



APC priorities for the 13th Internet Governance Forum, Paris, 2018

*Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
November 2018*

1. Preamble

The 13th annual Internet Governance Forum (IGF),¹ the UN's most significant multistakeholder platform for discussing internet governance, is taking place in Paris, France from 12 to 14 November 2018.² At a time when trust in digital technologies seems to be declining with every data breach, misinformation campaign and revelation of surveillance, the overall theme of IGF 2018 – “Internet of Trust” – is quite timely.

This year's IGF is taking place alongside the Paris Peace Forum³ and the GovTech Summit, during what is being branded as the “Paris Digital Week”.⁴ Whether co-location with other events adds to or detracts from the IGF's status remains to be seen. Of greater concern is that it overlaps

¹<https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual>

²<https://www.gouvernement.fr/en/paris-digital-week>

³Linked to the Paris Peace Forum is the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace which will be announced at the IGF.

⁴<https://www.gouvernement.fr/en/paris-digital-week>

with the third and final week of the International Telecommunication Union's Plenipotentiary Conference (ITU Plenipot) in Dubai, forcing many members of the internet governance community to decide which event to prioritise. Included on the Plenipot's agenda are many of the same issues that will be discussed at the IGF, such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, over-the-top services, the "internet of things", data protection, and connectivity. Those who prioritise negotiated outcomes would likely choose the ITU Plenipot.

A few additional factors mean that we can expect the IGF to be a more limited event this year. For example, it is just three days long, as opposed to the usual five days (day 0 plus four days). In addition, it is taking place in Western Europe for the second year in a row, which might not be as much of a draw or be financially feasible for participants travelling from far away, especially from countries in the global South. Next year it will be in Western Europe once again, with Germany hosting.

It is important to remember, however, that the IGF is not only an annual event. It is a year-long process that entails intersessional work, on a range of topics, including local content, gender, public access and connecting the next billion, as well as multiple national and regional IGFs. The IGF also has a role in connecting relevant internet governance-related processes taking place elsewhere, particularly processes elsewhere in the UN system. The fact that the recently created UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation⁵ is using the IGF as a forum for open dialogue and the exchange of ideas, and that the UN Secretary-General António Guterres is expected to attend, reinforces the value and status of the IGF. That the High-Level Panel was established, however, also indicates that there are still gaps in coordination and cooperation in global internet governance, gaps that the IGF could fill, but is not able to in its current iteration. APC continues to believe that the IGF has the potential to be a central platform for filling such gaps effectively, but to do so it must be strengthened.

2. Current political trends relevant to internet governance

The IGF is taking place in a political climate in which the power of the internet as a tool for public participation, democratisation and collaboration is critically needed, yet this power is being undermined as well as hijacked by anti-democratic interests and actors.

On the one hand, there is a wave of conservative, authoritarian leaders and regimes in many countries who are actively eroding fundamental human rights and encouraging intolerance. Just as India has struck down a colonial-era law, thereby decriminalising same-sex intercourse, the rights of transgender people in the United States are being threatened by the Trump regime, and the city of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania has launched an "anti-gay" task force that is actively hunting down LGBT individuals. Jair Bolsonaro, the president-elect of Brazil, has made repeated statements of a racist, misogynist and LGBT-phobic nature. Bolsonaro has also expressed his opposition to political activism, and promised to end the unrestricted operation of civil society organisations. Media independence and space for dissent and civil society activity are under threat around the world, including in Europe, for example, in Hungary.⁶ The exploitation of data to drive electoral outcomes – in the United States, for instance – and the weaponising of information during election campaigns continue to undermine trust in institutions and the integrity of electoral processes.

⁵<https://digitalcooperation.org>

⁶<https://globalvoices.org/2018/06/27/with-new-anti-migration-laws-the-space-of-civil-society-in-hungary-continues-to-shrink>

Considering how vital online spaces are to both mainstream and citizen journalism, to political participation, and to social movements, non-governmental organisations and broader civil society, these trends should feature high on the list among the concerns addressed by this IGF – not just in Paris, but in subsequent intersessional work.

