IGF Community Public Consultation: Taking stock of the 2017 work programme and 12th IGF and suggestions for the 13th IGF

Submission from the Association for Progressive Communications, February 2018

About APC

The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) is an international network and non-profit organisation founded in 1990 that works to help ensure everyone has affordable access to a free and open internet to improve lives and create a more just world. APC has 87 members (made up of 58 organisations 29 individuals) most of whom participate actively in the IGF process. APC itself has been an active supporter of the IGF since its inception as an outcome of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) process. The remarks below are a compilation of reflections from APC members and staff. The suggestions for the future draw on inputs APC has previously submitted to open consultations and the IGF retreat.

A. Taking stock of 2017 programming, preparatory process, community intersessional activities and the 12th annual IGF

A1. What worked well in 2017?

Preparatory processes including venue, timing, logistics, participation and networking

- Geneva and the UN as a venue worked well in many ways, even if there were some downsides which we mention below. In particular it meant that governments could participate more easily through their Geneva-based missions.
- The presence of a diverse set of stakeholders, including from governments and parliaments, created a rare and valuable opportunity for learning and cross-regional and cross-sector exchanges and dialogue.
- The opportunity to meet and talk with UN actors, like the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Opinion and Expression was extremely valuable.
- Networking, meeting new people and forming new relationships, as well as connecting with existing partners, taking stock, and planning further collaboration as well as opportunities for bilateral consultations and meetings.
- The exhibition area worked well and allowed for a lot of interaction among exhibitors and with participants.

- The large number of newcomers added dynamism to the mix of participants and creates a sense of the IGF's continued relevance.

Programming, content and session formats

- The main sessions on gender, cybersecurity and on internet shutdowns were all very relevant to APC's work and we are pleased to have been able to participate in them.
- Having current issues, for example "fake news" and online extremism on the agenda worked well and provided the opportunity to examine these issues from different regional and stakeholder perspectives.
- The open letter read at end of the IGF from Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) groups on the concerning discourse around fake news and elections indicates how the IGF is still seen as a strategic space for people to voice their views and concerns.
- The pre-event on a rights-based approach to cybersecurity that APC co-organised was successful and contributed to the IGF as a whole, added value to the BPF on cybersecurity, and, we believe, will contribute to the longer term discussion of cybersecurity in the IGF.
- Using the IGF as a platform for presenting research, getting feedback and discussion of policy options going forward worked well. A concrete example of this is the research APC conducted on social media and extremism in Asia which we presented in a workshop, along with research some of our partners had done on similar topics.

Community intersessional activities

- Dynamic coalitions that worked throughout the year could use the global IGF effectively to meet, consolidate and plan ahead (but needed more time - more on this below).
- The dynamic coalition on community connectivity (DC3) has become an active space for discussion on taking community networks to the next level because it includes so many practitioners. However, not enough of these practitioners were able to attend the global IGF itself.

A2. What did not work so well?

Preparatory processes including venue, timing, logistics, participation and networking

- Spaces for networking were limited. In fact, finding a chair to sit in outside of a meeting room was a challenge!
- Queuing for registration in the cold and snow outside was arduous. It would have been far easier if registration for day 0 took place onsite at the Geneva International Conference Centre. There were some difficulties at registration, e.g. UN personnel had difficulty in finding a name in the database (which was actually there) which resulted in a moderator being late for an event she organised. It was our impression that a bit more flexibility and openness on the part of UN security personnel would have helped.
- The building was hard to navigate. More signage would have been helped.

- Geneva is an expensive location for many participants and not having lunch or coffee/tea provided increased the financial burden for many.
- The exhibition area was relatively disorganised and smaller than in previous years but as we said above it did still facilitate effective networking.
- The timing of the IGF so close to the end of year, which means end of year reporting for some, and Christmas, as well as being in the middle of the southern hemisphere's summer holidays, was very challenging and definitely impacted on participation.
- Remote participation. Many people experienced difficulties during the 2017 IGF.

Programming, content and session formats

- While acknowledging the efforts of the MAG in this respect, the workshop selection process remains difficult to understand and it is not clear that it results in the desired mix of topics and approaches.
- Some workshop proposals coming from dynamic coalitions were not accepted, which resulted in a missed opportunity to build on their work at previous IGFs and during the intersessional period. This undermines the intersessional work processes of the IGF.
- Moderation of workshops was frequently not effective resulting in limited or no opportunity for audience participation. It is not clear that the MAG and the secretariat are applying the guidelines set for number of speakers and moderation, or perhaps the challenge is that the MAG does not have mechanisms or the resources needed to ensure that these guidelines are adhered to.
- Many sessions had too many panelists and the "round table" format seems to have become simply a mechanism for having a huge panel rather than an interactive round table with everyone in the room able to contribute. We strongly advise that the guidelines for this format be revised so that it achieves what we understand to be its original objective:to play a role in synthesising outcomes and key messages.
- Lighting talks, partly because the space allocated was not conducive to the format but also because they were not publicised well.
- The quality of captioning was particularly poor in many of the sessions.
- Interpretation was not available in all sessions.

