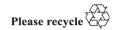E/CN.16/2014/CRP.2

**Commission on Science and Technology
for Development (CSTD)**
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Report of the IGF Secretariat to the CSTD[*]

Ongoing Implementation of the Recommendations of the Working Group on Improvements to the Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

April 2014

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[*] This document has been submitted by the IGF Secretariat and is being circulated as received.

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Background

1. This report intends to provide the CSTD with details of some of the actions taken by the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Secretariat, The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) of the IGF in response to the recommendations of the CSTD Working Group on Improvements to the IGF[1], which have been actively implemented since adopted by the UN General Assembly in December 2012.

Introduction and Executive Summary

2. In all of its various working activities since its creation in 2006, the IGF has endeavored to fulfill its mandate by providing an open and inclusive multi-stakeholder platform to address policy issues related to the Internet. The 9th annual meeting of the IGF will take place in Istanbul, Turkey from 2–5 September 2014. Brazil has already offered to host the 10th IGF in 2015. The IGF today has firmly established itself as the essential place where the vast Internet governance community gathers to share experiences and exchange information.

3. Since its inception in 2006, the IGF has implemented a continuous improvement process with a review of "what worked well and what did not" in the open consultations after each Annual IGF meeting. The IGF has created a sense of community that allows discussions of challenging issues in an open and frank manner. Part of the value of the multi-stakeholder approach is both agreeing and disagreeing on various issues and encouraging participants to show respect and listen to each other's arguments, positions and needs, and the IGF provides this unique space.

4. The IGF Secretariat, UNDESA and the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) facilitate the creation of this unique space by constantly responding and reacting accordingly to the requests and suggestions from all stakeholder groups. The work of the CSTD Working Group on Improvements to the IGF, which indeed was made up of individuals representing all stakeholder groups, formalized many of these requests and suggestions.

5. After the recommendations were formally adopted, the IGF began to implement them and the preparatory work for the 8th annual IGF meeting in Bali in 2013 was guided by many of them. Dedicated working groups were established within the MAG specifically to ensure full implementation.

6. This year is the IGF's ninth year and is a pivotal year for Internet governance. The accelerated pace of Internet governance discussions in 2014–2015 is exemplified by the many major conferences (World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC), NETmundial, WSIS Review, ITU Plenipotentiary, and others) shaping the future agenda, with some of them aiming to restructure existing arrangements. The IGF, guided by the recommendations of the CSTD Working Group, is working actively to contribute to the shaping of a new international consensus on Internet governance.

7. In 2013, the first year that the recommendations were in place, the IGF Secretariat, UNDESA and the MAG were able to implement many of the recommendations that

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[1] UN Document Symbol A/67/65–E/2012/48, available at: http://unctad.org/meetings/en/ SessionalDocuments/a67d65_en.pdf.

funding permitted. The IGF began some new working initiatives and evolved and matured accordingly. Continued improvements are well underway in 2014 and implementation efforts will continue on a rolling basis in all five key areas outlined in the Working Group's report, namely:

I.   Shaping the outcomes of IGF meetings;

II.   Working modalities including open consultations, the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group and the Secretariat;

III.   Funding of the IGF;

IV.   Broadening participation and capacity-building;

V.   Linking the IGF to other Internet governance-related entities.

8.   The next section of the report outlines some of the work done in response to all five areas specified by the Working Group in 2013 as well as the ongoing work underway in 2014.

9.   The Italicized text at the beginning of each section is extracted verbatim from the final report of the Working Group. For full details of each specific recommendation made under the five categories, readers may refer to the full report of the CSTD Working Group on IGF improvements. Up-to-date information on the ongoing activities of the IGF can be found on the IGF website[2].

I.   Shaping the outcomes of IGF meetings

10.   While maintaining the IGF as a non-binding, non-decision-making and non-duplicative forum, it is important to improve the quality and format of IGF outcomes to enhance the impact of the IGF on global Internet governance and policy. For this purpose, it is necessary that IGF outcomes clearly reflect the full diversity of opinions on key policy issues of the multi-stakeholder IGF community. In addition, more tangible and visible IGF outcomes combined with enhanced communication tools and strategy would also improve outreach.

