

Response from the IGF MAG to the IGF Leadership Panel's call for comments on 'The Internet We Want'

8 March 2024

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) welcomes the initiative of the IGF Leadership Panel to review its report, 'The Internet We Want', and that this review will take account of feedback received from the global, multistakeholder IGF community. [Members of the MAG](#) have taken the opportunity to review the document, and this submission collects their feedback, which is grounded in the [role and remit](#) of the MAG.

Suggestion 1: Strengthen link to multistakeholder approach

We suggest using the opportunity of this report to more concretely link the vision of “the Internet we want” to the multistakeholder approach to governance. Considering the paper’s framing around key principles, the first of these (“whole and open”) could be developed to discuss the connection between a multistakeholder governance approach and the maintenance of a global, unfragmented Internet. This is particularly important given the vital role of the Internet Governance Forum as a venue for multistakeholder participation and innovation.

We propose the following edit under the section entitled, “1. Whole and open” (additional text in bold):

*Potential fragmentation at the technical, content, or governance layers threatens the open, whole, interconnected, and interoperable nature of the Internet, and its associated benefits to social and economic development, while also harming human rights. **The open, global, and decentralized nature of the Internet requires a governance approach that respects and incorporates the multitude of stakeholders and users around the globe - governance rooted in inclusive, consensus-based decision making, as described in the original WSIS outputs. The Internet Governance Forum and the vibrant ecosystem that has developed around it is testament to the positive potential for innovative multistakeholder Internet governance efforts.***

*We call on the stakeholders of the Internet to set collective goals to ensure that the Internet stays whole, open, free, globally connected, interoperable, stable and unfragmented - **an Internet accessible for all. We encourage all stakeholders to engage with the multistakeholder processes necessary to agree and achieve these goals.***

Suggestion 2: Strengthen link to sustainability

Further, we note the importance of an Internet that is developed with all efforts to minimize its environmental impact and contribute to global environmental sustainability. These issues have been identified as a community priority in the Internet Governance Forum, including in intersessional work (the Policy Network on Environment and Digitalisation and the Dynamic Coalition on Environment), and is reflected in the “Commitments” section of the paper; however, this priority does not fit easily under any of the five principles identified as fundamental to the “Internet we want”. We believe it is necessary to add a sixth principle to

capture the importance of environmental sustainability as we work towards an Internet that is accessible and of value to all.

We propose to add the following as a sixth principle: *6. Environmentally sustainable*

And later in the paper:

6. Environmentally sustainable

The physical infrastructure of the Internet, including the many devices via which it is accessed, has an unavoidable impact on our natural environment. While it is essential that we work towards achieving meaningful Internet access for all of humanity, we must at the same time prioritise efforts to minimise and mitigate the environmental impact (including energy usage) of these technologies. Only by balancing these vital needs will we achieve a sustainable Internet for all.

Suggestion 3: Strengthen link to human rights, individual freedoms, and peace

When used in a peaceful manner, the Internet and technology can be a valuable tool for reducing poverty, improving access to health and education, and achieving the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including Goal 16, which calls for peace, justice, and strong institutions.

The Internet and digital technologies, however, can also be tools of violence and war, and to repress citizens' political demands for participation, equality, and fundamental freedoms. Digital technologies can spread misinformation, propaganda, and hate speech, manipulate democratic elections, and fuel political and social tensions that disrupt democracies. They can be used to develop lethal autonomous weapon systems, engage in foreign espionage, and carry out mass surveillance. Furthermore, the development of new technologies can exacerbate geopolitical tensions and existing power imbalances between countries, as those with the resources and expertise to develop and deploy these technologies may be able to exert greater influence over those that do not. This can lead to technological arms races and give rise to concerns about technological imperialism.

To mitigate these risks and maintain trust in the Internet, we must act now. Before we even realize it, we may be approaching a "tipping point" in the development and impact of technology on global peace and security. As new technologies are created and utilized, they are creating facts not only more quickly than policy makers can regulate them but, taken together, these smaller and bigger changes in our way of living might create effects that are unintended and difficult to foresee.

We propose to add the following as a seventh principle: *7. Peace promoting*

And later in the paper:

Principle 7: Peace promoting

The Internet has remarkable potential for fostering and promoting peace in human societies, particularly in its ability to facilitate open and inclusive communication, reduce poverty, and

increase access to essential services such as healthcare and education. Human dignity and individual freedom lie at the heart of both peace and respect for human rights, and the Internet can be a vital contributor to “building peace in the minds of men and women” (to quote UNESCO). [However, the Internet and digital technologies also carry significant risks if employed to violate or undermine fundamental rights.] We must act intentionally to attain an Internet that promotes and respects human dignity, individual freedom, and peace in the world.