INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM 2019
MULTISTAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP

MAIN SESSION GUIDELINES
1 July 2019

BACKGROUND: The annual Internet Governance Forum event (IGF) features different session types that encourage multi-stakeholder dialogue on Internet Governance and policy issues. Session types include workshops, open forums, best practice forums, National and Regional IGF Initiative (NRI) collaborative sessions, Dynamic Coalition (DC) sessions, flash sessions and main sessions. Amongst other items, the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG), whose purpose is to advise the Secretary-General on the programme and schedule of the IGF meetings, is responsible for organizing main sessions. These sessions typically involve high-level speakers. They are held in larger rooms and translation is provided in the six UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish).

PURPOSE of MAIN SESSION GUIDELINES: The purpose of these Guidelines is to help the MAG and other main session organizers:

- Create a structured approach for developing and executing main sessions that enable MAG members and the IGF community to contribute;

- Facilitate the development of main sessions in a way that is fair, inclusive, transparent and timely;

- Deliver main sessions with maximum value for all stakeholders and the IGF community;

- Support and augment the ability of the main sessions to contribute to the outputs and resources of the IGF to community; and

- Enhance confidence in the multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance during the current mandate of the IGF.

These Guidelines apply to the organization of all IGF main sessions.

PRINCIPLES for MAIN SESSION ORGANIZATION:

1) **Themes/topics should be:**
   a) Of a high level of discussion that will attract the participation of global experts and high-level delegates;
   b) Contemporary, and relevant to Internet governance developments;
   c) Aligned with the overarching theme of the IGF, reflect one of the existing themes of the IGF, or reflect a new theme with broad consensus among MAG members;
   d) An important concern for, or relevant to, developing countries, with relevance for developed countries;
   e) Able to generate wide-ranging interest amongst onsite and online IGF participants; and
   f) To the extent possible, build on existing dialogue from previous IGFs.

2) **A Main Session should not,** to the extent practicable, replicate other sessions in terms of speaker composition, policy questions, or content.

3) **Organization of the Main Sessions should:**
   a) Engage key stakeholders and allow for all multistakeholder groups to contribute substantively, on an equal footing;
   b) Consider how the main session could contribute substantively to the topic and establish dialogue between actors;
   c) Consider how the main session can contribute to efforts to improve the IGF, in line with the CSTD Working Group Report on recommendations for Improvements to the IGF, and as reflected in the WSIS+10 Outcome Document;
   d) Encourage contributions from NRIs, DCs, and relevant Best Practice Forums and workshops;
   e) Consider how the session can benefit from the resources available, i.e. room size, translation into UN languages; and
   f) Include, in an appropriate way, inputs from the IGF workshop sessions on the same theme.

3. PROCESS and CRITERIA for MAIN SESSION ORGANIZATION:

1) With exception of any main session that the MAG assigns to specific groups, such as the NRIs or the DCs, the topics for the main sessions are determined by the MAG.
2) With the exception of any main session that the MAG assigns to specific groups, such as the NRIs or the DCs, main session co-organizers must be MAG members.
3) Co-organizers (usually 2, and in exceptional cases more than 2) are responsible for:
   a) Drafting the main session description;
   b) Seeking MAG feedback and acceptance to include in the overall program of the IGF;
   c) Inviting volunteers to join the organization activity;
   d) Soliciting input from the community, including policy questions;
   e) Hosting planning calls; and
   f) Leading the identification and confirmation of speakers, moderators, remote moderators and rapporteurs.
4) Co-organizers will develop the main session description based upon inputs from the community and volunteers. The description should specify:
   a) The main session narrative, including policy questions;
   b) Speaker photos and bios; and
   c) The session structure, including timing indications.
5) Speakers
   a) Speaker composition should reflect gender, geographic and stakeholder group diversity, and should strive to include young people, and persons with disabilities.
   b) A MAG member should not serve as a speaker or moderator in a main session he/she co-organized.
   c) A MAG member should not serve as a speaker or moderator in more than one main session.
6) Moderators and rapporteurs
   a) The role of the on-site moderator includes:
      i) Introducing the session theme and speakers;
      ii) Ensuring that all speakers have the opportunity to speak;
      iii) Ensuring participation from the attendees, including remote participants; and
      iv) Facilitating the discussion.

b) The role of the remote moderator includes:
    i) Fielding questions and observations from remote participants; and
    ii) Working with the on-site moderator to incorporate these questions and observations into the discussion.
c) The role of the rapporteur is to synthesize the key points of the discussion and to provide an overview of the session in the format provided by the IGF Secretariat.

7) Format
a) The format of the Main Sessions can include innovative options, variable speaker numbers, different room set ups (as can be accommodated by the venue), and other alternative approaches as appropriate to the session.
b) The format must accommodate remote participation, and seek to leverage the participation of remote participation hubs.
c) The format must enable interaction, thus encouraging Moderators to intersperse comments from the panel of speakers, with comments and questions from online participants and delegates from the floor, from the very beginning.