

Haarlem, Tuesday 11 February 2020

L.S.,

Following up on the High Level meeting on Internet Governance at DG CNCT on Tuesday 28 January I hereby submit my views on a future IGF model.

As a start I would like to point out that following a workshop on the future of the IGF held at the Geneva IGF in 2017<sup>1</sup> a report was presented to the MAG called 'Strengthening cooperation within the context of the IGF'. This report was the result of substantive input from all stakeholder communities. It never got a true debate in the MAG, also because of reasons I will return to below. As the report is of direct relevance to this consultation, I submit the report as part of my response.

In general the following remark is of importance. The IGF each year brings together experts in numerous fields of the internet and lets them "escape" as it were, without any contribution to a tangible outcome or potential solution. If however their respective brainpower was actively used, many ideas could be formulated for future reference or even to start working on together. Because they become part of the inception, they may more easily be inclined to contribute in the intersessional period than when being at the IGF just to present for 15 minutes and leave.

It is of interest to mention that the IGF+ model was tested in an IGF pilot project called 'Implementing internet standards and protocols for a safer internet'<sup>2</sup>. It showed that through the ability to work in a dedicated way on a long-lasting and complex internet governance issue, insights were gained allowing for clear next steps, what stakeholders to involve and where to apply pressure in society. It showed that most, not all, organisations and individuals gladly shared their views, knowledge and cooperated in very different ways. It showed that the IGF is capable of producing a tangible outcome in a few months' time. But also that under the current IGF model, it is extremely hard to achieve as it does not fit the model. The mindset is not bent on change and proactive leadership is lacking. The project was externally funded.

A) Overarching questions on a future digital cooperation structure concerning all models

1. How could the new model foster more actionable outcomes?

By organising work within the IGF in such a way that the goal is an actionable outcome. This means, at least in part, letting go of the traditional workshop/Open Forum/etc. form.

Depending on the desired outcome different forms can be organised. E.g.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://igf2017.sched.com/event/CRB6/strengthening-cooperation-within-the-context-of-the-igf-creating-a-roadmap-for-2018>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/implementing-internet-standards-and-protocols-for-a-safer-internet>

- Inventory or best practice

To find out what ideas are, current best practices around the world, state of play is, etc. Organise a two hour workshop where all invited, through a thorough preparation, know what is expected from them and set to work to exchange views, share knowledge, find (a rough) consensus and present the outcomes in a report that is taken up elsewhere for execution.

- Policy setting

Provide potential ways forward for all involved stakeholders.

Create (intersessional) working groups that work together around a specific theme towards potential solutions that are taken up or implemented elsewhere. This involves reaching out to necessary stakeholders, the designation of experts, the acceptance of responsibility and ownership for the follow up work.

- Serious, long lasting issues

Many topics return year in, year out to the IGF. This calls for another approach.

Working groups around topics that have come back for years without improvement or breakthroughs are set up. Experts are given time to prepare within the IGF intersessional context and work together at the IGF on ways forward, that are presented to the world at the IGF.

- Etc.

In short anything except the traditional IGF workshop set up. (See also below under 5 and 6)

2. How can broader participation of government and business representatives, especially from small and developing countries and SME's be ensured?

By actively reaching out to them and by making sure that their participation is of utmost importance. The topics discussed need to be tailor made to their interests and that means, at least in part, letting go of the current proposal cycle, as those unknown with or not really interested in the IGF will never propose a workshop, resulting in a program of less to no interest to them, so they do not show up or at best send less relevant representatives. To attract them, a part of the program needs to be made in cooperation with these stakeholder groups outside of the workshop proposal cycle. This takes liaisons (see below).

I would specifically add the technical community to the list mentioned in the question.

3. How can a stable financial funding be ensured?

The IGF has to become a membership based organisation. Large organisations and governments, IGOs and NGOs all chip in.

And if internet governance is so important as everyone says it is, there ought to be a few million in the UN budget to find as well.

B) Internet Governance Forum Plus (IGF +)

4. Do you think the Advisory Group is a useful proposal and if yes, how should it look like? Especially in terms of its composition/membership, responsibilities? To what extent should there be differences to the current MAG?

