

Suggestions for the IGF 2011 program and format

An NRO contribution to the February Open Consultations

7 February 2011

We have taken a three-pronged approach to this submission: 1) What has worked in the past and should be kept; 2) What has been used in the past but could be improved; and 3) What new elements could be introduced to the 2011 IGF.

1. Keep

During the past five IGFs, a number of good program practices have been developed which should be continued for the IGF 2011 program. These include:

- Enabling the MAG to facilitate workshop mergers when multiple workshop proposals contain similar or duplicate content areas
- Aggregating the diverse set of workshop submissions into theme-based tracks by the MAG in close coordination with open consultation input
- Scheduling “feeder” workshops before the relevant main session
- When selecting workshops, prioritizing those that include representatives from all stakeholder groups
- Including representatives from all stakeholder groups in main session panels
- Minimizing time for panelists during main discussions, allowing as much time as possible for open discussion from the floor and from remote participants
- While the general level of discussion on Internet governance issues at the IGF has been steadily maturing over the past five years, it continues to be important to provide a “Setting the Scene” session that can help provide a necessary introduction to newcomers to Internet governance discussion.

2. Improve

Areas that could be improved are:

- Facilitating great discussion amongst stakeholder groups via co-located events

It would be useful if the IGF Secretariat could encourage organizations co-locating meetings at the IGF to release details of their events as early as possible via the IGF website to encourage greater participation in co-located meetings. This is important as it encourages greater multi-stakeholder cross collaboration.

- Enabling greater understanding of discussions by remote participants and participants who do not have English as a first language

IGF 2010 provided live transcripts, chat rooms, and video/audio for all sessions of the meeting. However, the quality of transcripts at IGF 2010 was much lower than previous years, and therefore prevented remote participants and participants without English as a first language from fully being able to utilize the benefits of the other participation options.

- Expanding the range of issues discussed at the IGF

Internet governance issues will rise and fall in terms of level of importance as new technologies and business models emerge, decline, or become standard. It is vital that the IGF's program remain open and inclusive to new issues as they may emerge.

To help keep the IGF open to emerging new themes, it would be useful for workshop submissions to include not only the pre-existing list of topics (development, openness, access, etc) but have an additional "unspecified" topic that would permit workshops on as yet uncategorized issues be submitted.

3. Add

Areas for innovation could include:

- Integrating regional/national discussion of topics into the main program of main sessions and workshops

Currently reports from regional/national IGFs are kept as a separate "theme" with side sessions for reports on each regional/national IGF plus one main session for showcasing regional/national IGFs. However, it could be useful to have representatives from various regional/national IGFs report back directly in relevant main sessions and in workshops on discussions held regionally/nationally on the same topic(s).

- Encouraging new speakers to be used in both main sessions and workshops

While it is important to continue to have widely acknowledged experts in their field participate in main sessions, etc, encouraging less well-known speakers from the younger generation will assist with the development of the next generation of Internet governance policy experts.

- Encouraging a diverse range of sources to collate, interpret, and analyze IGF discussions

Drawing on a wide range of sources (academics, media, subject matter experts) to develop summaries, post-meeting analysis, academic evaluation and advancement of the discussions could assist in providing continuity of debate and deepening of study on the topics discussed at the IGF.

The Number Resource Organization (NRO)

Formed by the Regional Internet Registries (RIRs) to formalise their cooperative efforts, the NRO exists to protect the unallocated Number Resource pool, to promote and protect the bottom-up policy development process, and to act as a focal point for Internet community input into the RIR system.