

**Report on the Implementation of the Outcomes of the
World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)**

2022 Input from the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

I. Executive Summary

The 16th IGF was held from 6 to 10 December 2021 in Katowice, Poland. The meeting marked the sixth gathering of the global multistakeholder IGF community since the renewal of the IGF's mandate for 10 years by the UN General Assembly¹. Under the overarching theme, '*Internet United*', the IGF provided a platform for advancing critical Internet policy discussions, in particular in response to a number of ongoing policy challenges pertaining to the digital divide, human rights online, digital cooperation, data privacy and protection, and the effects of digital transformation on environmental sustainability.

During the five-day meeting, more than 10,000 delegates from 175 countries² participated in over 318 sessions at the IGF, both onsite and online. The overall programme was developed in a bottom-up and inclusive manner in consultation with the growing IGF community and with a view to enhancing wide-ranging and diverse multistakeholder participation. The lively and productive meeting featured interactive dialogues, and addressed a broad range of timely themes and issues.

The IGF is unique in the sense that it is [convened by the United Nations Secretary-General](#) to be an open, multistakeholder forum bringing together all stakeholders as equals. Its UN mandate gives it convening power and the authority to serve as a neutral space for all stakeholders. Exchanges throughout the week recognized the important role Internet plays for economic and social development within the right policy frameworks, as well as recognized the need to protect rights online as fundamental human rights. The use of transparent and inclusive multistakeholder approaches continued to be critical for identifying, discussing and proposing solutions around complex digital policy issues.

With emphasis on improving working modalities, the IGF's preparatory and intersessional activities this past year have been guided by its 10-year mandate, calling for the IGF to 'continue to show *progress on working modalities* and the participation of relevant stakeholders from developing countries' and by the recommendations of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) Working Group on Improvements to the IGF³.

The expansion of stakeholder engagement, including of under-represented groups into vital political and institutional decision-making spheres; the fostering of new policy discourses; and the strengthening of working modalities and communication measures to make the IGF ever-more accessible and visible; constitute main areas of progress over the past year.

¹ http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/125

² <https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/igf-2021-participation-and-programme-statistics>

³ http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/a67d65_en.pdf

II. Analytical Overview

Since the 2012 report by the CSTD Working Group on Improvements to the IGF, the IGF has used its recommendations as a guiding light. These are, namely, to improve the IGF's: tangible outcomes and overall visibility; working modalities, including open consultations, the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) and the Secretariat; funding mechanisms; participation and capacity-building; and links to other Internet governance related entities.

At the same time that significant progress was being made in these areas, further processes emerged that both draw from the initial CSTD recommendations and centrally position the IGF in broad UN digital policy agendas. These include the Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and Our Common Agenda report, with the former outlining specific measures for "making the Internet Governance Forum more responsive and relevant to current digital issues" and the latter calling for the Forum "to adapt, innovate and reform to support effective governance of the digital commons".

Furthermore, an Expert Group Meeting was organized by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in March 2022 to consider how the IGF could implement proposed initiatives in the context of these policy agendas, as well as within the broader context of the ongoing process to strengthen and improve the Forum.

As one of the major outcomes of the WSIS process, all of the work of the IGF Secretariat aims to ensure that the IGF facilitates implementation of all the agreed action lines, including, but not limited to; C1: The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development; C4: Capacity building and C11: International and regional cooperation.

Improving Tangible Outcomes and Visibility of the IGF

The past year has been notable for the Forum in terms of its high-level engagement and visibility. No fewer than seven sessions, in addition to traditional high-level opening and closing ceremonies, constituted a thematic high-level leaders track at the 16th edition of the annual meeting. Experts and leaders from all stakeholder groups discussed key questions such as: In which areas of people's lives do we see the biggest impact of digital transformation for sustainable development? How can we ensure that revitalised digital economies are inclusive? How can technologies work for people? Ceremonial segments were presided over by the highest-level leadership from the United Nations, represented by the Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, of the host country Poland, represented by President Andrzej Duda and Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki.

The parliamentary track at the 16th IGF, which was strengthened to include preparatory sessions before the IGF and three topical sessions during the meeting itself, moreover, culminated in the presence of more than two hundred parliamentarians from different parts of the world. Both the high-level and parliamentary tracks produced tangible outputs⁴ – either as a contribution to the overall "Katowice Messages", the main outcome document of the 2021 IGF, or as a standalone output – thereby fulfilling the commitment laid out in the *Roadmap* to strengthen such tracks "ensuring more actionable outcomes".

