

The Next 10 Years

The IGF as a Bridge Between Two Worlds

APrIGF

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Content:

- Background and context
- The first ten years: tensions and progress
- The renewal of the IGF mandate
- Outlook on the next 10 years

Internet Governance - a long history



- Past 30 years the Internet has transformed from being mainly for academic and scientific communities to containing immense social and economic impacts on society
- Governments now consider it to be a significant part of their infrastructure

The Internet as a bone of contention

- The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) put a new issue on the agenda of international cooperation: the Internet.
- Recognition of the importance of the Internet as backbone of globalization.
- Clash between the private sector / Internet community and governments.
- Two visions of the world:
 - Bottom-up distributed cooperation vs.
 - Classical intergovernmental cooperation.

The Internet and Internet Governance

The Internet is:

- Built on basic libertarian and democratic axioms
- Deployed outside sphere of government influence
- Its distributed governance model is adapted to the distributed underlying technology
- Based on voluntary collaboration
- With bottom-up decision-making processes

An inherent tension

- The Internet as a borderless technology clashes with the international order, based on the Westphalian model and the UN Charter.
- Some countries are comfortable with the Internet model...
- ...others are not and would like the Internet to respect national sovereignty.

The 90s

- Internet Governance was confined to a circle of insiders
- Two opposed approaches:
 - One approach hands-off and bottom-up:
 - let the technology develop and let technologists get on with their job
 - One approach hands-on and top down
 - bringing the Internet under intergovernmental control, preferably under a UN umbrella (like trade, health, climate change, development, disarmament, human rights etc).

WSIS Phase I

- Goal of WSIS: for Governments to come together to find global solutions for a major challenge
- WSIS: apply traditional governance model for ICTs driven by the Internet
- Geneva Declaration created terms 'Internet governance' and notion of multistakeholder governance
- Formation of Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG)

WSIS Phase II

- Held in Tunis in 2005
- Influenced by WGIG methodology – more open and inclusive
- Governments by and large endorsed WGIG report
- Recognized that “existing arrangements for Internet governance have worked effectively”
- Agreed to convene a new Forum for multistakeholder policy dialogue” – the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)
- Identified need for “enhanced cooperation”

Working Definition of Internet Governance

“A working definition of internet governance is the development and application by governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the internet.”

WGIG Report/Tunis Agenda, para. 34

What does it mean?

- More than naming (DNS) and addressing (allocation of IP addresses).
- Public policy issues related to the physical and logical infrastructure of the Internet.
- Public policy issues related to the use (and abuse) of the Internet.
- Based on multi-stakeholder cooperation.

Rationale for a new Forum

“The WGIG identified a vacuum within the context of existing structures, since there is no global multi-stakeholder forum to address Internet-related public policy issues. It came to the conclusion that there would be merit in creating such a space for dialogue among all stakeholders. This space could address these issues, as well as emerging issues, that are cross-cutting and multidimensional and that either affect more than one institution, are not dealt with by any institution or are not addressed in a coordinated manner. “

WGIG Report Para 40:

The IGF as a bridge between two worlds

In Tunis, Heads of State and government felt there was a need to continue the dialogue on internet governance in a new setting.

They created a dialogue between two worlds:

- The world of the Internet community
(technical community, business, civil society)
- The world of governments

IGF: Not a traditional UN process

- The IGF serves to bring people together from various stakeholder groups as equals, but not to make decisions or negotiate
- IGF may not have decision-making abilities, it informs and inspires those who do have the capacity to make decisions.
- Dialogue has evolved and matured from Athens to Joao Pessoa.
- IGF has created trust among participants and created a sense of community.

A synthesis between UN and multistakeholder processes

The IGF can be seen as a synthesis between the top-down and hands-off approaches.

It has the legitimacy of a UN process – it is a platform convened by the Secretary-General of the UN.

It has the credibility of a multistakeholder process – the participation of all stakeholders contributes to the relevance of the discussions: experts on technical, societal, political, economic aspects of Internet governance participate as equals.

IGF Funding

- The IGF is not a UN programme
- It is not part of the regular UN budget
- It is a so-called extra-budgetary project
- The IGF Secretariat is funded through voluntary contributions

Advantage: more flexibility than a regular UN programme

Disadvantage: uncertainty about funding

- The annual meeting is funded mostly by the Host Country

The IGF mandate

Paragraph 72 of the Tunis Agenda:

Key sub-paragraph:

“Discuss public policy issues related to key elements of Internet governance in order to foster the sustainability, robustness, security, stability and development of the Internet.”

