

Reference: Questions guiding the Follow-up Process of the Report of the UN High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, Recommendations 5A/5B (HLIG meeting 28 January 2020)

Comments from Finland

A 1: The better the IGF sessions are prepared, the sharper their focus and the clearer the formulation of their debate questions, the more likely it is that they arrive at actionable outcomes. Thus, the new model should, first of all, bridge the gaps and redeem the problems of the planning/preparation phase of the existing model.

A 2: The level of participation depends to a large extent on its perceived usefulness and relevance from the point of view of the stakeholder group in question. Presumably, government and private sector representatives in particular have to carefully weigh costs and benefits of participation. If IGF has the reputation of being just a talking shop, it is not considered worth of spending time and money for. We must lift the relevance of the IGF to the stakeholders. On the other hand, IGF's in 2018 in Paris and 2019 in Berlin show that the engagement of the host country on the highest level can make a difference for the participation of governmental and parliamentary decision makers. - Funding should be made available to bring in all categories of stakeholders from less developed countries.

A 3: Heightened awareness of internet-related challenges and threats should be a powerful argument when approaching new potential donors. If donors have historically seen the IGF as a vehicle for development cooperation – which it certainly remains - it could now be “sold” also by appealing to the self-interest of corporations and governments, as a forum that deals with their problems.

B 4 – 7: The preparation is the Achilles' heel of the IGF. The MAG is not able to process the bottom-up flow of proposals in the way that would make each IGF a coherent, dynamic event that focuses on the most important topics of the moment and produces actionable output on them.

New mechanisms – Cooperation Accelerator, Policy Incubator and Observatory/Help Desk – are obviously intended to bridge the existing gap in the preparation process. Basically, it is a question of taking the raw material contained in hundreds of bottom-up proposals and applying some top-down analysis and synthesis to it to produce another well focused IGF instead of another exhaustive list of topics. At some point, decisions have to be made that do not necessarily please all who have submitted proposals. This means that new structures, whatever they are called, should have enough clout to fend off pressures.

Perhaps IGF could take a leaf from the book of EuroDIG, one of its regional “children”. IGF calls for proposals for issues, not for fully developed plans for sessions or workshops. Preparing for a EuroDIG, a group of subject-matter experts, together with the Secretariat, has a fairly free hand to put proposals into

thematic baskets, combine and add to them. The actual session planning is done by teams composed by proposers of related issues, with the participation of subject-matter experts. Of course, this process should then adjust in the global context of the IGF.

Designing new IGF structures, getting them approved, funded and populated by best possible talent is a major undertaking. We can only express the hope that this work is not delayed and complicated by too much political infighting and turf wars and that when the structures start functioning, volunteers that inevitably will do most of the work will be backed up by enough resources (support staff, communications, travel).

B 8: The current IGF Trust Fund, with alternative ways to support developed during the IGF's lifetime (IGFSA, Tides foundation, in-kind support etc.) are already sufficient to ensure funding to the IGF by a broad multistakeholder community, with all the different stakeholders and a geographical balance included. Naturally, the continued development of the IGF and especially its relevance to all the stakeholders is connected to this funding issue. However, the important question of fundraising needs a better focus, dedicated resources and professional leadership. We hope to see suggestions for this through the ongoing process of the Panel Report in order to go concretely forward.

B 9: See A3

C 10 – D 11: Elements of the other two proposal can co-exist with IGF+. In addition to cooperation within IGF+, various actors of the Internet ecosystem need to reach out to each other in other settings.

E 12: Over its 15 years of existence, IGF has accumulated an enormous amount of material (video, transcripts, supporting documents) about its proceedings. They should be organized/made searchable which would help not only research but also every potential proposer of issues who would like to check, how the same issues has been dealt with at its previous sessions.

E13: See C 10 – D 11

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