Contribution to the "Retreat on Advancing the 10-Year Mandate of the Internet Governance Forum" from the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), 1 July 2016

This document provides inputs on the agenda items that will be discussed at the "Retreat on Advancing the 10-Year Mandate of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)" to be held in New York from 14 to 16 July 2016. It also presents some recommendations on the process for the Retreat.

1) What are some ways to:

Improve the overall preparatory process of the IGF

Much improvement has already taken place and should be sustained, this includes:
- Use of working groups in which non-MAG members participate.
- Intersessional work, including Best Practice Forums (BPFs)
- Assigning secretariat personnel to support MAG working groups, particularly on BPFs.

For consideration in the future we propose:

- Engaging the support professional event designers/and or facilitators with expertise in planning and managing large participatory events.
- Mapping relevant policy discussions that the IGF could feed into as part of the preparatory process.
- 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.
- As a means of encouraging government participation, proactively consulting with intergovernmental bodies on issues they would like to see discussed at the IGF.

Suggestions for the programme (some of which are already being implemented):

- A more effective structure for the IGF would be to have two days of workshops followed by two days of main sessions interspersed with round tables and best practice forums.
- The norm should be not to have main sessions and workshops at the same time.
- We suggest that the MAG extract sub- themes based on the initial proposals submitted, allowing the programme to be guided by the IGF community.
- Recycling of core themes into main sessions/plenaries needs to be revisited - rather use plenaries for synthesis, cross cutting and emerging issues.
- With regard to workshops we recommend that the MAG solicit initial session topic ideas without proposers needing to identify a full list of panellists, a practice that sometime results in false listings.
- 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.
- To ensure a fuller range of issues relating to 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. This can be done by IGF staff/MAG participating in, for example, the SDG process.
- A main session on IG for development constructed around issues that emerged from workshops that have taken place over the previous two days could contribute to address IG and development issues in a more comprehensive and effective way.
- 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.

Improve the nomination process and make-up of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) and the appointment process for the IGF-MAG Chair

- Maintain rotation of MAG members. Exceptions can be made but should be made transparently.
- Develop terms of reference and criteria for the selection of a MAG chairperson and make use of a nomination committee (nomcom) process in which all stakeholder participate to develop a slate of names for the Secretary General's consideration.
- Names of potential chairpersons should be made public, as should the criteria used for selection. MAG members and the broader IGF community should have the opportunity to weigh in on the candidate through the nomcom process.
- The position of MAG chairperson should rotate among stakeholder groups and regional groupings.
- Consider having co-chairs 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 co-chairs 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.

Strengthen the IGF support structures

The IGF and the United Nations:

- Its birth out of a UN summit and its ongoing relationship with the UN system (as an intergovernmental body) is a source of legitimacy which should be valued. We believe the IGF should remain under the UN umbrella but retain its autonomy. In fact, in some respects, it would be good if it could have more.[1]

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1   For example participants from the Republic of China should not be excluded from participation in the annual event. Precedent for this exists in the UN system through the World Health Organisation having granted them observer status under the name "Chinese Taipei".

- The secretariat should remain in Geneva. This enables them to maintain and further develop close relations with the other UN agencies there or nearby e.g. the Commission for Science and Technology for Development, the International Telecommunications Union, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Command, UNESCO, WIPO and the WTO. Geneva is also more centrally accessible than New York and staff from developing country missions more likely to have the knowledge and capacity to address internet-related issues.

Decision-making, accountability and governance:

- APC's understanding is that the MAG is responsible for guiding the organisation of the event, and that the Secretariat is accountable to UNDESA. It is an advisory body that provides advice on the IGF event.
- However, accountability relationships are not clear and there is no common understanding – even within the MAG - of whether its mandate does or does not extend beyond organising the annual event and intersessional work.
- The Special Advisor and the Executive Secretary have not been replaced and still leaves a gap in spite of the increased capacity and performance of IGF staff.
- There is a funding group which seems to be made up only of representatives of member states donor companies/institutions who contribute to the IGF UN Trust Fund.
- There is no multistakeholder and regionally diverse group that plays either an advisory or oversight role in relation to the IGF function, process and secretariat.
- We recommend that a special advisor be appointed and/or an executive secretary appointed to play a leadership and political role.
- We also recommend that a second, smaller advisory group be established, made up of no more than 12 individuals. It could work with senior secretariat staff, UNDESA personnel (the oversight agency) and include MAG members (in particular the chairperson or persons). It could even be a subset of the MAG although its members should ideally not rotate as frequently as MAG members do. Members can be identified through a nom-com process.
- We suggest that the structure and function of such a group be discussed at the IGF retreat/ It should at least include advice and support on the following:
  - Fundraising, budgeting, and financial sustainability
  - Staffing
  - Inter institutional relationships (e.g. with other UN agencies)
  - Monitoring and evaluation including of implementation of the recommendations that emerge from the retreat
  - Dealing with contentious issues

2) What measures can be taken to engage those stakeholders who are currently unengaged, with a view to expand and diversify physical and virtual participation?

