ICC INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
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BASIS
Business Action to Support the Information Society

ICC BASIS – IGF 2017 TAKING STOCK AND LOOKING FORWARD TO 2018

Internet Governance Forum 2017, Geneva, Switzerland

As the global business community reflects on the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) held in Geneva, Switzerland, 18 – 21 December 2017 we are also thinking about the key areas of improvement to consider in planning the 13th IGF meeting in 2018.

Based on business' participation in past IGFs, the multistakeholder advisory group (MAG), and various other multistakeholder activities, we submit this paper which takes stock of IGF 2017 and provides suggestions for improvements for the years ahead.

Contents

1. Themes/programme

Highlights

- The overarching theme of IGF 2017 was *Shape your digital future!* The theme was sufficiently broad to successfully include dialogue on global Internet governance issues. It also provided a close link to the broader UN agenda and highlighted the need for active participation of all stakeholders and communities to fully benefit from the Internet, information communication technologies (ICTs) and reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Recommendations

- Giving the opportunity to the community to "select" the sub-themes of the IGF through the workshop proposals was a much welcomed idea when introduced in 2016. This aligns well with the bottom-up, open nature of the IGF. The implementation of this idea is still to be worked out, so that the programme can accurately reflect that (e.g. through main sessions) and participants are aware in due time.
- Further opportunities must be sought to link the IGF to wider UN sustainable development agenda. In addition, the programme of the annual IGF meeting should include discussion and elements on how each IGF is making progress on the challenges raised in the WSIS+10 Outcome Document (such as increasing developing country participation), and what are the plans to address the remainder by 2025.

- Ideas to engage communities, organizations, businesses and different sectors that may not be directly involved with Internet governance but either impact it or are impacted by it may be considered while discussing structure and programme for 2018.
- The topic of digital economy and jobs should continue to be discussed at the IGF to monitor and evaluate progresses made.
- IGF should push for more fact-based sessions and promote non-ideological discussion on the different issues.
- Day 0 is a valuable part of the IGF, with its different status and nature, with the ability for groups to propose formats and sessions which do not necessarily need to conform to the structure of the rest of the IGF week. Nevertheless, to ensure that Day Zero fulfills its potential, there needs to be discussion on the goal of Day 0 and the MAG role in event selection, and also transparency on the events, at least to all MAG members, as part of the IGF programme discussion. With the host government responsible for organizing Day 0, such a discussion within the MAG could also provide helpful guidance to the host government, which will not be as familiar with the annual IGF meetings.

2. Main sessions

Highlights

- Thematic sessions help extend appeal to non-IGF regulars and in particular government and business, where attendance has been lower. It worked well where the main sessions were oriented to meaningful exchanges on topics of broad interest that focus on practical examples of applying policy or practices to address challenges in various circumstances that allow for capacity building across the range of discussants and participants.
- Workshop rooms on certain substance issues were overflowing while the main session room was less well attended. Reflecting on the levels of attendance in different 2017 sessions could help guide the 2018 planning discussion of which content is better suited for the larger sessions. It might also help in working out how to match bigger and smaller meeting rooms with sessions and workshops.
- The work and outputs of different BPFs and the CENB – Phase III was well integrated in different main sessions and various workshops, with no need for an allocated main session slot for these intersessional activities.

Recommendations

- Main sessions lend themselves well to content rather than IGF process discussions, since audience participants are more likely to engage on substance of wide appeal.
- Main sessions should be selected by the MAG by respecting the existing criteria. Main sessions should not be a duplication of workshops and should feature a diverse and balanced panel of experts on the discussed topic from all stakeholder groups.
- Main sessions should be reflective of the topical issues of particular interest to the community, as indicated by tags on workshop proposals. This would also ensure they are better linked with IGF subthemes that are meant to be selected based on workshop tags as well, respecting the bottom-up nature of IGF planning.
- The idea to provide National and Regional IGF Initiatives (NRIs) a platform for sharing their work with the wider community and establishing a tighter connection with the global event is commendable. However, the session was low in attendance, seemed to attract mainly NRI organizers from around the world and did not allow for meaningful dialogue or participation from the floor. The MAG should consider channeling NRI contributions into

the various thematic main sessions of interest, rather than organizing one dedicated main session.

