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**Submissions from entities in the United Nations system, international
organizations and other stakeholders on their efforts in 2023 to
implement the outcomes of the WSIS**

Submission by

Internet Governance Forum

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 27th session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

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

2023 Input from the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

I. Executive Summary

The 18th IGF was held from 8 to 12 October 2023 in Kyoto, Japan. The meeting marked the eighth global multistakeholder gathering of the Forum since the renewal of the IGF's mandate for 10 years by the UN General Assembly¹. Under the overarching theme, '*The Internet We Want – Empowering All People*', the IGF was once again a key platform for advancing digital policy discussions on the global scale, responding specifically to the challenges raised by new developments in Artificial Intelligence, data governance, rights and security online, and the urgent need for an equitable and sustainable digital transformation of societies.

During the five-day meeting, more than 11,000 delegates from 178 countries² participated in over 300 sessions. 6,279 participants attended onsite, making the 18th IGF the largest-ever physical gathering in its history. The programme was developed in a bottom-up and inclusive manner on the basis of public inputs and with a view to enhancing wide-ranging and diverse multistakeholder engagement. Its lively and productive discussions were supported by a variety of interactive session formats, a longstanding feature of the meeting.

The IGF is unique as a multistakeholder, open forum [convened by the United Nations Secretary General](#) that brings together stakeholders on an equal footing. Its UN mandate gives it convening power and the authority to serve as a neutral space. Exchanges throughout the 18th IGF week recognised the important role digital technologies continue to play for economic and social development, as well as the rapid changes in the digital landscape, particularly around generative AI, that demand unprecedentedly innovative and adaptive governance frameworks. The IGF's transparent and inclusive multistakeholder approaches were critical for identifying, discussing and proposing solutions on these complex issues.

IGF is also a year-round process whose intersessional impacts resound beyond the annual meetings. Work carried out by the Secretariat and multidisciplinary contributors on a spectrum of issues responds to needs and fills policy gaps year on year, with activities leading into the 18th IGF focused on AI, Cybersecurity, Internet Fragmentation, and Meaningful Access. The continued growth this year of grassroots national and regional IGFs, with representation in close to all the world's countries, and of voluntary, issue-specific dynamic coalitions, stands as an enduring endorsement of the IGF model. Meanwhile, the IGF's Leadership Panel, only in its second year, has raised the Forum's profile and contributed to its fundraising capabilities.

Expanding stakeholder engagement, specifically of under-represented groups and into vital political and institutional decision-making spheres; fostering new policy discourses; and strengthening working modalities to make the IGF ever-more accessible and visible; constitute main areas of progress for the Forum 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/filedepot_download/300/26575

With emphasis on improving working modalities, the IGF's preparatory and intersessional activities 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 reporting period also includes the relevant intersessional activity and convening of the 17th IGF in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, titled '*Resilient Internet for a Shared, Sustainable and Common Future*', on whose successes, substantively and organisationally, the most recent IGF has built.

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 framework for progress. These recommendations, namely, are 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.

While 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: the former suggests a "strengthened and enhanced Internet Governance Forum Plus" as a potential model for addressing gaps in global digital cooperation and outlines specific measures for "making the Internet Governance Forum more responsive and relevant to current digital issues"; the latter identifies the Forum as a key actor in protecting the online space and calls for it "to adapt, innovate and reform to support effective governance of the digital commons"⁴.

Follow-up discussions on the 'Global Digital Compact' (GDC) proposed in Our Common Agenda have concluded the IGF would play an important role in the GDC's implementation, "providing knowledge on issues and sectoral information, guidance and practical expertise to facilitate dialogue and action on agreed objectives"⁵.

As one of the major outcomes of the WSIS process, 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.

Looking ahead to the WSIS+20 Review and the possibility of its extension in 2025, the IGF is both recommitted to its mandate – which it has fulfilled and, in many respects, surpassed, in tandem with the evolution of digital issues – and recommitted to the continuous progress suggested by the above processes.