- a. => A platform for dialogue, NOT a decision making organisation!

What is the IGF about?

- IGF provides a space for a structured policy dialogue on Internet related public policy issues.
- IGF provides a platform for sharing best practices at national and regional levels.
- IGF provides a neutral meeting place for all relevant institutions – IGOs and ‘Internet institutions’.
- IGF helps build trust and confidence among all Internet users

IGF Methodology

- Exchange of information.
- Sharing of best practices.
- Think globally, act locally.
- No one size fits all solutions.
- Solutions adapted to the needs of each country.

A multidimensional debate

The IGF has shown that there are several dimensions to the debate:

1. Polity -- Government-led top down approach vs. multistakeholder bottom-up collaboration
2. Geopolitical – role of one dominant super power
3. Developmental – digital divide
4. Economic –perceived loss of telco revenues and dominance of big multinational players
5. Technological – circuit switching vs. packet switching
6. Cultural – dominance of one language and culture vs. cultural and linguistic diversity.

The Internet Governance Forum as an experiment

- Based on the convening power of the UN.
- ‘Soft governance’ approach.
- IGF has no decision-making power, no power of redistribution.
- IGF has the power of recognition:
 - can identify issues of concern;
 - can draw attention to an issue;
 - can put an issue on the agenda of international cooperation.
- -Can shape public opinion and decision making.

Strengths and weaknesses

Different views on strengths and weaknesses:

- Some see lack of decision-making power as a weakness:
 - They want the IGF to produce concrete results and ‘tangible outputs’.
- Others see it as a strength:
 - The lack of decision-making power creates a space for open dialogue.

Different interpretations of the IGF mandate

- Para 72 g: “...and, where appropriate, make recommendations”.
- Language negotiated by diplomats.
- Meaning of where appropriate in diplo speak: Never, or only over my dead body!
- Different interpretation by different stakeholders: some of them want “tangible outcomes”!

2010: First renewal of the IGF mandate

- Criticism of the IGF as a “talking shop”.
- The IGF does not produce outcomes, just talk (“talking shop”).
- Extension of the mandate for another 5 years.
- But: CSTD WG on IGF improvement

CSTD WG on IGF Improvement

- Many good suggestions.
- General thrust towards producing more “tangible outcomes”.
- Most recommendations not resource neutral.
- Open questions:
 - how to implement recommendations? How to resource implementation?

IGF evolution since 2010

- The IGF has evolved and matured.
- There is now an IGF community.
- Participants are more comfortable to address delicate issues (eg. surveillance in 2013).
- Spread of National/Regional IGFs.
- Intersessional activities:
 - Best Practice Forums
 - Thematic stream (CNB)
 - Dynamic Coalitions

Preliminary Conclusion:

- The first 10 years confirmed the value of a multi-stakeholder dialogue.
- Win-win situation for all stakeholders.
- There is value involved for all participants:
 - Technologists and business can showcase and explain innovations and learn about concerns of other stakeholders.
 - Civil society and governments can learn about technology and voice concerns about problematic developments.

New mandate 2015-2025

- UN General Assembly in 2015 renewed IGF mandate for another 10 years.
- Positive development: more room to develop multi-year work programme and secure funding.
- IGF retreat on 14-16 July in Glen Cove:
 - Confirmed trend towards more intersessional activities and multi-year work programme.
 - Closer linkages to to other relevant organisations.
 - Alignment with SDGs

Tangible vs intangible outputs

- Tangible outputs:
 - Chairman's Summary
 - BPF outcomes and other reports
- Intangible outputs:
 - Education
 - Capacity building
 - Networking
 - Marketing

Role of the IGF

- The IGF has no decision-making power, but...
- The IGF can:
 - Shape the decisions of who have the power to change the Internet.

IGF beyond 2025

- Will there be a need for the IGF beyond 2025? Or...
- ... will all the issues the IGF is dealing with have been solved by then?
- ...will there be need for a new “Super Internet Organisation” with decision-making powers?
- Maybe not. But the Internet will have evolved and new problems will emerge.
- **Prediction:** There will be continued need for multistakeholder dialogue, be that in the IGF or on a different platform!

Future of the Internet

- Ultimately, discussions about the future of the IGF are part of the debate of what kind of Internet we want.
- Do we want an Internet that is:
 - Open, global and interoperable?
 - Based on innovation without permission?
- Do we accept the risks that come with an open Internet?
- Or do we want an Internet that is above all secure and respects national borders?