⁴ <https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/igf-2021-outputs>

Despite the significant challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2021 annual meeting also enjoyed exceptional media visibility. The Forum saw over 2,500 news and media articles produced, close to 744 million social media accounts reached and overall, a nearly 170% increase in media coverage compared to 2020.

Working Modalities

As part of improved working modalities, the *Roadmap* has recommended a “more focused agenda for the Forum based on a limited number of strategic policy issues”. The 2021 IGF took an issue-driven approach to programme design, with as a general goal, to examine fewer issues and treat them in greater depth. Two main focus areas, Economic and social inclusion and human rights and Universal access and meaningful connectivity, grounded the programme. The 2022 programme has been similarly strategic in aligning its themes closely with the Secretary-General’s envisioned *Global Digital Compact* and situating the Forum as a platform for inputs to the *Compact*.

In August 2022, in further fulfilment of the Roadmap’s recommendation to create “a strategic and empowered multistakeholder high-level body”, to “coordinate follow-up action on Forum discussions and relay proposed policy approaches and recommendations from the Forum to the appropriate normative and decision-making forums”, the IGF Leadership Panel was established. The fifteen-member Panel appointed by the Secretary-General has begun its work with a mandate to address “urgent issues, in order to promote greater impact and dissemination of IGF discussions.”

2021 and 2022 saw a number of improvements with regards to fundraising. As components of an “innovative and viable fundraising strategy”, intensified outreach to new and underrepresented donors was initiated. Communication to donors was advanced through the first-ever issuing of quarterly financial reports.

Participation & Capacity Building

The Secretary-General’s call for action expressed at the 13th IGF stressed that the Forum must increase its efforts to draw “weak and missing voices” into its work. Over the course of the 2021 and 2022 cycles, capacity development efforts have focused on: thematic workshops; support to IGF National, Regional and Youth Initiatives (NRIs), IGF Dynamic Coalitions (DCs), and schools on Internet governance; as well as fostering the integration of unrepresented communities. In 2021, over one hundred individuals from least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and small island developing states (SIDs) received support for meaningful participation through financial support to attend the annual meeting. In 2022, more than 180 individuals will receive similar support. Twenty (20) NRIs received the financial grants to engage communities in their IGF processes. Also, twenty-four Dynamic Coalitions were engaged in development of a substantive report outlining their individual and collective work achievements. Throughout 2021 and 2022, over twenty capacity development workshops were hosted to support stakeholder engagement in Internet governance and specifically trigger interest in the IGF 2021 and 2022, respectively. Specific trainings were hosted for the session organizers and session moderators on how to use the IGF participation platform and maximize opportunities for themselves and other participants.

The IGF continues to build capacity through in-office training on Internet governance matters. It has especially supported youth from developing countries in this regard. During 2021 and 2022, five interns joined the IGF Secretariat. They have had the opportunity to work directly on Internet governance issues and benefit from unparalleled, up-close expertise engaging with the IGF community.

The IGF 2021 saw thirty-nine (39) remote hubs organized around the world, with nine (9) receiving also the financial support from the IGF Secretariat. In 2022, it is expected that this practice will continue.

2021 was a record-breaking year in terms of IGF annual meeting participation. Notwithstanding challenges to onsite attendance due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Forum in Katowice welcomed close to three thousand participants. A combined total of 10,371 onsite and online participants from 175 countries were present in the meeting.

Cooperation with Other Internet Governance Related Entities

The 2021 meeting inaugurated the high-level UN open forum session, “Connecting the digital dots – how the UN System is supporting the digital transformation and the way forward”. The session was an opportunity for UN entities to update IGF participants and one another on their ongoing digital policy work, as well as exchange views on enhancing digital cooperation among UN agencies, funds and programmes. UNIDIR, UNFPA, the World Bank, UNESCO, FAO, UNCTED, ECLAC and UNFCCC were among the participating entities.

Cooperation with resident coordinators around the world was established and strengthened through support to the IGF 2021 remote hubs. This is planned to advance in 2022.

The 2022 IGF programme will resume this discussion among UN entities with a session focused on strengthened cooperation toward the Global Digital Compact.