Improving Tangible Outcomes and Visibility of the IGF

The past year has seen the Forum continue to increase its visibility and high-level engagement, including and particularly of governments. At the 2022 IGF, seventeen ministers and vice-ministers took part in a dedicated high-level track alongside senior-level multistakeholder experts. In 2023, government

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

⁴ <https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/igf-and-core-un-agendas>

⁵ <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-gobal-digi-compact-en.pdf>

representatives of no fewer than 105 countries attended the IGF onsite, as well as eighty-seven high-level experts, more than thirty of whom were speakers in topical high-level sessions. The high-level track in 2023 consisted of five sessions focused on ‘data free flow with trust’ (DFFT), mis- and dis-information, WSIS+20 and the future of digital governance, digital technologies for accelerating the SDGs, and AI. Ceremonial segments in both the 2022 and 2023 IGFs were presided over by the highest-level leadership from the United Nations, represented by the Secretary-General António Guterres, and of the host countries, represented by their heads of government, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia and Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan. Prime Minister Kishida was also a keynote speaker in the meeting’s special session on AI.

The parliamentary tracks at the 17th and 18th IGFs added to previous years’ gains by enhancing preparatory activities and numbers of participating legislators. The lead-up to Addis Ababa featured a parliamentary symposium resulting in the establishment of an African Parliamentary Network on Internet Governance and 35 countries represented at the annual meeting. Capacity-building workshops were held at regional IGFs in Africa and Asia-Pacific preceding the 18th IGF in 2023, with 38 countries represented by legislators in Kyoto. Tangible output documents issued from the discussions among international parliamentarians, both as contributions to the meetings’ main outcome “Messages” and as standalone outputs – thereby fulfilling the commitment laid out in the *Roadmap* to establish such tracks, “ensuring more actionable outcomes”.

Media visibility of the IGF continues to enjoy an upward trajectory. The Forum generated over 2,300 news and media articles in 2022 and more than 200,000 social media posts, a nearly twenty-fold increase over the previous year. The 2023 Forum saw wide-ranging, mainstream print and broadcast publicity, with coverage in all major Japanese as well as several international news outlets.

The “Addis Ababa IGF Messages”⁶ resulting from the 17th IGF were widely disseminated. Submitted as an input to the GDC process, they were frequently cited over the course of related thematic consultations. The recently produced “Kyoto IGF Messages”⁷ are currently open for stakeholder review and feedback.

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 2022 programme took an issue-driven approach to programme design, aligning its themes closely with the GDC and situating the Forum as a platform for inputs to the Compact. The 2023 programme similarly aligned with the GDC, hosting numerous sessions from stakeholders in preparation for GDC as well as WSIS+20 negotiations, reflecting the IGF’s function as a “platform of platforms”.

The IGF Leadership Panel was appointed by the Secretary-General in August 2022 in fulfilment of the *Roadmap*’s recommendation to create “a strategic and empowered multistakeholder high-level body” tied to the Forum. In little over one year, the fifteen-member Panel has vigorously carried forward its mandate by focusing on the amplification of the IGF’s activities and outputs, providing strategic advice to and working closely with the IGF MAG, and contributing to the scope of the IGF’s digital policy impact with the release of a vision paper on the “Internet We Want”⁸. It has also placed special emphasis on fundraising, with specific initiatives to bolster contributions to the IGF’s extrabudgetary Trust Fund. The Panel has met several times, notably with in-person meetings in Vienna, Geneva and New York over the course of 2023, in addition to periodic virtual meetings.

⁶ <https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/addis-ababa-igf-messages-1>

⁷ <https://intgovforum.org/en/content/kyoto-messages>

⁸ <https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/the-internet-we-want>

2022 and 2023 extended improvements with regards to fundraising. As components of an “innovative and viable fundraising strategy”, outreach to new and underrepresented donors was undertaken and communication to donors enhanced through detailed 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 2022 and 2023 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 2022, 140 individuals from least developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and small island developing states (SIDs) were able to meaningfully participate in IGF through financial support to attend the annual meeting. In 2023, roughly the same number received this support.

The IGF’s emphasis on youth has gone from strength to strength. Thousands of young people participated in the IGF 2023 Youth Track, led by Youth IGF coordinators and international youth-focused organisations in dialogues on how digital transformation affects different parts of the world. Young people also continue to be integrated in key parts of the IGF meeting, including its high-level track, and as MAG members. As with the development of a dedicated Parliamentary Track, the IGF Youth Track is an affirmation of the indispensability of this group’s perspectives and priorities in digital decision-making.