Actions:

11.   One recommendation outlined in the report of the Working Group was the formulation of specific policy questions to guide discussions during the annual meetings. This was already a practice that had been taken up in the preparatory processes for annual meetings in the past. The Secretariat, together with the MAG, enhanced this process in 2013. Traditionally, each main session had a set of questions that are posed to the panelists and audience and are meant to guide the discussion. These questions were usually formulated by the relevant session organizers and MAG at large.

12.   In the 2013 cycle the Secretariat made a public call for inputs regarding specific questions that stakeholders wanted to address during the focus sessions at the 8th IGF. The Secretariat then compiled and synthesized these questions. The questions were then posted to the IGF website and were addressed during each of the focus sessions. The Chairman's Summary paper mapped out many of the divergent and convergent opinions on specific policy questions that each of the sessions addressed.

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[2] http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/.

13.   The Secretariat, in line with past practice, made publicly available the transcripts of the meetings, and the Chair's Report for the 2013 meeting. A book which compiled and summarized together all of the transcripts, workshop reports and other relevant documentation of the 2012 meeting was also made available and posted to the IGF website. This has been the standard practice since the first IGF meeting and will continue moving forward. The book containing the edited transcripts, workshop reports and other relevant information on the 8th IGF will be made available in the spring of 2014.

14.   The IGF Secretariat makes all of its outcome documentation available on the IGF website for public viewing and download.

15.   In 2013, the Secretariat strengthened its social media outreach to increase the visibility and availability of IGF outcomes. Work is ongoing to further improve the visibility of the IGF. In 2014, a more formal partnership has been established between the IGF Secretariat and the UNDESA social media team to help increase the visibility of the IGF processes. MAG members and other members of the IGF community also contribute to disseminating relevant information via various social media channels, retweeting and forwarding pertinent messages.

16.   In further efforts to implement the recommendations for more tangible outputs at the next annual IGF meeting to held Istanbul, Turkey, the MAG decided at its first physical meeting[3] in Geneva on 19–20 February 2014 to revive the concept of "best-practice" sessions as a way to provide more tangible takeaways for participants. At the 9th IGF, relevant workshops and other events that highlight best-practices in Internet governance will be thoroughly documented and shared with the broader community. Such best practices can then be widely distributed and built upon in other relevant processes, also through the work of IGF dynamic coalitions and National and Regional IGF initiatives if appropriate.

II.   Working modalities including open consultations, the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Group, and the Secretariat

17.   While being focused on themes and specific policy questions, it is important to maintain the overall structure of the IGF, namely main sessions, feeder workshops, workshops, round tables and specific policy questions. However, the working modalities of the IGF, including open consultations, the MAG and the Secretariat, could be improved to ensure the effective impact of IGF multi-stakeholder policy dialogue.

Actions:

18.   In 2013 the Secretariat convened two open consultations and MAG meetings during the 8th IGF cycle as has become tradition and opened up these sessions to all interested stakeholders around the world for active participation via remote participation if they were unable to physically attend the meetings. In addition, the Secretariat made a public call for comments on the IGF website for stakeholder suggestions and comments on how to improve the annual meetings and for suggestions on substantive areas of focus for the 8th IGF.

19.   The Secretariat worked together with the MAG to set the dates for these publicly consultative sessions as far in advance as possible, keeping in mind the goal to hold the

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[3] Full report of the Open Consultations and MAG Meeting that took place on 19-20 February 2014: http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/2014/MAG/Summary_Report.PDF.

sessions during a time that is most appealing to developing country stakeholders. Oftentimes these sessions are held simultaneously or back to back with other major international meetings on similar subjects for this reason.