Intersessionally, communication and linkages with UN System bodies have been increased through the launch of a dedicated mailing list and the inclusion of System-wide of “UN Digital Stories” in the IGF newsletter. In addition, cooperation continues to develop with various UN entities in implementing the IGF intersessional work (UN Women, ITU, UNESCO etc.).

III. Brief Description of Innovative Policies, Programmes and Projects, plus Future Actions with regard to Issues Raised in Part Two (1-2 pages)

One tangible way for the IGF to enhance and increase the participation of developing countries is through the National, Regional and Youth IGFs (NRIs) which have been emerging spontaneously ever since the IGF was convened in 2006. They are independent in their work, and organized in accordance with the core IGF principles of being multistakeholder, bottom-up, inclusive, open, transparent and non-commercial. Since the 10th IGF, the number of NRIs has grown tremendously and the total number of officially recognized initiatives has more than doubled from 43 NRIs at the end of 2015 to a current record of more than 155 [recognized NRIs](#). The NRIs are active and immensely useful contributors to the IGF community’s intersessional activities. The linkages between the NRIs and the IGF have increased significantly, due to many joint work activities such as the organization of sessions held during the annual IGFs; work on organizing collaborative sessions; developing publications containing guidelines and best practices on how to establish and run a successful NRI; as well as collaboration on developing youth-specific workshops and activities intersessionally and during IGF annual meetings. Records from the [NRIs regular fortnightly meetings](#) also serve as valuable and tangible inputs to the global IGF; providing more local and issue -perspectives to policy challenges.

In the resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 7 August 2018[on the recommendation of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (E/20168/31)]⁵, member states welcomed the continuous progress made with regard to the intersessional work of the Internet Governance Forum in the different modalities of connecting and enabling the next billion online, dynamic coalitions and best practice forums, as well as the contributions being made by both national and regional Internet governance forums.

In 2021, the IGF furthered its work on issue-specific policy work with respective [policy networks](#) on Meaningful Access (PNMA) and the Environment (PNE). The PNE successfully harnessed the strong political and popular momentum behind climate issues to bring visibility to its work. The PNMA gathered prominent experts who have advised on ways to bridge digital divide and develop digital capacity across communities. Both policy networks expanded the type of expertise that exists under the IGF umbrella and confirmed the IGF as a space for effective multidisciplinary cooperation.

[The IGF's Best Practice Forums \(BPFs\)](#), meanwhile, continue to offer unique platforms to investigate topical Internet policy challenges by collecting community input and experiences in a flexible and bottom-up manner. Just as the policy networks, the BPFs gather knowledge that exist with different groups, organizations, experts and individuals, made available as a useful resource for the broader community in the form of tangible output documents. As a part of the 2021 community intersessional activities, the eighth cycle of BPFs focused on Gender and Digital Rights and on Cybersecurity. Both the policy networks and BPFs worked throughout the year in an open and inclusive way via open mailing lists, regular virtual meetings and BPF workshops during the 16th IGF meeting.

In the 2022, the PNMA's work was extended for a further cycle and a new policy network on Internet Fragmentation (PNIF) established. The BPFs continue to focus on Gender and Digital Rights and Cybersecurity.

Extending and developing on a process which began in 2015 with their first-ever main session at the IGF, IGF Dynamic Coalitions coordinated their efforts throughout 2021 leading up to the annual meeting. Through their regular monthly virtual meetings and [adoption of common work standards](#) (open archives, open membership, open mailing lists), their activities have become more synchronized, all while coalitions continue to work independently as multistakeholder expert discussion groups on a variety of topics. As with other parts of the IGF Community, DCs are growing steadily, with a total of 24 coalitions in 2022.

Some specific efforts undertaken to improve working modalities included:

Important for the IGF's longer-term efforts to improve its processes is the MAG Working Group on IGF Strengthening and Strategy (WG-Strategy), whose purpose is to develop proposals of actions implementable in the short and medium term on how to strengthen the IGF and position it strategically in the evolving digital cooperation landscape. Two additional MAG working groups, on Hybrid Meetings (WG-Hybrid), and Outreach, Engagement and Communication (WG-OEC), focus on practical enhancements to the IGF's hybrid online/onsite meeting modalities and communications strategy.

With respect to the implementation of the capacity development activities, the Secretariat cooperates more closely with the communities through the NRIs and Youth IGFs to ensure its work plan tailored in a way it best responds to the communities' needs.

⁵ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/RES/2018/28