Comments to IGF+ Model

The main criticism addressed to the global IGF regards the fact that, although the quality of the debates is of a high level, the event is not able to affect the implementation of Internet policies and does not produce tangible results.

We have seen in recent years a proliferation of initiatives, working groups that for various reasons deal with issues related to Internet Governance and that proceed uncoordinated. However, there is not a single place, recognized worldwide, that is a reference for Internet Governance and where Internet policies are discussed and implemented. IGF should be adequately strengthened to carry out a worldwide coordination function of all IG initiatives that should be surveyed by checking on their ongoing themes and activities.

At the moment the IGF and its Secretariat is based on voluntary donations. It should become a stable United Nations project, financed on a fixed and continuous basis by the actors , networks and platforms that for various reasons are involved in the technical governance of the Internet (ICANN, IETF, ITU, IEEE, WWW, etc.) and that have funds allocated on IG activities or take a profit from services and activities they offer over the Internet. The economic sustainability of the IGF is fundamental in order to implement the policy definition and implementation processes. For this reason, it is important that IGF makes use of bodies that have economic stability, such as ICANN, and which can help to finance its activities. It may also be appropriate to provide for other forms of financing for other activities that profit from using the Internet.

The functions of the MAG should be strengthened and expanded. The MAG should perform a coordination function of the various IG initiatives and be able to trigger implementation processes of the policies discussed.

It is important that IGF pushes towards a vision of shared principles such as those drafted in the Contract for the web.

IGF ++ MODEL

Multi-stakeholderism is the pillar of the global IGF but at the same time some form of hierarchy in the multi-stakeholder model could be needed in order to allow the complex IGF system to evolve and to produce tangible outputs.

Taking into account the 3 architectural models of global digital cooperation defined in the report issued by the High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, it is suggested to start from the IGF Plus model (institutionally anchored to the United Nations) and further strengthen this IGF Plus model by including some of the distributed networks and platforms indicated in the second architectural model (COGOV) of the report.

IGF ++ should be able to initiate policy implementation processes using the networks that already operate in the design and implementation of norms that regulate the Internet (IETF, ICANN, etc.)

IGF ++ architecture includes: Advisory Group or Steering Committee, Cooperation Accelerator, the Policy Incubator, the Cooperation Networks, Regional Legislation Groups, the Observatory and Help Desk Digital.

1) Advisory Group or Steering Committee

The Advisory Group or Steering Committee, based on the IGF's current Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group, would be responsible for preparing annual meetings, and identifying focus and key policy issues each year. This would not exclude coverage of other issues but ensure a critical mass of discussion on the selected issues. The Advisory Group could identify moments when emerging discussions in other forums need to be connected, and issues that are not covered by existing organizations or mechanisms. Building on the current practices of the IGF, the Advisory Group could consist of members appointed for three years by the UN Secretary-General on the advice of member states and stakeholder groups, ensuring gender, age, stakeholder and geographical balance.

The MAG includes representatives of the various world organizations (ICANN, IETF, OECD, etc.) who are involved in the Internet regulation. They participate to the MAG in a continuously manner.

The MAG identifies key policy issues and checks progress and the implementation status. Where there are no tangible results / improvements, the MAG, through a vote, establishes whether to start a Cooperation Network to deal with the issue.

2) The Cooperation Networks would be issue-specific horizontal collaboration groups, involving stakeholders from relevant vertical sectors and institutions. They could be formed freely by stakeholders in a bottom-up way, self-governed, and share the same goal of cooperation - including potentially the design of digital norms. They could be created or supported by one or more governments and / or intergovernmental organizations with the same concerns. Their functions would include developing shared understandings and goals for a specific digital issue, strengthening cooperation, designing or updating digital norms, providing norm implementation roadmaps and developing capacity to adopt policies and norms.

3) The Cooperation Accelerator would accelerate issue-centered cooperation across a wide range of institutions, organizations and processes; identify points of convergence among existing IGF coalitions, and issues around which new coalitions need to be established; convene stakeholder-specific coalitions to address the concerns of groups such as governments, businesses, civil society, parliamentarians, elderly people, young people, philanthropy, the media, and women; and facilitate convergences among debates in major digital and policy events at the UN and beyond.

The Cooperation Accelerator could consist of members selected for their multi-disciplinary experience and expertise. Membership would include civil society, businesses and governments and representation from major digital events such as the Web Summit, Mobile World Congress, Lift: Lab, Shift, LaWeb, and Telecom World.

5) The Policy Incubator would incubate policies and norms for public discussion and adoption. In response to requests to look at a perceived regulatory gap, it would examine if existing norms and regulations could fill the gap and, if not, form a policy group consisting of interested stakeholders to make proposals to governments and other decision-making bodies. It would monitor policies and norms through feedback from the bodies that adopt and implement them. The Policy Incubator could provide the currently missing link between dialogue platforms identifying regulatory gaps and existing decision- making bodies by maintaining momentum in discussions without making legally binding decisions. It should have a flexible and dynamic composition involving all stakeholders concerned by a specific policy issue.

6) The Regional Legislation Group is made up of a group of parliamentarians representing each region of the world who updates the MAG regarding the state of implementation of the rules in the region. In case of non-compliant countries, the MAG can ask the United Nations General Assembly and / or the competent regional authorities to activate the most appropriate actions.

7) The Observatory and Help Desk would direct requests for help on digital policy (such as dealing with crisis situations, drafting legislation, or advising on policy) to appropriate entities, including the Help Desks described in Recommendation 2; coordinate capacity development activities provided by other organizations; collect and share best practices from NRIs; and provide an overview of digital policy issues, including monitoring trends, identifying emerging issues and providing data on digital policy . The Observatory will collect input using NRIs networks. The Observatory provides, for each country, the implementation state of the policies with respect to the key issues identified by the MAG.

Concettina Cassa – IGF MAG member (in a personal capacity)
Email : cassa@agid.gov.it
Mob: + 39 3924465037 or +39 0685264442