20. From the close of the second open consultations and MAG meetings up until the 8th IGF in Bali in October, (June–October 2013) the IGF Secretariat convened a series of virtual online MAG meetings to continue preparations for the annual meeting. These important (bimonthly, monthly) meetings, carried out using WebEx technology, allowed the IGF Secretariat and respective MAG working groups to update one another on work being done towards preparations for the annual meeting. Reports of these meetings were made available on the IGF website. This process will continue in 2014, ensuring that the MAG is actively engaged year-round in communicating with their respective stakeholder groups.

21. The recommendations regarding the selection process for the MAG, while primarily being in place during past MAG renewal processes, have been implemented during the latest MAG renewal/selection process initiated by the Secretary General together with the Secretariat for the 2013/2014 cycle. The recommended procedures and guidelines will again be followed in future renewal processes. The Secretariat also produced in early 2014 a clear terms of reference for the MAG to better guide their work.

22. Annual records of MAG physical and remote participation are available on the IGF website in the MAG minutes/summaries archives. An orientation process for new MAG members was implemented during the 2013 May open consultations/MAG meetings where many new MAG members participated for the first time. This process of orienting new MAG members will continue moving forward. Video recordings of all the open consultations and MAG meetings are now being made available on the IGF YouTube station as well.

23. In 2014, the improved working modalities that were put in place during the 2013 cycle have continued. A clear timetable for the preparatory process has been established and all stakeholders have been informed accordingly. In line with the recommendations, the Secretariat issued its call for suggested themes and issues to be addressed at the 9th IGF, well ahead of the first round of open consultations. These themes and issues were then categorized and will be used to organize the workshops in Istanbul.

24. Though clearly contingent on available funding of the IGF trust fund, considerable efforts have been made to strengthen the IGF Secretariat. In January 2014, a full-time "G4" level staff member was added to support the administrative work of the Secretariat based in Geneva. In addition, dedicated consultants have been contracted to further support the activities of the Secretariat and this practice will continue. Fundraising efforts in 2014 will be aimed to raise the necessary funds to support a fully functional Secretariat capable of carrying out the vast IGF mandate.

25. In 2013, an interim chair of the MAG was appointed by the UN to guide the work of the MAG and to act as an effective intermediary between the MAG and the Secretariat. In 2014, this process continued and a new interim-chair was appointed at the open consultations and MAG meeting in February of 2014 for the preparatory work of the 9th IGF.

III. Funding of the IGF

26. Currently, the IGF relies on voluntary funding, including host-country and other in-kind contributions. While maintaining the present funding model, it is important to increase voluntary funding to enhance the long-term predictability and stability of funding

contributions and create continuity of funds for the IGF activities. It is useful to explore additional ways to encourage voluntary contributions, in particular to support participation from developing countries and especially LDCs. Stable, predictable, and voluntary funding should also cover remote participation management and technical expenses. The Secretariat and the host country should work together to ensure the availability of adequate technical and human resources, including a remote moderator. There is an integral relationship between stable, predictable and increased voluntary funding and the implementation of other recommendations of the Working Group.

Actions:

27.   Fundraising efforts for the IGF trust fund has been a primary task of the Secretariat, MAG members, the existing donor community and other stakeholders since the inception of the IGF. Considerable efforts are constantly being made to reach out to new potential donors and to maintain the relationships with existing donors.

28.   Outreach materials and information on how to make donations, both monetary and in-kind, are available on the IGF website. Annual detailed financial reports of the IGF trust fund are always made available to the IGF community via the website[4] and other outreach channels. These reports are also made available and public during open consultation sessions and during physical donors meetings that are held at the annual meetings and during open consultation and MAG meetings.

29.   In 2014, a working group has been established within the donor community to produce a detailed brochure to better equip those undertaking fundraising activities. The brochure will provide a narrative of the IGF project document and broader mandate with a goal to better explain the initiative to those outside of the current IGF stakeholder community. It was also emphasized by the donor community that the National and Regional IGFs should be utilized to bring to the attention of the broader IGF community the importance of contributing to the IGF trust fund.

30.   Donors, both monetary and in-kind, are formally recognized on the IGF website. Host countries are also acknowledged, via consultations with the host countries, in a formal manner. Host country agreements are negotiated with each country to be mutually beneficial for the host and UNDESA.

