things;
- awareness raising about existing, but un(der)used Internet standards and best practice;
- the implementation of cyber security fixes;
- artificial intelligence and robotics.

To find out what works best, the MAG can contemplate to experiment with several pilot forms in 2019. This will allow it to learn from each form and see what works best in the context of the IGF. Some pilots are intersessional, others a well-prepared, single session at the IGF, e.g.:

- external facilitation and a community wide deliberative process in line with the proposed pilot from Synmind (intersessional);
- (well-prepared) inventorial/alternative workshop sessions like fact-finding sessions or working sessions, processes that culminate in conclusions and/or recommendations;
- information sharing and debate sessions[2];
- a very concrete and well-defined BPF (intersessional);
- any other form worth piloting.

Ideally the discussion on and pre-selection for topics for 2019 pilots would be made ahead of and during the IGF 2018 assuring inclusion of the views of the broad community. An adopted process, as described above, can facilitate working towards that goal, including identifying the pilot topics. Always with this in mind: "provide prioritisation, focus, a goal, time constraints and, ideally, pre-defined, desired outcomes".

Remaining questions

There remain important questions to answer:

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[2] Workshop #40 on 'Internet Mega-Trends' impact on the Internet's Architecture' is such a session presented by members of IETF, IAB and ISOC

- How to ensure support from stakeholders not so enthusiastic?

- How is engagement, participation and dissemination ensured?

Once a choice has been made, participation has to be ensured. The MAG plays a role here by using its networks to engage these stakeholders and individuals. If the work is relevant, stakeholders will join. The same goes for the dissemination of end results.

Finance

That leaves one final important question in need of an answer. To be successful, professional facilitation of the process is needed. How can the IGF fund pilots and pilot sessions, and at a later stage in a structural way? What options are available to those willing to provide funding?

These are important, but secondary questions. The decision on the principal whether the IGF/MAG is to act more pro-actively on major issues in Internet governance comes first. Financing comes second. If selected topics for piloting are deemed as truly important, the IGF immediately increases its value. This will lead to financial issues to be overcome. There are organisations in the world most likely willing to provide financial support when proposals meet the right criteria. In fact some already do, as this body of work on strengthening cooperation proves. Success will increase this likelihood even more. All else would be to stop a process of change on the basis of assumptions. Yes, this process can fail and for many, different reasons, but without trying it first, the IGF community will never find out whether improvement and success can be attained.

High level next steps, time frame

Several decisions are put before the MAG, working towards the 2019 cycle. In order to be able to decide on ways forward concerning the 2019 pilots and/or to formulate recommendations thereof for the future MAG, decisions are formulated and a time frame suggested.

1. Decision on pilots in the 2019 IGF cycle

The MAG is introduced to the concept of having pilots, starting at the beginning of the 2019 cycle.

When: IGF November 2018

2. Decision on pilot topics

If pilots are decided upon, a decision on topics is called for.

When: December 2018/January 2019

       Consultation during the first two virtual MAG meetings

Final selection: late January 2019

3. Decision on pilot form(s)

When: first two virtual MAG meeting 2019

Final selection: late January 2019

4. Start of pilots

When: asap 2019, right after the first MAG meeting latest

5. Reporting

When: during the year

Presentation: session at the Berlin IGF

Reporting: within one month of Berlin IGF