- Instead of automatically designating a main session to IGF groups or activities such as DCs; or NRIs; organizers should consider first what the content of the session would cover, the breadth of appeal and then allocate the session to the most appropriate format option. Some main sessions that have not been as well attended would be better adapted to the workshop or open forums format. The MAG should be focused on securing broad content appeal for a wider IGF audience in the main session programme along with diversity of representation and perspective.
- Main session organizers should pay careful attention to the time allocated for panel discussions, so that this does not stifle discussions or interventions from the floor/remotely.

3. Workshops

Highlights

- The workshop proposal and selection process was well planned, with clear deadlines and instructions and sufficient time allocated for proposers to complete each step.
- The workshop rooms provided an open and interactive setting for discussion.
- Some sessions worked well because they combined people able to give global, policy perspectives with others able to share real working examples of action on the ground to solve problems.

Recommendations

- A number of workshops and DC sessions were lacking in balance and diversity in terms of speakers, with one or more stakeholder groups not represented at all in the discussion. Efforts should be made to ensure a more balanced representation of stakeholders among proposers of accepted workshops, as well as among the workshop speakers. A secretariat analysis of the data related to speakers in IGF 2017 workshops and sessions could be helpful for the MAG to reflect on how the workshop evaluation process could be adjusted to better address this for IGF 2018. It could also prove helpful to better understand the diversity of participation in the DC sessions.
- The timeframe and pace of workshops should be improved to allow for enough time for discussions and interventions from the floor. Having a limit on the number of speakers or time allocated per speaker might help to ensure there is time for questions and meaningful dialogue.
- The workshop selection process should be improved in order to reduce the number of workshops on the same topics and overlapping speakers.
- When categorizing workshops under a specific theme for the schedule more attention should be paid to the workshop description, not just the title and tags, to avoid any confusion.
- Clarity on expectations and timeline for submitting workshop reports should be communicated in advance of the event.
- Enough time should be allowed for the completion of workshop reports after the event. This year the workshop reporting process and deadline did not take into account the holiday season for many parts of the world and the fact IGF was held late in the year. Considering workshops are often organized by multiple contributors, sufficient time should be allocated for submitting reports

- The schedule of lightning sessions should be communicated at the same time and on the same platforms as the overall schedule.

4. Intersessional work

Highlights

- The intersessional work on Policy options for connecting and enabling the next billion – Phase III as well as the BPFs on Cybersecurity and Gender and access are strong examples of how the IGF can gather, catalogue, and share valuable tangible outputs without being prescriptive.

Recommendations

- There should be more concerted efforts to archive the outputs of the intersessional work stream and BPF documents in a manner that is accessible and searchable to the lay user who may not be familiar with the IGF.
- Continued efforts should be made to better communicate and promote these outputs.
- IGF resources are not as unlimited as the appetite for groups to come together to work on new issues. The MAG should discuss and consider a mechanism to anticipate how to deal with the increased interest in DCs, BPFs, NRIs as well as MAG working groups. These activities all compete for the same limited IGF staff support, and at times stakeholder representatives' support, all of which only stretch so thin. A turnover policy should be considered where new ones take place of those that have completed their cycle rather than having an open-ended opportunity to add these onto the annual IGF work programme.

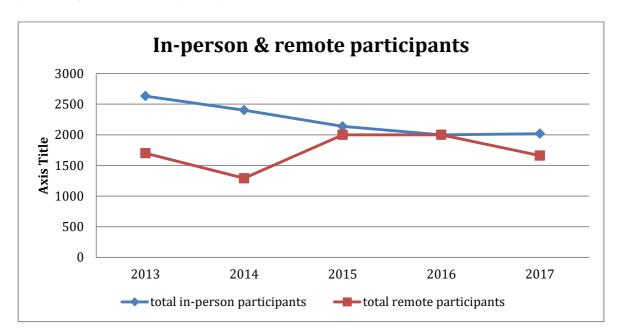## 5. Practicalities and logistics pre-IGF

Highlights

- The professionalism and support of the staff working at the IGF Secretariat was appreciated both on the ground and in the run-up to IGF 2017.
- The IGF host country website was very well done, sharing all relevant information in a timely fashion.