31.   Throughout 2013, as well as in 2014, the Secretariat and UNDESA have convened a series of meetings of the IGF donor community to try and facilitate activities and new strategies to increase funding for the IGF trust fund. Specifically, on 4 September 2013, members of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) donor community and some other prospective donors met together with staff members of UNDESA/DPADM, IGF Secretariat, the UNDESA Capacity Development Office and the UN Office of Legal Affairs, to discuss and brainstorm how to best carry out fundraising for the various activities of the IGF. Remote participation was made available for those members of the donor community who were unable to attend the meeting in person.

32.   The donor community and relevant UN officials are in agreement that the IGF has greatly matured over the years and while it is bounded by its mandate in some regards, it should grow and evolve accordingly in its fundraising and project scope to keep up with the interests of all stakeholder communities in the initiative and its guiding principles.

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[4] http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/funding.

33. Alternative funding modalities for the IGF trust fund are in the process of being developed. As some donors and potential donors have expressed a desire to make the donation process easier, it has been proposed that an intermediary partner could be sought out which could easily collect tax-free donations from individuals or corporations, foundations, etc., that could then be transferred to the IGF trust fund directly. The UN legal office and the capacity development office are working with the TIDES foundation[5] to do just this, and other foundations such as a European foundation based in Switzerland, established by ISOC, would be welcome to form such a partnership once the legal modalities are agreed upon by all parties. This will not substitute the standard agreements and financing structure in place, the standard trust fund agreements between donors and the United Nations, but would rather be another alternative that could help expand the donor base significantly.

34. A donors' meeting was held back-to-back with the open consultations and MAG meeting on 21 February 2014 in Geneva. It was agreed again there that increased efforts need to be made by everyone to secure both short and long term sustainability for the IGF trust fund. New innovative strategies are being set in motion to attract new donors and to make the entire process more open and transparent. An open committee has been set up via the existing donors' mailing list to continue the work. Part of the 21 February donors meeting was open to all stakeholders, giving the entire process much broader exposure.

IV. Broadening participation and capacity-building

35. Although participation in the IGF has increased with time, it should be further broadened, both at the annual meeting and in its preparatory phase, to involve new stakeholders, in particular from developing countries and especially LDCs, and persons with disabilities and other underrepresented groups. Broadening participation enhances the IGF's openness and inclusiveness and fosters effective multi-stakeholder policy dialogue and productive capacity-building. For this purpose, questions related to existing obstacles that limit greater involvement should be addressed. It is important to acknowledge that remote participation is now an integral part of the IGF and that adequate resources should be made available to develop this activity further.

Actions:

36. The Secretariat and DPADM/UNDESA are always working to expand and diversify participation in IGF meetings. Outreach is conducted by Secretariat staff that travel to related meetings and through usual outreach channels (listservs, website announcements, press releases, other media channels, etc.).

37. In 2013 the Secretariat facilitated the travel and provided full or partial funding from the IGF trust fund to 39 trips of MAG members to participate in the 2013 meetings of the IGF. This process is continuing in 2014 and priority is given to those MAG members travelling from developing countries.

38. Each year the IGF partners with IGF community organizations to facilitate the travel and participation of IGF stakeholders from developing countries at IGF meetings. Fellowship programs are offered to young people interested in Internet governance related issues. The IGF itself has a fellowship program which invites young students and professionals in the Internet governance field to work with the Secretariat in Geneva.

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[5] http://www.tides.org/.

39.   Development issues have been a primary focus of the past three IGF's as the main themes of the forums have had direct links to development issues. The forums have also been held in developing regions as well, enabling easier participation from those stakeholders in the respective regions. Workshop selection gives priority to organizers from developing and least developed countries and has always been inclusive and relevant in this regard. The Secretariat and MAG will continue with this approach and will work to enhance this process further.

