



## IGF 2018 Messages - Evolution of Internet Governance

### Overarching messages

Newly emerging technologies have brought new challenges to society and their impacts on people have deepened. With regard to the unregulated online domain, some national and regional responses related to Internet governance have been implemented, as well as some instruments applicable to the Internet public policy. There is a need for the global community to come up with a set of universal values and standards and with that with a globally recognized framework that will support the harmonization of these individualistic national approaches. It is an imperative for the community that the Internet stays free, open and safe for everyone.

Given the complexity of these issues and of the Internet itself, involvement from all sectors is critical for finding effective solutions. This is why the multistakeholder model is essential for discussing Internet governance. The IGF is seen as a unique forum under the auspices of the United Nations, that makes possible for various people and groups to discuss Internet governance matters within a bottom up, open, inclusive, non-commercial and multistakeholder framework. However, the IGF should keep pace with technological innovations in order to stay relevant. This is why the IGF community must continue to work on improving its processes, by strengthening multistakeholder communities at the national level and establishing cooperation among these on a global level.

Global Internet penetration has rapidly increased in the last five years period. At the same time, the digital divide has deepened, especially between developing and developed countries. The small island developing states (SIDS) are facing unique challenges in terms of achieving meaningful access. In parallel, newly emerging technologies are posing concerns regarding online safety, protection of personal data and respect for human rights online. How should the community respond to these and many more challenges? Is the multistakeholder model effective and, if so, is it globally accepted? What is the role of the IGF in the present moment and in the future?

### Broadening stakeholder participation in Internet governance

- There is a need for a standardized set of principles applicable to Internet governance for advancing human rights and achieving sustainable development.
- The evolution of how providers and operators of Internet services function may affect Internet governance and its core principles. There should be some forms of mechanism for raising awareness of such trends. In this regard, stakeholders being accountable to agreed values and principles could preserve the public and distributed nature of the Internet.
- The term 'Internet governance' is seen as unattractive and difficult to be meaningfully translated into some languages. Stakeholder engagement requires the core organizing groups to explain the terminology and bring it down to specific topics.
- Different stakeholders have different stakes in the Internet. For increasing stakeholder engagement, it is important to explain to different stakeholders that the nature of the Internet requires all disciplines to be involved, and how they will benefit from developing good Internet policies.
- Stakeholder engagement processes need to be widely spread on national, regional and global levels, to achieve the inclusion of everyone.

- Capacity building can be done through the Schools on Internet Governance, which have been shown to be effective and already have global presence.
- The multistakeholder model has to be inclusive of all voices, taking into account the rapid growth of the Internet population where it is estimated that two-thirds of the future users will come from developing countries. These users must be engaged in existing processes, as they connect online.
- Effective tools need to be used and developed to facilitate the online interactions of stakeholders and broaden their participation in Internet governance.
- The development of digital technologies has brought new substantive challenges. Net neutrality raises many concerns, as there are a variety of views on how to approach this subject. Some countries normatively regulate net neutrality, while others currently operate openly without any specific regulation. Enhanced dialogue and cooperation among relevant stakeholders is necessary to discuss net neutrality on a global scale.
- Internet Governance matters reflect human rights. However, with the evolution of Internet Governance, certain sections of the intersection of IG and human rights evolved as well. Presently, the online freedom of speech and right to be informed is dominated by the term fake news, that relates to disinformation, misinformation, propaganda. There should be a harmonized set of solutions for combating this practice, rather than sporadic measures.
- National laws on the Internet are proliferating. These must be enacted by those that understand the technology and policy aspects. Recognized international framework and a set of agreed principles should be developed to avoid inconsistent practices.

### IGF's organization and role

- The IGF is seen as a unique forum, with a place in the UN system, that allows various people and groups to discuss Internet governance matters within a bottom up and multistakeholder framework. For a free, open and accessible Internet for all, its existence is seen as essential.
- The IGF community must continue to work on improving its processes, to strengthening multistakeholder communities at the national level and establishing cooperation among these on a global level.
- Improvements of the IGF processes, on national, regional and global levels, are dependent on sustainable funding.
- It was proposed that the community take concrete steps to improve its work and profile, including, (i) using new/different terminology to describe the IGF (i.e., to clarify the meaning of 'governance' and to fully capture the scope of the issues that it considers, such as cybercrime, AI, etc); (ii) improved targeted branding and communications strategies (to make the IGF more recognizable at local, regional and global levels; and, (iii) broadening the scope of emerging technology topics that the IGF considers.
- The IGF process should engage voices that have not traditionally been involved in the Internet governance space.
- Collaboration among the national, regional and Youth IGFs should be enhanced by sharing best practices and coordinating the timing of their annual events, so that they can follow each other processes.

### Multistakeholderism

- With the Internet being unique in both its transnational nature and rapid evolution, there is a need for new structures and ways of discussion which are more inclusive than a purely governmental process. However, there is also a broad recognition that in order to stay relevant, or even survive, the multistakeholder model needs to evolve, and quickly. The interrelationship between the UN structures and the IGF is one aspect of that, but more could be done to highlight and promote examples of successes and to highlight its relevance in concrete terms. Better continuity 'bridging' from year to year was felt to be desirable, together with reporting of more directed and specific policy recommendations. Although it is still very fresh there was interest in the recent suggestions made by the French government for the evolution of the IGF.
- Implementation of the multistakeholder model for discussing matters pertaining to Internet

governance is not unified on national levels. For this reason, national practices have to be compared, especially among developing and developed countries to understand various challenges, and for exchanging best practices and recommending improvements.

- The multistakeholder approach is seen as an effective method for Governments to overcome the challenges of jurisdiction and legislation that the cross-territorial nature of the Internet has brought.
- While the National, Regional and Youth IGFs (NRIs) each take a different approach to influencing policy, there are some commonalities. Some NRIs aims to influence policy directly, while others aim to facilitate multistakeholder discussions alongside governments without any direct policy objective. Despite these differences, they all share the objective of elevating the voice of all stakeholders. Additionally, they provide an example of the multistakeholder model that extends beyond the confines of the IGF and the NRIs.
- Difficulties in the application of the multistakeholder model also occur on national, regional and global levels. Resourcing is a challenge, with funding most commonly mentioned as an issue, in addition to securing locations meetings and events. Difficulties with engagement and participation were also referenced multiple times, ranging from low youth participation rates to a lack of government engagement. The multistakeholder model struggles for relevance in some parts of the world, where history and culture create an expectation that problems are solved in a more hierarchical (rather than multistakeholder) manner.
- A lack of awareness about the work of the IGF in many parts of the world, whether at a global level or national or regional levels, was also noted as a related issue.

*\*For any questions or comments regarding the IGF 2018 Messages, please write to [igf@un.org](mailto:igf@un.org).*