2023 was yet another record-breaking year for IGF annual meeting participation. Over 11,000 stakeholders joined discussions at the 18th IGF, including nearly 6,300 onsite in Kyoto. This amounted to the highest number of in-person attendees in the IGF’s history, following on the highest-ever number of session proposals received in advance of the meeting.

Cooperation with Other Internet Governance Related Entities

In 2021, the IGF inaugurated a high-level, UN-only session on UN System support to sustainable digital transformation. Intended as 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 cooperation within the System, the 2022 meeting resumed the discussion with a session focused on strengthened institutional linkages ahead of the GDC. Among many others, agencies engaged have included ECLAC, UNCTED, UNESCO, UNIDIR, WIPO and the World Bank, as well as those not traditionally associated with digital policy discussions, such as UNFCCC, UNFPA and FAO. Through the WSIS process, the IGF maintains close ties with the ITU and UNCTAD.

Intersessional communication with UN agencies has redoubled thanks to increased participation in the IGF’s biannual open consultations. Nearly fifteen UN entities briefed stakeholders at the IGF’s First and Second Open Consultations in March and July 2023.

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 organised 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 recognised initiatives has more than doubled from 43 NRIs at the end of 2015 to a current record of more than 150 [recognised NRIs](#). The NRIs are active and immensely useful contributors to the IGF's intersessional activities. The linkages between the NRIs and the IGF have increased significantly, due to many joint work activities such as the organisation of sessions held during the annual IGFs; work on organising 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 [NRIs' regular fortnightly meetings](#) also serve as valuable and tangible inputs to the global IGF, providing more local 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)]⁹, 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 2022 and 2023, the IGF furthered its issue-specific policy work with respective [Policy Networks](#) on Internet Fragmentation (PNIF), Meaningful Access (PNMA) and Artificial Intelligence (PNAI), the latter inaugurated this past year. Since its launch, the PNAI has successfully harnessed the strong popular momentum and interest behind AI-related issues to bring visibility to its activities.

[The IGF's Best Practice Forums \(BPFs\)](#), meanwhile, continue to offer unique platforms to investigate topical digital policy challenges by collecting stakeholders' input and experiences in a flexible and bottom-up manner. The BPFs gather knowledge that exist with different groups, organisations, experts and individuals, made available as a useful resource in the form of tangible Best Practice outcome documents. The BPF processes create temporary platforms for people to discuss, interact and collaborate on one specific digital governance issue. They foster interaction between existing stakeholders and new stakeholder groups from all geographic regions.

Through their substantive outreach efforts and continued calls for input and contributions, the BPFs enabled more diverse and varied participation in IGF processes, including from a richer variety of regions and stakeholder groups. By continuously involving new people in their work, the various BPFs also contributed to enlarging the global footprint of the IGF. As part of 2022 community intersessional activities, BPFs focused on Gender and Digital Rights and Cybersecurity, and in 2023, exclusively on Cybersecurity. BPFs worked throughout the year in an open and inclusive way via open mailing lists, regular virtual meetings and BPF workshops during the 17th and 18th IGF meetings.

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 2022 and 2023 leading up to the IGF's annual meetings. 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. In 2023, the DCs also agreed on a [Charter](#), which outlines the principles and common guidelines of the Dynamic Coalitions, such a basic principles, obligations, membership governance, and mission and vision of the DCs. The Charter will be reviewed every year to reflect new realities that impact DCs' operations, a better understanding of the DC's needs, and evolving policy landscapes. As with other parts of the IGF Community, DCs are growing steadily, with 28 in 2023.

Some specific efforts undertaken to improve working modalities included:

⁹ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/RES/2018/28

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 action implementable in the short and medium term on how to strengthen the IGF and position it strategically vis à vis developments in digital cooperation. The working group has driven the MAG's collaboration with the IGF Leadership Panel on IGF inputs and relationship to the GDC process. An additional MAG working group on Workshops Process (WG-WSP) contributed significantly in 2023 to the qualitative success of the 18th IGF programme, comprised of traditional workshops and other sessions.