



## INTERNET SOCIETY'S COMMENTS ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATION 5A/B OF THE HIGH-LEVEL PANEL ON DIGITAL COOPERATION: THE AGE OF DIGITAL INTERDEPENDENCE *REPORT*

The Internet Society appreciates this new opportunity to comment on the implementation of Recommendations 5A and 5B of the report of the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, *The Age of Digital Interdependence* (June 2019).

We have contributed on the previous consultations – before and after the publication of the Report. We are encouraged to see that the Secretary-General is now turning to the challenging task of implementing the Report's recommendations through open Roundtable dialogues.

In this submission, we specifically examine Chapter 4 – Mechanism for Global Digital Cooperation and its Recommendations 5A and 5B, and put forward concrete steps for implementation. While the Report addresses technologies in general, our submission focuses on the Internet as the driving force of many of the changes the Panel was mandated to address.

### Comments on the Recommendations 5A and 5B

Echoing our previous comments, the Internet Society believes that existing digital cooperation mechanisms need to be improved, and that collaborative approaches are the best approach<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, we appreciate the Panel's call for mechanisms to '*become more holistic, multi-disciplinary, multistakeholder, agile and able to convert rhetoric into practice*'.

Therefore, **we believe that now is the time to strengthen the IGF rather than reinventing new mechanisms** such as the "Distributed Co-Governance Architecture" and the "Digital Commons Architecture".

The key objective should be to deliver **more tangible outcomes**, while not transforming the IGF into a negotiating body.

On this note, while the Report indicates that the "IGF Plus" could provide 'multi-stakeholder and multilateral legitimacy' at the same time, in trying to be both, it may arguably be forced to make unreasonable compromises in negotiating outcomes, and might not, at the end, do either very well.

As the honorable UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in his Opening remarks at the IGF 2019 '*not only we are still building physical walls to separate people, but (that)there is also the tendency to create some virtual walls in the Internet also to separate people. And the only way to avoid it is if you are able to have one vision. With one vision and one world, I hope we'll be able to be also with only one Internet*'. Back in 2005, when the Tunis Agenda, in article 72, asked the UN Secretary General to convene "this open and inclusive process for multi-stakeholder policy dialogue—called the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)", this forum reflected this vision.



**We recommend that the future roadmap on Digital Cooperation reflects the need that the IGF remains entirely multistakeholder.** Indeed, the multistakeholder approach to governing the Internet has demonstrated its value over the past years<sup>2</sup>. Processes such as the NETmundial meeting, the WSIS+10 Review High-Level Event, and the successful transition of the IANA functions, are clear illustrations of this value. They can be used as a source of inspiration to further develop the “IGF Plus” concept.

In building further outcome-oriented ground, **the IGF could have a useful “dispatch function”**, i.e. identifying where issues can be further discussed in other relevant fora, while not duplicating existing work within the IGF Intersessional work and other organizations.

The new “IGF Plus” components suggested by the Panel such as an *Advisory Group*, a *Help Desk* and a *Cooperation Accelerator* could be **designed to better operationalize existing IGF components**, and not duplicating features, such as review the mandate of the MAG to bolster a more strategic and multi-year role; leverage the bottom-up intersessional work with the BPFs, DCs, CENBs, NRIs by streamlining policy development.

Over the past year, there were visible improvements to crystallize IGF’s relevance as the place for Internet-related international policy discussions. We recommend that the Roadmap reinforces those changes already on track at the heart of the IGF: fewer thematic tracks, less parallel sessions, more cohesive agenda shaping, outreach efforts to new stakeholder groups, and increased attendance (see our previous concrete contributions in this matter <sup>3</sup>).

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<sup>2</sup> See: “*Why the Multistakeholder Approach Works*”, available at: <https://www.internetsociety.org/resources/doc/2016/internet-governance-why-the-multistakeholder-approach-works/>

<sup>3</sup> See: “*Let’s reform the IGF to Ensure its Healthy Future*”, published on 17 March 2018, and available at: <https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/2018/03/lets-reform-igf-ensure-healthy-future/>

See: “*A World Without the IGF*”, published on 19 April 2019, and available at: <https://www.internetsociety.org/blog/2019/04/a-world-without-the-igf/>