- Mechanisms for ensuring stakeholder participation has become too formulaic and tokenistic. Speakers at events should have a real stake in the issue being discussed,

and not just simply be a representative of a particular stakeholder group. The workshop template should be revised to help address this.

- Language is still a barrier to local participation. More English /local language interpretation in workshops in would help (it is already practice in main sessions).

Participation of people of all genders:

- Gender balance needs to be given more consideration in composition of panels.

Diversification of participation:

- An IGF which is just for IG insiders is not without value, but will not achieve its full potential. This is particularly true as the range of internet-related public policy issues is constantly expanding.
- Ensure that the IGF agenda responds to issues that matter to under-represented groups. They 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.
- The IGF should find a way to balance taking into account the priorities and particularities of different regions while continuing to address global issues.
- Budget should be allocated for inviting keynote speakers for main sessions so that their selection is based on expertise rather than on 'they are attending already'.
- Participation by diverse stakeholders need to also be reflected through substantive integration of perspectives in the discussions/panels/forums. One way of doing this is by getting them as panellists, but another way is to also direct workshop/session organisers to think about this and include this in their session proposals.

Participation from the global South:

- It is necessary to increase participation from developing countries from all stakeholder groups. This requires investment of effort around many actors, including developing country governments. We propose that the MAG initiates 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.

Virtual participation:

- The excellent record of the IGF in this respect should be maintained and extended, e.g. through providing transcripts and facilitating remote hubs.
- All session facilitators should scan the twitter feed, incorporating questions and comments, as a means of widening opportunity for remote participation.

Choice of location and host countries:

- Hosting the IGF in countries that clearly flaunt and violate many of the WSIS principles, which includes respect for fundamental human rights, should be avoided. If such an instances arises it is important for MAG members and UNDESA to engage with diverse stakeholders in the potential host country before a decision is finalised.
- Having an event in a city without an international airport increases costs, as does having it in a location where there is no low cost accommodation.
- Predictability and advance knowledge of host countries will increase participation and enable advance planning of the many pre-, side- and linked events people convene around the IGF. We recommend that host countries are secured and made known three to four years in advance.

3) What are the ways we can better capture the outputs of the IGF and 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:

Improving the presentation and dissemination of the outcomes of this work online and translating it to extend its reach.

Facilitating 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.
- Populating the NETmundial Solutions Map with information submitted and emerging from IGFs.
- Building on the current practice of ensuring linkages with other institutions and mechanisms (e.g. convening meetings of the CSTD Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation at the IGF, or using BPFs to contribute to the work of, for example, UN Women 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.
- Having round-table discussions at the IGF aimed at building consensus on issues [such as access or child protection], which can be taken forward as messages to other fora/processes.
- 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.
- The MAG could expand its role 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.

- Encouraging and facilitating the media's presence at the IGF. Media presence has been uneven.

4) What modalities should be put in place to ensure sustained funding to support the IGF process and the IGF Secretariat?

- Transparency should be maintained and funding should not be linked to any influence over the structure, function of programme of the IGF.
- The work of the IGF Support Association as a mechanisms for smaller contributions should be acknowledge and supported.
- A voluntary donation made as part of the registration process should be considered.

5) How can the IGF better support the work of national and regional IGF initiatives (NRIs) and how can synergies between the IGF and NRIs and amongst NRIs be increased?

- NRIs 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. The secretariat and MAC can facilitate this.
- Fostering 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.

6) What are other issues, if any, that could be discussed at the Retreat?

- Creating a mechanism linked to the IGF that addresses governments' expressed need for a forum to discuss internet related public policy issues.
- Establishing mechanisms for closer collaboration with initiatives such as the NETmundial Initiative
- Structure and governance as mentioned above. This includes the Special Advisor/Executive Secretary role, and a possible second, smaller, advisory body to work with the secretariat and UNDESA on IGF sustainability and operations.

- How host governments and UN personnel respond to to peaceful protest or the distribution of literature critical of UN member states during an IGF.
- The idea of thematic IGFs focusing on specific topics as intersessional events.
- Strengthening the capacity building dimension of the IGF and establishing closer relationships with the IGF schools (EuroSSIG; AfriSIG; the South School and APSIG).
- Pre-events play a significant capacity building role and should continue to be supported.

Recommendations on the IGF retreat of 15 and 16 July 2016

APC recommends that the retreat:

- Not be seen as something that makes decisions, but as a brain storming platform that will generate ideas to be discussed with the IGF community.
- Build on the work of the CSTD working group on IGF improvements.
- Starts with a detailed exposition of the current structure and function and mandates of all role players in the IGF.
- Facilitates remote participation. This should be done by whatever means possible, even if it is just through a twitter feed and through posting a summary of day one's proceedings and asking for input that can be incorporated on day two.
- It is important to maintain transparency and participation.
- That outputs be open for comments and inputs by everyone
- That there be clarity around what happens next with these outputs - roles and responsibilities and process.