Specifically important for the internet governance community is that Bolsonaro has been critical of the Brazilian Civil Rights Framework for the Internet (Marco Civil) signed into law at the 2014 NETmundial – a national law that has become a global reference for respect for rights such as access, privacy and freedom of expression online. Not only does this threaten good practice in the development of national legislation pertaining to the internet, it also risks the loss of Brazil as a leading legitimate and innovative developing country voice in global internet policy debates.

3. Priorities for IGF 2018 and 2019 intersessional work

3.1. Access

Community networks: An understanding of the role of community networks, how they work, and how they can grow and thrive has become one of the IGF's most important outcomes and has continued to produce concrete results. APC, its members, the Internet Society (ISOC) and other partners continue to work intensively on community networks as a means for empowering people to build and manage their own access solutions. The IGF (annual meetings, intersessional work and NRIs) has been an important platform for sharing experiences and knowledge, reflection, and strategising on community networks. We expect IGF 2018 will continue to provide the opportunity to connect this work with the broader internet governance community. As the growth in subscribers of traditional networks (mostly mobile) is plateauing, leaving many people still unconnected, the increase in the number of community networks, and their ability to sustain themselves, offers encouragement. The vital role of community networks is gaining recognition as reflected in a variety of actions at different levels, from national (e.g. licence exemption for community networks in Argentina) to international (e.g. workshops at the 2018 World Summit on the Information Society Forum and inclusion of community networks as an "emerging topic" in a resolution adopted by the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development), as well as in draft texts being debated at the ITU Plenipot. There have also been technology developments of value to community networks, such as progress with a powerful mesh wireless device, the LibreRouter,⁷ and HERMES,⁸ a project to use high-frequency (HF band) radio frequencies to interconnect GSM base stations.

Community networks have been discussed at three important regional IGFs – the Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) IGF, Asia Pacific Regional IGF and African IGF – and community network summits have been held in different parts of the world, with major participation in LAC, Asia, North America and Africa. In the last year, APC has held and/or participated in dedicated workshops on community networks with regional policy and regulatory bodies, namely the Inter-American Telecommunication Commission (CITEL), the African Union Commission, East African Communications Organization and the Communications Regulatory Authority of Southern Africa.

⁷<https://librerouter.org>

⁸<https://www.rhizomatica.org/hermes>

There remain many challenges ahead for community networks to reach their potential in connecting the unconnected; challenges that should be discussed at the IGF. These include translating all this momentum into tangible and long-lasting changes in policy and regulation, especially with regard to spectrum allocation and management – for example, spectrum sharing and setting spectrum aside for community-led mobile networks, and making TV white spaces (TVWS) available for use by community networks. Licensing regimes, identifying additional sources of funding, and better understanding of the business models of the newly established community networks are other challenges to address.

At the IGF, APC will be launching a number of publications relating to community networks. As in recent years, the IGF Dynamic Coalition on Community Connectivity (DC3) will launch its annual report, which APC contributed to. In addition, three other important publications on the topic will be released at the IGF: the 2018 edition of APC's annual Global Information Society Watch (GISWatch)⁹ report, which this year is dedicated to community networks; an ISOC paper on innovations in spectrum management for community networks co-authored by members of APC's Local Access Networks project¹⁰ team; and an in-depth study on the state of community networks in Latin America by Fundação Getulio Vargas with support from ISOC. We will also be organising and participating in a number of community network-related events, including the main session on Digital Inclusion and Accessibility and the session on "Spectrum for Community Networks: A 'Must' That Is Hard to Get".

