

IGF Community Public Consultation: Taking stock of the 2018 work programme and 13th IGF and suggestions for 2019 and 14th IGF

The Internet Governance Forum invites all stakeholders to submit inputs to the IGF Secretariat related to some questions.

Taking into consideration the participation that the Federal Telecommunications Institute had in the IGF 2018, we highlight the following comments and proposals regarding the program, the preparatory process and future of the IGF.

A) Taking Stock of 2018 programming, outputs, preparatory process, community intersessional activities and the 13th annual IGF: What worked well? What worked not so well?

Taking into account the statistics of the 13th Annual Meeting of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF 2018), it is possible to see an increase in the participation of the Forum. For example, according with the statistics, last year more than 3000 delegates participated in 171 sessions both onsite and remotely from 143 different countries.

It is also important to note that 43% of the participants were female. However, in the 2018 we had the same percentage of participation of female, and if we consider that this year there was a greater participation of stakeholders, we can say that there wasn't an improvement or increase in the female participation and it is necessary to continue to foster the participation of woman in the forum.

In addition, in this year the number of sessions was reduced to only 171 sessions in the overall program, this is a big difference if we consider that in the 2017 IGF, there were 220 sessions during the Forum. This reduction is a great improvement of the Program of the Forum; however, there are still too many sessions to only three days. This continue to be a big problem because there were some workshops of the same topic that met at the same time and made difficult the participation of the stakeholders.

In addition, a reduction in the number of workshops does not necessarily imply an improvement of the workshops quality regarding the topics that are discuss in the Forum. It is extremely important to avoid repeating workshops with a similar approach in the same category.

Regarding the preparatory process, the format for the presentation of workshop proposals was complicated, extensive and not very comprehensible, especially when it was necessary to confirm the speakers proposed to participate in the workshops. The instructions were only available in English, which also makes it difficult for non-English speakers to participate and propose workshops. In the same way, it is complicated and difficult to have all the proposed speakers fully confirmed by the time of submitting workshop proposal, which complicates the submission of proposals in a timely manner.

B) What suggestions for improvements could be made for 2019? (Please focus on programming, the outputs preparatory processes, community intersessional activities and improvements for the 14th annual meeting and beyond.)

As we mentioned before, the preparatory process regarding the workshop proposals is difficult to understand and complete. In this regard, it is necessary that the format to propose workshops would be more friendly and easier to fill, in order to facilitate the presentation of contributions for future workshops. Likewise, it is necessary to encourage the use of other languages different from English, in order to promote the inclusion of stakeholders from different regions.

Regarding the program of the Forum, it is necessary to avoid overlapping workshops that are part of a same category as human rights, cybersecurity, trust and privacy, etc. And as we said previously, it is important to avoid having workshops with a similar approach in a category.

Furthermore, talking about the reports of the sessions, throughout the celebration of the Forum and after its conclusion, various reports on the sessions were requested, and specific times were set for uploading it to the platform, which is neither dynamic nor efficient, so it is suggested to upload a single edition of the report once the session is over.

Regarding the outputs and conclusions of the Forum, it is difficult to identify specific outputs from the workshops because there are 177 reports for each session. In this regard, it is difficult to identify the conclusions, interests and points of view in a more general manner, for example, for each category. In this case, it would be helpful to publish reports of each category that summarize the conclusions of all its workshops. In addition, it will be more helpful to have more main sessions instead of so many workshops.

Finally, we consider necessary to reduce the number of sessions during the Forum, especially to avoid the duplication of workshops that discuss the same problems or topics.

C) How could the IGF respond to the recommendations made by the UN Secretary-General during his speech at the IGF 2018 Opening Ceremony?

Two of the main recommendations made by the UN Secretary-General were to make the IGF more multidisciplinary and to create share languages and references. We believe that these two recommendations are linked. As the Secretary-General said, "the digital technologies are transversal" and that is why it is necessary to foster the participation of stakeholders belonging to different areas and sectors. This will only be achieved if we expand the number of languages used in the IGF and through the creation of share references that are common in the Internet Governance.

In this regard, the IGF should increase the use of other languages in order to foster the participation of all stakeholders from different parts of the world and achieve in this way a better understanding of the issues that integrate the Internet governance.

By doing the aforementioned, the IGF will be able to respond to another recommendation of the UN Secretary-General; this is to “reach out to local communities that have many fascinating stories and insights on leveraging digital technology for business and inclusion”. The only way to make that the local communities participate in the Forum is by increasing the use of other languages.

Finally, the UN Secretary-General recommended to reach out the governments, especially from the developing countries and to make sure that these discussions and this forum have greater impact. In order to be able to accomplish with the recommendation of the UN Secretary – General it is necessary that the IGF produce tangible results, like more recommendations. It is important that the conclusions of the IGF not remain only in the debate.

D) How could the IGF respond to President Macron’s “call for action” made during his speech at the IGF 2018 Opening Ceremony?

President Macron’s “call for action” emphasized the importance of cooperation, especially the new ways of multilateral cooperation. The President Macron highlights the need to guarantee that the multilateral cooperation involves all the stakeholders, from governments to private sector, NGOs, intellectuals, journalists, civil society, Internet players, etc.

In addition, the President Macron urged the IGF to evolve and proposed a new collegial method that looks for a Forum that will produce more than just debate and reflection but specific proposals. As the President mentioned in his speech, this will be only possible with the participation of all the stakeholders but especially if these stakeholders work together.

In this regard, the IGF should make a bigger effort in guaranteeing the participation of all the stakeholders, the celebration of a variety of workshops, and especially focus greater attention on the selection of the topics for their discussion. In the last year, there has been a majority of workshops related to human rights. With this, we are not saying that the human rights are not important, but we cannot put aside other topics equally important.

In addition, one way to respond to the “call for action” made by President Macron, is requesting to the workshops to identify and note the proposals and new partnerships of ways of new cooperation resulting from each workshop.

Finally, it is necessary to foster the participation of the governments and the technical community. If we see the statistics of the last IGF, we can see that these groups of stakeholders are the less represented in the Forum.

E) What other organizations/disciplines should the IGF be collaborating with and how/to what purpose?

The UN Secretary – General said in his speech, “the technologies are transversal”. In this regard, it should be invited all organizations that have interest in the digital technologies and Internet regardless of the discipline to which they belong. However, the participation of these organizations should be according with the mandate of the Internet Governance, as it is defined in the paragraph 34 of the Tunis Agenda.

F) The Secretary-General set up a High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation (HLPDC) to “Identify good examples and propose modalities for working cooperatively across sectors, disciplines and borders to address challenges in the digital age”

1. How can the IGF contribute to the work of the HLPDC to help foster these aims?

The Panel will submit a report that will provide a high-level independent contribution to the broader public debate on digital cooperation frameworks and support Member States in their consultations on these issues. In this regard, the IGF should promote the participation of all the stakeholders in this Panel.

In addition, the IGF should take into account the report that will be developed by the HLPDC and discuss it in the next IGF 2019.