Community intersessional activities

- Scheduling of workshops on very similar topics at the same time (in parallel) was a challenge as people had to choose which to go to. We acknowledge that the Secretariat does its best to avoid this but it remains a problem.
- Dynamic Coalitions meetings should be allocated 90 minutes instead of an hour. An hour is not enough for an active DC.
- Cutting back on IGF secretariat support for intersessional work seems to have impacted on the preparation of work for the IGF in the case of some of the BPFs.
- While the DC3 was effective in creating spaces alongside the IGF for networking it would have been good to have a more formal space too, e.g. in the form of a workshop. Unfortunately the coalition's workshop proposal, submitted by ISOC, was not accepted.

This raises the concern of how the MAG selects workshops in such a way that continuity is ensured.

B Suggestions for improvements in 2018?

B1. Preparatory processes including venue, timing, logistics, participation and networking

- MAG selection - new MAG members should be identified before the end of the calendar year and preferably ahead of the IGF, to allow for planning and preparations.
- Mapping relevant policy discussions that the IGF could feed into as part of the preparatory process. This can in turn feed into more effective communication of outputs of the global IGF.
- Engaging proactively on programme content and themes with the conveners of national and regional IGFs, as opposed to just relying on them participating in the open consultation. (This is already in process but we think it can be strengthened).
- As a means of encouraging government participation, proactively consult with governments (including with Geneva-based missions) and with intergovernmental bodies on issues they would like to see discussed at the IGF.
- Create a mechanism linked to the IGF that addresses governments' expressed need for a forum to discuss internet related public policy issues in order to increase their participation, and the impact of the IGF.
- Strengthen the capacity building dimension of the IGF and enhance participation by establishing closer relationships with the IG schools (EuroSSIG; AfriSIG; the South School and APSIG). For example, alumni from these schools could volunteer at global and regional IGFs.

Participation from the global South:
- **I**ncrease participation from developing countries from all stakeholder groups. This requires investment of effort around many actors, including developing country governments. MAG should initiate discussions with these governments very early on in the preparation for the preparatory process for the annual IGF.
- Stakeholders from developing countries should be encouraged to be facilitators of sessions and funds should be secured to support their participation.
- Make sure that global south participation is enabled by choice of venue and timing.

Remote participation:
- The excellent record of the IGF in this respect should be maintained and extended, e.g. through providing transcripts and facilitating remote hubs.
- Remote moderators should scan the twitter feed, incorporating questions and comments, as a means of widening opportunity for remote participation. We were pleased to see that many have already started doing this.

B2. Programming, content and session formats

- Engage the support of professional event designers/and or facilitators with expertise in planning and managing large participatory events. For example, the MAG could experiment with interactive meeting methodologies such as Open Space Technology[1] even if just for one track or theme.
- Extract sub- themes based on the initial proposals submitted, allowing the programme to be guided by the IGF community.
- To ensure a fuller range of issues relating to sustainable development and broader public policy are reflected in the programme the IGF needs to facilitate dialogue with development policy makers and practitioners, many of whom are not currently engaged.
- Assign 90 minute time slots to dynamic coalitions who engage in intersessional work. A 60 minute time slot should be sufficient for those that are not active throughout the year.
- Revise round table format so that it is interactive, involving the audience, and not just an extended set of panellists.
- Consider changing the overall structure for the IGF to have two days of workshops followed by two days of main sessions interspersed with round tables and best practice forums. This structure will enable deepening of the discussion on some topics, and facilitate developing key messages, outcomes, and input into the work programme for the next cycle of intersessional work.
- Use plenaries and round tables for synthesis, cross cutting and emerging issues.
- Workshops are a way of bringing people to the IGF and building community ownership and therefore limiting their number has to be done with care.
- Workshops on common themes should not run concurrently.
- Consider creating a coding system for different types of workshops that would reflect if their goal is to begin to elaborate a topic, or to build on previous discussions.
- Open sessions/white spaces: The MAG should consider building in some open slots into the programme which can be used for networking or unscheduled sessions.
- Ensure that panels are composed with gender balance.
- Ensure that the IGF agenda responds to issues that matter to under-represented groups, who often have existing capacity in relation to these areas, and can share their knowledge with the IGF community. The IGF can focus on building their capacity in integrating IG more closely into their existing priorities. Examples include people with disabilities, people living in rural areas without sufficient infrastructure, people from small island states and indigenous people.
- Balance taking into account the priorities and particularities of different regions while continuing to address global issues. Relying on the NRIs to achieve this is not sufficient. In fact, to some extent the focus on NRIs runs the risk of creating a separate regional and national track as opposed to exploring linkages between global, regional and national levels.