Access for people with disabilities, public access, gender, and open telecom data: APC's overall approach to access is holistic and includes a focus not just on infrastructure and cost, but also content, context and capacity. Topics we want to highlight at the IGF include access for people with disabilities; the importance of safe and cost-free public access, for example, in libraries, community centres and educational institutions; and access for women, girls and gender-nonconforming persons. The theme for this year's Disco-tech IGF pre-event¹¹ co-hosted by APC is disability and accessibility to the internet. More than 12 years since the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which makes it obligatory for states to "promote access for persons with disabilities to new information and communications technologies and systems, including the Internet", came into being, web accessibility remains a distant reality for people with disabilities. The event will provide different opportunities to foreground the experiences, realities, needs and concerns of internet users with disabilities. APC will also participate in a new campaign for open telecom data¹² that will be initiated at the IGF. Open telecom data is particularly important for smaller operators such as community networks and other local access providers, and we believe it is a relevant topic for the 2019 intersessional IGF agenda.

Misguided taxation: A concern we will raise in discussion at the IGF is the recent trend in taxing the use of social media and voice-over-internet services in countries where these services are being used to enable public participation and to reduce the cost of communications for people from poor communities. These taxes impact on both access and the enjoyment of human rights.

3.2 Human rights

Trends in policy and regulation: 2018 has been a mixed year for human rights online. On the one hand, there is the idea that smart regulation, developed with inputs from different stakeholders, can

⁹<https://www.giswatch.org>

¹⁰<https://www.apc.org/en/project/local-access-networks-can-unconnected-connect-themselves>

¹¹<https://www.apc.org/en/news/disco-tech-paris-join-us-pre-igf-event-disability-and-accessibility-internet>

¹²<https://manypossibilities.net/2018/05/open-telecom-data-moving-forward>

safeguard individual rights, such as the right to privacy in the case of the European Union General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).¹³ On the other hand, national legislation emerging in many parts of the world is aimed at regulating the internet in ways that compromise rights online, failing to meet either national constitutional guarantees or international standards, especially in relation to freedom of expression and the right to privacy. Examples include Egypt,¹⁴ India,¹⁵ Pakistan¹⁶ and Bangladesh.¹⁷

Legislating restrictions to human rights online: Laws, together with extralegal measures, have led to increasing restriction of space for civil society to develop and operate, with human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, sexual rights defenders and LGBTIQ activists, journalists, artists and others subject to arrest, censorship, and hate online, which ultimately compromises their security offline. APC is co-organising a workshop, “Making National Laws Good for Internet Governance”,¹⁸ with Social Media Exchange (SMEX), during which a multistakeholder group of experts in internet law and jurisprudence will share their observations on these new internet-targeted legal interventions. They will share the expected and unexpected impacts of laws and help distill lessons learned for internet law and policy makers. The workshop will also consider the relevance and utility of establishing a best practice forum or dynamic coalition on the rule of law in the digital sphere.

Platform responsibility and accountability: Increasing intervention by private platform providers in the free flow of information on the internet (in particular social networks, messaging services and search engines), with negative impacts on freedom of expression through direct restrictions (censorship by removal or blocking, including automatic filtering) and prior or indirect restrictions (priority or reduction of scope) of legitimate content. This highlights the need to demand that companies comply with international human rights law and ensure transparency, accountability and due process in their content moderation practices. APC’s position is that companies should use human rights law as the authoritative global standard for ensuring freedom of expression and other rights on their platforms, not the varying laws of states or their own private interests.

Algorithmic decision making and the right to explanation: As the use of algorithms is increasingly finding its way into different aspects of our lives, it is critical to examine the problems posed from a human rights perspective by automated or algorithmic decision making. Algorithmic decision making impacts a range of rights, from freedom of expression to the right to work, and has already demonstrated its ability to extend discrimination and deepen inequality. APC is co-organising a workshop on “Algorithmic transparency and the right to explanation”,¹⁹ which will introduce the concepts of algorithmic justice, algorithmic bias and algorithmic transparency. Speakers will explore the technical,

¹³<https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/apc-welcomes-eus-general-data-protection-regulation-calls-stronger-privacy-protections-globally>

¹⁴<https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/statement-opposing-egypt%E2%80%99s-legalisation-website-blocking-and-communications-surveillance>

¹⁵<https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/universal-periodic-review-criminalisation-online-expression-asia>

¹⁶<https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/joint-written-statement-submitted-apc-35th-session-human-rights-council-criminalisation-online>

¹⁷<https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/bangladesh-joint-submission-freedom-speech-expression-and-thought-under-third-cycle-%C2%A0universal>

¹⁸<https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2018-ws-388-making-national-laws-good-for-internet-governance>

¹⁹<https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2018-ws-421-algorithmic-transparency-and-the-right-to-explanation>

legal and human rights issues, as well as the technical and policy solutions to ensuring that algorithms can provide a right to explanation.