Recommendations

- Information about shipping deadline, labeling, specificities of local postal services and expected timeframe of customs and other security measures should be offered in a timely and explicit fashion so that booth holders can plan ahead.
- When the IGF schedule is being finalized, attention should be paid to sessions on similar topics overlapping and speakers' and moderators' schedule conflicts. Main session and workshop organizers should work closely with the IGF Secretariat to try to assure that there is no overlap of speakers/ moderators on the overall calendar, so that sessions in which the same speakers are participating do not happen concomitantly. Ideally, speakers/ moderators should be given enough time to attend and get to sessions they committed to, not having to leave one session before it ends to attend the other.
- More efforts should be made to encourage participation from businesses and governments. Regional, sectoral and stakeholder diversity is important.
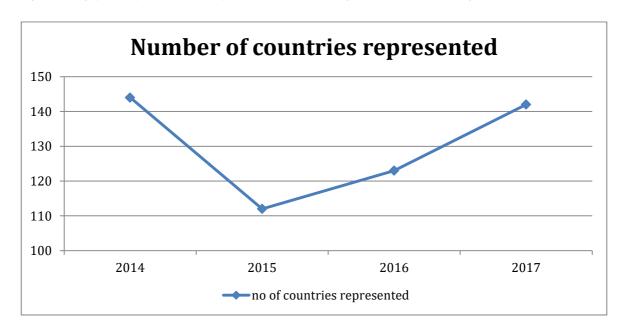
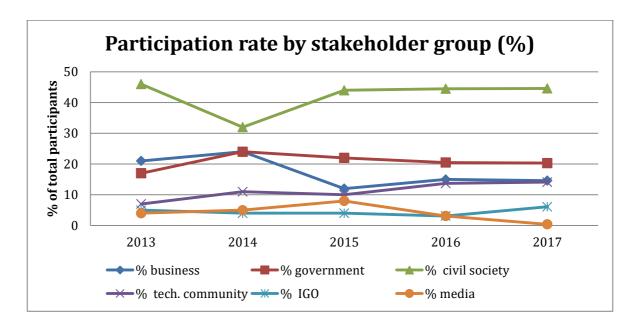# 6. Practicalities and logistics on the ground

Highlights

- At approximately 2000 onsite delegates participating, the attendance of the event seems to have normalized at this number since 2015, but a considerable drop compared to previous years. Remote participation continues to fluctuate:

In-person & remote participants

- By-country participation has improved considerably over the last two years

Number of countries represented

- Participation of government and business representatives has not improved from previous years, but it is encouraging that it did not continue to decline. Organizing the IGF in Geneva had a very positive impact on the participation of representatives of international organizations.

Participation rate by stakeholder group (%)

- The facilities and rooms were accessible to all, which is a very important necessity and was very well received.
- The host country made a laudable effort in providing interpretation.
- Good Internet connection was appreciated.
- The lunches and refreshments offered a good selection of food, were affordable compared to external prices and their distribution went smoothly, considering the large number of attendees.
- Bilateral rooms were well suited for closed meetings and in-depth conversations. However, they were situated too far from the rooms where other activities were taking place.
- The venue was well connected to hotels thanks to affordable and efficient public transportation services.

Recommendations

- There was an obvious lack of support staff and volunteers at the venue.
- Finding one's way around the venue was not always straightforward. Staff at the info point were not familiar with the venue and unable to help participants.
- Technical support staff were not present in the workshop rooms and volunteers tasked to help with remote participation lacked in experience and training.
- The IGF village was under-equipped. The booths lacked in storage space and technical equipment.
- It would have been appreciated to have fresh water, coffee, tea, close to the meeting rooms all throughout the day.
- Creating a "study hall" space at the IGF venue that allows for a quieter room with plugs for participants to work in should be considered, especially when security checks make it inconvenient to leave and return to the venue in a timely fashion.
- In order to provide participants with an opportunity to still follow sessions that have no more space in the room, organizers should consider adding one or more "overflow rooms" where participants can follow the session webcast on screens and participate quasi-remotely. This would have been particularly useful during the Opening Plenary and the High-Level Thematic Session on the afternoon of the first day when many people could not be seated in the room.

- Last-minute changes of rooms should be avoided not to confuse participants.
- The amount of remote participation at this year's IGF was reduced compared to previous years. Although several remote-participation tools were made available, neither of them worked smoothly and were not synched with each-other. It is important that the IGF continues to encourage and support remote participation to improve inclusivity and diversity.
- Organizers should clarify with internal staff rooms reserved for private meetings in the venue.