

Taking Stock of IGF 2019 and Call for Inputs for IGF 2020

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Taking Stock of the IGF 2019 programming, outputs, preparatory process, community intersessional activities and the event itself: What worked well? What worked not so well?

Preparatory process (timeline, call for workshop proposals, workshop selection, MAG meetings etc.)

The preparatory process was significantly improved in relation to the previous edition, and involved parties should be commended for that. With calls and selections taking place earlier in the year, the community was able to be more effective and operate with increased cohesion.

The replacement or addition of panelists was also made easier by the longer timeframe, but a question that remains difficult is **the inability to changes the Speaker list on the session page by organizers.** It is a known fact that such substitutions often take place, but relying on IGF staff to change the database does not make sense, as they are bogged down with too many higher priority tasks during the months leading to the event. This is not the first year that such problems have happened, which ends up causing issues of transparency, reporting and appropriate speaker recognition.

Community intersessional activities (Best Practice Forums, Dynamic Coalitions) and National, Regional and Youth IGFs - please comment on process, content, and in particular on how these intersessional activities were included in the programme content of the Berlin IGF.

The importance of these groups cannot be understated, which is precisely why **it is concerning that their actions remain fairly detached from the broader event.** The relevant sessions were carried out as normal, but still lacked a higher degree of integration with other elements of the IGF, particularly with the Main sessions.

IGF 2019 overall programme structure and flow (in particular the three thematic tracks: digital inclusion; data governance; and security, safety, stability and resilience)

The limitation of thematic tracks seems arbitrary and its benefits are not clearly laid out. There are many subjects that don't fit inside those baskets, but are worthy of discussion. As a transnational space, the IGF should be able to accommodate debates on whatever themes different communities find relevant, regardless of whether they fit into a few baskets.

IGF 2019 programme content: please comment on the content of workshops, main sessions, high level sessions, open forums, BPF, DC and NRIs sessions, as well as on the speakers and quality of discussions.

The return of Day Zero was a good move, enabling the community to get more preparation in comparison to the previous edition. It has become clear at this point that this is an important a feature of the IGF that should be maintained as a fixture.

There was a profusion of main sessions, but it continues to be unclear what their purpose is, as has been the case in previous years. As they compete directly with the community-organized sessions, more thought needs to be given into how they interact and leverage the system as a whole.

IGF 2019 participants

Participation was strong and interest in the event seems to have been higher than previous years. For the IGF to remain relevant, it needs to continue finding strategies to engage and bolster its community, and the 2019 edition stands as an example of how many people can be mobilized under the right conditions.

In terms of sponsorships given by the host government to the community, the **major delay in selecting people was problematic,** seeing as the more time that is taken, the higher the cost of flights, meaning that the same money ends up being spent to take less people to the event. Had the selection process been organized in a more expeditious and timely manner, better results could have been achieved.

IGF 2019 Village

The Village was split into two sections: one right at the hub where most sessions were taking place and where there was the food court; the other in a more secluded area in which much less activity was going on. The difference in number of visitors was quite noticeable. **While the organizers cannot avoid constraints originating from the venue itself, there was a lack of effective signage to direct participants to the second area.** A large banner, along with a local staff member strategically positioned close to the entrance to orient people to go in that direction, could have alleviated the problem. It

is strongly recommended that this be taken into account should the Village need to be split again in the future.

IGF 2019 communications, outreach and outputs

The “Review of Outputs”¹ is a valuable feature that should continue and be expanded. However, it has not been sufficiently publicized, and better ways to spread these outcomes need to be found if the event intends to increase IGF legitimacy among the variety of stakeholders that it represents.

IGF 2019 logistics (venue, catering, security, registration etc.)

The venue proved to be an apt choice, providing a comfortable and functional environment. A problem that stood out was that **the illumination in some rooms was quite poor**, as was the case in “Raum III”. This not only was detrimental during sessions, but more importantly compromised the quality of the videos which are the permanent records of the discussions. The production team needs to work close together with venues to avoid such issues in the future.

The transportation pass given to attendees was very helpful, and should be negotiated with future host countries to integrate this into IGF events whenever possible.

Any other comments on the IGF 2019

Not at this time.

What are your suggestions for improvements for IGF 2020?

Preparatory process (timeline, call for workshop proposals, workshop selection, MAG and OC meetings etc.)