Measuring a free, open, rights-based and inclusive internet: Measuring progress – or regression – in the extent to which internet-related human rights are respected, how universally accessible and used the internet is, and how inclusive internet governance processes are, is difficult but important. APC is extremely pleased that a tool that we facilitated the development of for UNESCO will be launched at the Paris IGF.²⁰ The UNESCO Internet Universality Indicators aim to measure to what extent the ROAM (rights-openness-access-multistakeholder) principles are applied at national levels in relationship with cross-cutting indicators on gender and the needs of children and young people, sustainable development, trust and security, and legal and ethical concerns. Quantitative, qualitative and institutional indicators are included, along with a list of identified sources and means of verification. The purpose of the indicators is not in any way intended to result in any kind of index or ranking of countries. They are designed to facilitate learning and country-level discussion among stakeholders on how to improve “internet universality”. We believe that the use of these indicators should become part of the IGF’s ongoing intersessional agenda.

Refugee rights and the internet: It is estimated by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees that today over 65 million people – the largest number since the Second World War – are refugees or internally displaced people. Internet access has become a vital lifeline to their families and friends, as well as to starting new lives. However, refugee populations tend to lack digital networks and infrastructure and face unaffordable connectivity or restrictions imposed on their full participation in the online environment. APC will participate in a session on “Refugee rights and the online environment”, discussing what has been done to ensure equal access and full participation in the online environment for this large community of refugees, and whether the technologies used to collect data are following the necessary steps to ensure that the rights of refugees are protected online and offline.

3.3 Gender

APC will build on its long history of raising concerns related to women’s rights, gender equality and sexual rights at the IGF. It is essential for the IGF to open a space and engage with feminist researchers, advocates and activists to support, challenge, and reform policy advocacy in relation to the internet governance system. In particular, feminist knowledge production that works to bring forward situated knowledge from the standpoint of marginalised communities, such as women and LGBTIQ people, can positively influence the way we understand the impact of internet governance regulations profoundly. Furthermore, the APC Women’s Rights Programme engages with intersectional feminist thinking to unravel the challenges of meaningful access to the internet and the politics of internet governance. An intersectional framework facilitates methodological tools to reflect beyond a “gender-only” approach and investigate the intersecting effects of structural injustices based on race, class, sexuality and other socioeconomic divisions.

APC’s gender interventions at the 2018 IGF will include active participation in sessions stemming from intersessional work, such as the meetings of the Dynamic Coalition on Gender and Internet Governance and of the Best Practice Forum (BPF) on Gender and Access, in which APC continues to play an active role. Based on previous BPF work, which underscored that people’s lived realities of access can be quite

²⁰<https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2018-of-5-measuring-a-free-open-rights-based-and-inclusive-internet>

distinct from overarching statistics, this year the BPF on Gender and Access²¹ is focusing on Alternative Models of Connectivity for gender non-conforming persons and women with disabilities, migrant women, refugee women and others who face challenges to access the internet. We will also use Paris IGF to build on previous work, support our partners and participate in active debate that can frame intersessional work for 2019 on the following topics:

- More recognition of online gender-based violence as a human rights violation.
- Increased attention paid to gender digital divides to translate into concrete actions to close these divides.
- How to prevent gender bias in the use of artificial intelligence and algorithms.
- How to counter the global rise of online anti-feminist movements and the resulting threats to women's human rights defenders.
- "Queering the IGF", as in making it a space in which queer people can participate openly in all internet governance debates as well as raise issues of particular concern to them.
- Exploring the idea of creating a benchmarking framework that can be used to assess the performance of internet companies in relation to their responsibilities with regard to the areas of sexual orientation and gender identity.

