To
The Office of the UN Secretary General's Envoy on Technology

With copies to:
UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs - UNDESA
Internet Governance Forum - IGF Secretariat
Chair, IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group - MAG
Government of Germany
Government of the UAE

Ref. Consultations on the interpretation of paragraph 93(a) of the Roadmap

In the Roadmap on Digital Cooperation launched in 2020, the UN Secretary General proposes reforms to promote the strengthening of the IGF, so that it could become 'more responsive and relevant to current digital issues.' Among the ideas listed to seek such goal, paragraph 93 (a) refers to:

> 'Creating a strategic and empowered multi-stakeholder high level body, building on the experience of the existing multi-stakeholder advisory group, which would address urgent issues, coordinate follow-up action on Forum discussions and relay proposed policy approaches and recommendations from the Forum to the appropriate normative and decision making forums'

The Options for the Future of Global Digital Cooperation prepared by the co-Champions Germany and the United Arab Emirates refers to the 'significant demand for stronger digital cooperation and leadership' in relation to the Internet Governance Forum - IGF and refers to different concerns raised by stakeholders in this regard, including caution that the bottom-up and flexible nature of the current IGF must not get lost. Proposals at that point included the creation of a new high-level leadership group similar to an executive committee, in addition to the Multistakeholder Advisory Group - MAG, which would retain its current functions; and, alternatively, the strengthening of the MAG's leadership role, with no need for the creation of a new structure.

After the creation of the Office of the UNSG Envoy on Technology in 2021, the mandate office, in coordination with UNDESA, organized a meeting on 22 February 2021 to collect contributions in relation to the interpretation and operationalization of paragraph 93(a) above and on the 25 February a questionnaire was published and sent to member states and some stakeholders to collect inputs on the format and composition of such body.[1]

The civil society organizations that sign this statement want to contribute to such discussions, both in some cases individually submitting answers to the referred questionnaire, but also jointly here, through the considerations and recommendations listed below:

- The IGF has achieved much in terms of fostering knowledge exchange, policy discussions, multi stakeholder collaboration and sharing of best practices related to digital issues. In order to continue its trajectory of moving forward the WSIS agenda with openness, participation and diversity, and contributing to the further democratisation of internet governance as a key element of digital cooperation, it could be strengthened to become an even more strategic and impactful process.
- It is important to consider that lack of resources and commitment have been one of the main challenges for the IGF to achieve more. Any plan to strengthen the IGF, therefore, needs to respond foremost to such weaknesses.
- Additionally, given the above, strict cost-benefit analysis should guide the decision about where to invest limited resources if the final goal is to strengthen the IGF process. This cost-benefit analysis should orient the decision about creating or not another internal structure and the scope of its eventual mandate.
- Measures to be implemented should aim at: increasing further horizontal linkages between the global IGF, the National and Regional Initiatives - NRIs and the intersessional work, a more targeted and focused programming, and reinforced synergistic dynamic between the IGF and decision-making bodies. Jointly these efforts will contribute to make the IGF an even more relevant space in the global digital cooperation landscape.
- Strengthened leadership to deliver such improvements would be relevant to the extent it strengthens and in no way undermines the IGF structure and community, including the current MAG.

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[1] It was also made available at IGF's website.

- It is our view that no separate new structure should be created outside of the IGF architecture that determines or shapes the IGF, its processes and procedures. Any body created should be structured as peer and complementary to the MAG and should not take decisions on behalf of the IGF community.
- Multistakeholderism, diversity and inclusion should guide any new structure, building on the IGF legacy thus far and be the basis for putting the structure in function of shaping the global internet governance agenda in a way that effectively addresses the persistent, exacerbated and new challenges derived from the pandemic situation, including the increasing power of some parts of the industry, in particular the large technology companies, and the lack of voices from more vulnerable and marginalised groups.
- The Tunis Agenda should continue to determine the boundaries of the IGF mandate, as well as any new structures within it.
- Any new developments should be carefully tailored in order to observe the above and, therefore, should not be rushed, but built on extensive consultations and dialogue. Meaningful consultation and dialogue means that the views of the different contributors will be taken in due consideration in decision-making, following democratic practices. It will also create greater buy-in.
- Transparency of such measures will be key to build the necessary trust and participation that will allow any reforms to be legitimate, impactful and sustainable.

We call on your office to engage with civil society groups, academia and the technical community in a structured and continuous fashion, pointing out, in advance and with clarity, the next steps expected in the debates concerning the multistakeholder high level body and the IGF+ process.

Although discussions in relation to the overall strengthening of the internet governance architecture have been taking place since the High Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, focused discussions and consultations should take place specifically to address paragraph 93(a) of the Roadmap and the undersigned entities are willing and happy to support in this.

Yours, sincerely

Access Now
Association for Progressive Communications (APC)
Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio & Communication

Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria

Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa (CIPESA)

Cyber Cafe Association of India (CCAOI)

Derechos Digitales

DigitalSENSE Africa

European Center for Not-for-profit Law Stichting

Global Partners Digital (GPD)

Internet Governance Caucus

Media Institute of Southern Africa – Zimbabwe

Paradigm Initiative

TEDIC

The Internet Society

World Wide Web Foundation