40.   In 2014, the IGF will continue to provide ample space for discussions on access and other themes specifically aimed towards addressing issues related to Internet governance for development to make it more interesting for participants from developing countries, in particular LDCs. These themes and issues will be prominently reflected in the agenda to attract these stakeholders to participate. The 9th IGF will also feature forward-looking discussions regarding the role that ICTs and Internet governance issues could play in the post-2015 sustainable development agenda. Discussions on this topic at the 9th IGF will then be conveyed to the UN system through appropriate channels.

41.   In 2013, remote participation continued to be improved, with all workshops and focus sessions open to remote participants. All of this has been done with very limited resources and with the help of the host country and many volunteers. Interested stakeholders can follow the discussions from home or office; watch the webcast of the event; follow real-time closed captioning; and participate live. Remote participants/hubs are able to interact with the meeting by sending text questions and/or video/audio interventions using the remote participation platform (WebEx). Information regarding remote participation for the annual IGF's, as well as many of the open consultations sessions, is made available on the IGF website. The Secretariat, together with the MAG and all IGF stakeholders, will strive to improve remote participation for all meetings in 2014.

42.   The current website design is aimed to make the site user-friendly and give it the ability to add on tools for better online collaboration. The website aims to promote the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). It tries to meet the highest standards set by the W3C. The Secretariat, funding permitted, is exploring ways that it can enhance the website's interactive functionalities in a variety of ways to enhance the forum's online visibility and accessibility online. Host countries are mandated to provide logistical and other pertinent information for stakeholders on their websites well in advance of the annual meetings and this practice will continue and be enhanced moving forward.

43.   Each open consultation session is open to the public and gives new, interested stakeholders a chance to participate in the IGF process both physically, if they are able to attend, or remotely. Records of all past IGF activities are also available on the IGF website for those interested in learning about past IGF debates, discussions and topics of interest.

44.   In 2013, a comprehensive capacity building track was built into the schedule for those participants who wanted to participate in sessions geared towards capacity building specifically helping make the IGF a "one-stop-shop" on Internet governance issues. This capacity building track will continue and be expanded in 2014 at the 9th IGF.

45.   Government representatives and parliamentarians, particularly those from developing and least developed countries, are always encouraged to participate in the IGF processes and the Secretariat and MAG will enhance outreach efforts moving forward to continue and increase their participation and active engagement. High-level "day-zero"/"pre-events" have taken place at the past few annual meetings, convened by the host-countries, which have helped attract high-level government officials to participate in the IGFs.

V. Linking the IGF to other Internet governance-related entities

46. It is important for the IGF to continue and improve its interaction and communication with other Internet governance-related entities in order to further global policy dialogue. This goal can be achieved by developing a defined outreach and communication strategy.

Actions:

47. The Secretariat is continually engaged in outreach efforts to increase its linkages with other relevant Internet governance related entities. The other major entities are participating and supportive of the inclusive, multi-stakeholder IGF process. Oftentimes, because of the limited resources available, volunteer stakeholders take on outreach responsibilities on behalf of the IGF at other major meetings. In 2014, the IGF Secretariat, together with representative MAG members and the interim-chair of the MAG, will represent the IGF at as many other major meetings on Internet governance as the budget will sensibly allow. Documentation and outcomes of the IGF are always made available on the website for public viewing and comments.

48. In 2013, efforts were made to integrate the National and regional IGF into the program of the Bali IGF with a specific track. The views and themes emerging from these initiatives were captured in the workshops and focus sessions throughout the week, as well as inter-regional dialogue meetings dedicated to creating bridges and encouraging exchanges of views between the various initiatives. The National and Regional initiatives will be further integrated into the 9th IGF in Istanbul in September 2014.

49. It was agreed at the February 2014 Open Consultations and MAG meetings that the IGF will continue to be actively involved in the many parallel Internet governance processes going on around the world. There was broad consensus that the IGF should continue to evolve and confirm itself as a unique space within the broader ecosystem. The 9th IGF will provide space for discussions of evolution in other fora (WSIS review, ITU, ICANN, NETmundial, CSTD Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation, High-Level Panel on Global Internet Cooperation and Governance Mechanisms) to ensure its full interaction with other Internet governance related entities and meetings.