3.4 Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity is, deservedly, gaining in profile at the IGF. Aside from a main session and several workshops, the Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace will present its latest norms package²² and the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace will be launched. Public awareness of the need for greater security is increasing with more frequent data breaches. The internet governance sector is ridden by intense debate on how, and where, to deal with the issue. APC's view is that a secure internet is best achieved through a rights-based approach and must centre on the security of users as opposed to the security of states. Cybersecurity practices, policies and strategies should place human rights at the centre and not treat cybersecurity and human rights as inherently at odds with each other. To this end, APC organised an IGF Day 0 event at the 2017 IGF in Geneva. The recommendations²³ that emerged from this event were published earlier this year and contain suggestions that can be picked by IGF intersessional processes. This year the BPF on Cybersecurity²⁴ focused on stakeholder perspectives on cybersecurity norms, their development, implementation and success; and the potential risk of a digital security divide in terms of the protection the norms offer to different people. APC contributed to the BPF background paper on "Cybersecurity Culture, Norms and Values"²⁵ and made a submission²⁶ to the call for contributions.

Activities we will be involved in at the IGF include the following:

²¹<https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/bpf-gender-and-access-0>

²²<https://cyberstability.org/news/global-commission-introduces-six-critical-norms-towards-cyber-stability>

²³<https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/rights-based-approach-cybersecurity-recommendations-and-considerations-2017-internet-governance>

²⁴<https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/bpf-cybersecurity-2018-contributions>

²⁵https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/filedepot_download/3405/1294

²⁶https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/filedepot_download/6763/1340

- APC will be speaking at a session on Multistakeholding cybersecurity in Africa²⁷ to work towards a better understanding of multistakeholder collaboration in cybersecurity, by considering the following questions: 1) What is the rationale for multistakeholder collaboration in cybersecurity policy making? 2) How can multistakeholder collaborations in cybersecurity be improved in Africa? What are the challenges of implementing them? 3) What forms should multistakeholder collaborations for cybersecurity take? and 4) What are the key success factors experienced by the different stakeholders involved in the partnership?
- APC will participate in a session organised by the Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace,²⁸ of which APC's Anriette Esterhuysen is a member, to present the Singapore Norm Package, a set of accessible norms that both states and non-state entities can implement – without the need for any specific international agreements – that will enhance security and stability in cyberspace. While these norms are non-binding, and can easily be adopted and applied voluntarily, they can also be picked up and adopted or developed by intergovernmental forums such as the UN Group of Governmental Experts.

3.5 Strengthening inclusive, interconnected internet governance processes

APC believes that internet policy should protect the publicness of the internet, and that internet policy processes should be accessible, democratic, transparent, accountable and inclusive.²⁹ We believe that the IGF can and should play a key role in achieving this, and while we feel frustrated that the IGF is not growing in strength and stature, we continue to believe it has the potential to facilitate cooperation and learning, and achieve outcomes towards more inclusive internet governance globally and locally.

While we are pleased that the new UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation will use the IGF as a platform for consultation, we believe a more cost-effective and generally appropriate option would have been for this panel to be linked directly to the IGF, a forum which is also convened by the UN Secretary-General.

The IGF has proven its value, through 12 successful global events and numerous national and regional IGFs (NRIs), and through the outcomes of its intersessional work. But it is clearly in need of increased human and financial resources as well as greater political support from both within and outside of the United Nations system. As more internet-governance processes emerge, the role of the IGF in facilitating cross-forum dialogue increases. But to play this role effectively it needs to change.