Relative to the inability to change the Speaker list on the session page by organizers, **the simplest solution would be to allow organizers to at least request such changes directly from the platform** that manages sessions, so that all that is left is for the IGF staff to do is approve the changes. This would greatly optimize the process and take into account undesirable loopholes.

¹ <https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2019-review-of-outputs>

On that same subject, **more leeway should be given to the necessity to list all speakers upon submission of session proposals.** For example, a listing of “Speaker from GRULAC” can be more effective at promoting diversity than giving session organizers the incentive to place someone who they are unsure will be able to participate, who may be replaced late in the process, but that will increase their diversity score. Session organizers could be held more accountable to what was intended if IGF could review and ensure that the placeholders are properly filled vis-à-vis matching the general aspects of the speaker originally listed.

One final point is that technology changes very fast. A subject that was irrelevant in the first semester can explode in relevance during the second semester. To account for this, **a very abridged call for lightning talks with looser requirements should be made later on in the year,** so that individuals or small groups of up to three people can get together to expose hot issues to the community.

Community intersessional activities (BPFs, Dynamic Coalitions) and National, Regional and Youth IGFs and how they can best connect with the global IGF.

Ideally intersessional groups would present the outcomes of their discussions on Day Zero, laying the groundwork for further debate during the main event. If the reform that leads to an IGF+ model is carried out, it will be necessary to think about which are the best ways to position these groups and how to make optimal use of their efforts. **When documents are generated by intersessional groups, the UN should make an effort to advertise or promote those to a bigger audience,** provided the quality of the report meets a necessary standard.

Overall programme structure and flow (introductory and concluding sessions, main and other sessions, schedule structure etc.)

Having an introductory session with high-level key speakers is proving to be a good idea, stimulating the community towards meaningful debate, acting as a call to action, both to those in favor and those who are against what is said. This should continue into 2020 and beyond.

Higher stakes should be attached to the concluding sessions, to ensure a higher degree of attendance and engagement. For example, impressions from the open microphone could more dynamically be captured to generate a report that precedes the Taking Stock input. Indeed, Day Zero reports could also be presented at this time should an earlier session not be identified.

Do you think there should be thematic tracks as there were in 2019? Please indicate if you believe the three 2019 thematic tracks should be retained (digital inclusion; data governance; and security, safety, stability and resilience). If not, what should take their place or what theme should be added?

Thematic tracks limit desirable discussions. In the previous IGF, the addition of sub-themes helped attendants better navigate the event, which should be the purpose of such measures. This likely also helps the MAG avoid thematic overlap during the selection process. **Sub-themes should be brought back in favor of thematic tracks.**

Programme content (workshops, main sessions, high level sessions, open forums, other sessions, speakers)

The way Main sessions are organized should be rethought. Some options: A) employ them to expose the community to less beaten/traditional themes relevant to Internet Governance, opening doors for new debates; B) focus on engaging with the intersessional groups, to provide them with a bigger stage to discuss their outcomes and projects.

IGF 2020 participants

In relation to the sponsorship of participants, if opportunities arise again in the future in which States want to fund community members to attend the event, **a much more expedited and transparent process needs to be put in place** for the returns to the community to be maximized.

The people who list themselves as a **“Resource Person” should receive more exposure on the IGF’s website.** This is a resource that too few members of the community know about and that can help leverage the participation of more stakeholders. For example, a note could be included in the submission form about this feature and session organizers could be invited to try it out. It’s an idea that comes at zero cost and could generate good returns. Attendees should also be encouraged to realistically signal their availability for that year’s event.

Furthermore, **private sector and government participation needs to continue to be stimulated.** These actors have reduced their presence at the IGF as the years have gone by; their presence is essential for the legitimacy and growth of IGF debates and discussions.

Any other comments on the IGF 2020

The IGF's website remains problematic, and incremental changes have not been able to address core issues. Community members constantly cite issues with inability to perform basic tasks due to how it is organized, and a full redesign that meets current webdesign practices and standards would be the least that could be expected from the website of a forum intended to debate the Internet. This is a top priority that is rarely debated and which absolutely needs to be taken seriously.

In terms of financing, the continuation of the vision that the IGF is something fairly ad-hoc does not make sense considering the scope of the issues being addressed. To establish a proper functioning environment that would be able to deal with the massive challenges that lie ahead requires not only commitment from the stakeholders, but **the UN itself needs to evaluate what its role is in an IGF environment, including starting to dedicate funds to the IGF and its projects.** While it should not be made into a specific agency, it should also not be something appended to the UN on an ad-hoc basis either.

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