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[1] http://openspaceworld.org/wp2/what-is/

B3. Community intersessional work

- We recommend secretariat continues to support intersessional work, as we have observed much stronger outputs/impact where the secretariat provided support.
- Assign more secretariat support to the WG on IGF improvements.
- Pre-events play a significant capacity building role and should continue to be supported.
- One possibility to consider is to use day 0 for pre-events on topics covered by intersessional work but not necessary organised by DCs and BPFs.
- Designate a member of the secretariat to play a government liaison role as a means of increasing government participation in, and benefit from, intersessional work.

National and regional IGF initiatives (NRIs)

- NRIs to should remain independent and be able to identify their own themes and priorities.
- The MAG should encourage NRIs to contribute to the open consultations – or consult with them proactively - so that the priorities identified are taken into account when the annual global programme is developed, but, this should not be forced. Global, regional and national events will naturally focused on different issues. The most logical and useful links would be through intersessional work. Organisers of BPFs, for example, or dynamic coalitions, should reach out to NRIs and vice versa, with the support of the secretariat and MAG.
- Foster dialogue between the regions can be encouraged through the IGF Secretariat's facilitation of periodic meetings between the   conveners of NRIs.
- MAG members and delegates of the IGF Secretariat should aim to attend as many as NRIs as possible (in their regions, ideally) to stimulate cross-fertilisation among the regional and the global processes.

B4. The mandate, nomination process and make-up of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) and the appointment process for the IGF-MAG Chair

- Over time, the position of MAG chairperson should ideally rotate among stakeholder groups and regional groupings.
- Consider having a friends of the chair group to work with the MAG chairperson to a) assist with the workload and b) ensure that voices from all regions of the world and different perspectives and stakeholder groups are reflected in MAG coordination. For example, the SG appointed chair can be complemented by stakeholder group identified friends of the chair and together than can form a small chairing group that shares the load and supports the secretariat as needed.
- Increase transparency by publishing full list of MAG nominees, including the nominating party.
- Put more effort into the orientation and integration of new MAG members.

- Clarify accountability relationships between the MAG, the IGF Secretariat, and UNDESA, including whether the MAG's mandate does or does not extend beyond organising the annual event and intersessional work.
- Appoint the Special Advisor and the Executive Secretary. Their absence still leaves a gap in spite of the increased capacity and performance of IGF staff and the significant value added by the excellent MAG chairperson.

B5. Capturing the outputs of the IGF to increase their visibility and impact

Over the last three years IGF intersessional work has gone from strength to strength. It takes time for the results of these efforts to become visible. It should be sustained. Ways in which this can be done includes to:

- Improve the presentation and dissemination of the outcomes of this work online and translating it to extend its reach.
- Facilitate more input from the IGF community into relevant policy spaces by:
  - Mapping of ongoing policy spaces (mentioned already as useful to the preparatory work) and the creation of a mechanism for information sharing with these spaces can be established to ensure interaction between content and outcomes of discussions at the IGF, and other policy-making spaces.
  - Building on the current practice of ensuring linkages with other institutions and mechanisms or using BPFs to contribute to the work of, for example, UNWomen or Special Rapporteurs to the Human Rights Council.
  - Identifying, and proactively addressing, lack of integration between the SDG and WSIS process through reaching out to, for example the Technology Facilitation Mechanism of the SDG process.
  - Reach out to other policy communities, particularly those involved in development policy, environmental policy, trade, access to knowledge, human rights and women's rights and democratisation and good governance.
- Expand the role of the MAG to include the production of an annual report focused on the outcomes of the IGF yearly. Outcomes emerge (and have emerged) in multiple ways and it is necessary to capture and communicate them. It will reaffirm the value of the IGF as an open space for IG debate. Workshop and main session organisers could be asked to identify the outcomes of the sessions. In addition, the IGF Secretariat could develop a survey for the internet community to indicate what they view as being the three main outcomes of the IGF each year.
- Encourage and facilitate the media's presence at the IGF. Media presence has been uneven.