APC will share its efforts to strengthen internet governance at the IGF at main sessions and through dynamic coalitions and other intersessional work. These include:

- Participating in sessions that discuss NRIs. APC is a co-convenor of the LAC, Africa and Asia Pacific regional IGFs and through our members of many national IGFs.
- Participating in and co-organising the dynamic coalition on internet governance schools in our capacity as the organiser of the African School on Internet Governance (AfriSIG).³⁰

²⁷<https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2018-ws-171-multi-stakeholding-cybersecurity-in-africa>

²⁸<https://www.intgovforum.org/multilingual/content/igf-2018-global-commission-on-the-stability-of-cyberspace>

²⁹This is the fourth key result area in APC's Theory of Change. See: <https://www.apc.org/en/our-strategic-priorities>

³⁰<https://afrisig.org>

- Promoting the positions of the Civil Society Coordination Group (CSCG) with regard to IGF improvements, including at the level of the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG). The CSCG has requested³¹ transparency in the selection of MAG members and chairpersons as well as rotation of the chair to persons from the global South and to stakeholder groups who have not yet held the position, such as civil society. The CSCG is also requesting an update from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs on where the IGF retreat process – which produced many useful recommendations, some of which overlap with the work being done by the new UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel – stands. In addition, the new MAG members should be identified before the end of the calendar year and preferably ahead of the IGF, to allow for planning and preparations.
- Co-chairing the Working Group on IGF Improvements, and contributing to its work.

4. APC's activities at the IGF

A list of events that APC and its members are organising or participating in during the IGF is available at www.apc.org.³²

5. Follow APC online at IGF 2018

Twitter: @APC_News and @GenderITorg

Our Facebook page³³

Media contacts: flavia@apc.org in English, Spanish or Portuguese (off-site), and leila@apc.org in English and Spanish (on-site).

For GenderIT.org contact namita@apcwomen.org in English.

Check in-depth resources on our publications page.³⁴

Updates on gender and ICT policy on GenderIT.org.³⁵

6. APC members and staff at IGF 2018

6.1. APC members at IGF 2018

Nadim Nashif (7amleh, Israel/Palestine), Nicolas Pace (AlterMundi, Argentina), Nicolas Echaniz (AlterMundi, Argentina), Michel Lambert (Alternatives, Canada), Arturo Bregaglio (Asociación Trinidad, Paraguay), Osama Manzar (DEF, India), Jonas Valente (Intervozes, Brazil), Ashnah Kalamera (CIPESA, Uganda), Loyce Kyogabirwe (CIPESA, Uganda), Lillian Nalwoga (CIPESA, Uganda), Juliet Nanfuka (CIPESA, Uganda), María Paz Canales (Derechos Digitales, Chile), Lisa García (FMA, Philippines), Liz Probert (GreenNet, UK), Roger Baig (guifi.net, Catalonia), Ramon Roca (guifi.net, Catalonia), Anabella Rivera (Instituto Demos, Guatemala), Steve Zeltzer (LaborNet, USA), Yatanar Htun (MIDO, Myanmar), Asad Baig (MMfD, Pakistan), Leandro Navarro (Pangea, Catalonia), Bishakha Datta (Point of View, India), Nidhi Goya (Point of View, India), Serge Daho (PROTEGE QV, Cameroon), Arun M (SPACE Kerala, India),

³¹<http://internetgov-cs.org>

³²<https://www.apc.org/en/news/apc-igf-2018-schedule-events>

³³<https://www.facebook.com/APCNews>

³⁴<https://www.apc.org/en/publications>

³⁵<https://www.genderit.org>

Shaun Pather (Zenzeleni Networks, South Africa), Renata Aquino (individual member, Brazil), Alex Comninos (individual member, South Africa), Mallory Knodel (individual member, USA).

6.2. APC staff, interns and volunteers at IGF 2018

Anriette Esterhuysen, Avri Doria, Carlos Rey Moreno, Chat Garcia Ramilo, Deborah Brown, Jac sm Kee, Karen Banks, Kathleen Diga, Leila Nachawati, Maja Romano, Mike Jensen, Sebastián Becker Castellaro, Shawna Finnegan, Valeria Betancourt.

The Association for Progressive Communications is global membership-based network of organisations and individuals who work collaboratively on the internet and ICTs for social justice and sustainable development. APC has 58 organisational members and 34 individual members in 74 countries, primarily in the global South. APC has been an active participant in the IGF since its inception.