The current MAG works in essence as a program commission for the upcoming IGF. In my experience, based on participation in MAG meetings and two working groups on strategy, hardly ever time is taken to truly reflect on what has come out of a cycle. It also proves to be hard to have meaningful discussions on improvements. In the end it all comes down to “the next program”. There are two options. Restructure the MAG or have a second advisory body, per topic.

If the IGF is to do more than organise main sessions and workshops, it becomes of utmost importance that participants now absent or less interested become active and take ownership of selected issues. This takes a longer term and broader view of issues than currently in vogue. It also means that the program has to be, in part, changed. Working sessions, pre-described workshops, working rooms and result driven presentations all become a part of the program.

To change the program in ways that work towards actionable outcomes, leadership is necessary. The current way the MAG works this leadership is insufficiently developed and the will to show proactive leadership seems something not to be desired. If the input and views from the community is leading, as it now often is, then the questions asked to that community need to be more pointed and aimed at identifying the challenging issues and desired ways forward.

So, if the IGF is, in part, to change, this takes another group of people to develop and prepare this part of the program. The question in need of an answer is who decides on the “special topics”? If the MAG is to decide on the topics deserving a special program, it takes experts from respective stakeholder groups who come together and decide on how tangible outcomes can be derived at. But either way, a change is needed, as without change the IGF will most likely not change. Whether the MAG is restructured and focuses more on the longer term and tangible outcomes or whether a special committee of experts is created, advising the MAG on the working part of the program or whether it gets autonomy, is not of important to me. It has to work.

5. Do you think the Cooperation Accelerator is a useful proposal and if yes, how should it look like? Especially in terms of its composition/membership as well as its responsibilities? In general, yes, it could be. It all depends on the will of the participants and that the topics and desired outcomes are such that stakeholders cannot afford not to participate. The organising committee / team of experts has the responsibility to define the issue and goal in such a way that it is hard to manipulate or frustrate the process.

As an idea I would propose the following. The traditional workshop set up henceforth is only used for topics that have newly come up in the past year. As soon as a topic is established as an issue, it moves to either elsewhere outside of the IGF or it goes into solution mode. So many topics return each year, where people agreeing with each other tell the room how bad it is, while those needed to bring change are not present.

The accelerators (ad 5 and 6) are used for these topics, to work towards outcomes, action plans, new ways of thinking, policy suggestions, etc., to be taken up and implemented outside of the IGF. Many topics, returning now for many years lend themselves for such an approach.

The questions asked to potential workshop or program organisers will have to change. Definition of the issue, approach, desired outcomes, necessary participants, etc., all become part of the proposal. The criteria for admittance are changed accordingly.

6. Do you think the Policy Incubator is a useful proposal and if yes, how should it look like? Especially in terms of its composition/membership as well as its responsibilities?  
See under ad 5.

7. Do you think the Observatory and Help Desk are useful proposals and if yes, how should they look like? Especially in terms of its composition/membership as well as its responsibilities?

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8. Should a new IGF Trust Fund be considered? If yes, how should it look like, what expenses should it cover and – accordingly- what financial volume would it need (annual budget)? New or old. Organisations have to be willing to donate. So a membership fee is worthwhile considering.

9. How can stakeholders be encouraged to contribute to an IGF Trust Fund? How should contributions to a trust fund be structured: multistakeholder-wise, geographically, and institutionally?

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#### C) Distributed Co-Governance Architecture (COGOV)

10. Which aspects/features of the proposed architecture „COGOV“ should be further considered?

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#### D) Digital Commons Architecture

11. Which aspects/features of the proposed architecture should be further considered?

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#### E) Other Ideas

12. Which other ideas, mechanisms and features are worth considering?

The MAG has to start working with liaisons from specific stakeholder communities. A part of this system has to ensure bringing together the most pressing internet governance issues. Now this is partly left to chance through the ability to write the best proposal.

If the IGF+ model is to succeed, the liaisons not only bring issues but have to ensure cooperation, participation and responsibility for and ownership of processes and their outcomes. They are pivotal in bringing experts together in the working groups and not the generalists usually participating in MAG meetings and create the commitment necessary to succeed. This way they assist in the necessary trust to be built among the participants.

13. Do you see elements of combining the three models and if yes, how could this be operationalized?

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