



**APC**

ASSOCIATION  
FOR PROGRESSIVE  
COMMUNICATIONS

## **Reflections from the Association for Progressive Communications on the IGF 2013 and recommendations for the IGF 2014**

**18 February 2014**

### **1. Preamble**

The Bali Internet Governance Forum (IGF) will be remembered by the APC community for four main reasons: the hospitality of our Indonesian hosts, the impact on the event of the Snowden revelations, the linked initiative by the Brazilian government and ICANN to convene an internet governance meeting in Brazil in 2014, and, last but not least, Miss Internet Bali.

Revelations of mass surveillance of online communications by the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) as well as by other governments, with the cooperation of some of the world's largest internet and telecommunications companies, had a profound effect on the eighth annual IGF, held in Bali, Indonesia from 22 to 25 October 2013. Mass surveillance was not only addressed in workshops and in main sessions; it permeated the entire event. While many delegates were wondering if their communications while at the IGF were being monitored, the corridors were buzzing from the intense parallel dynamic resulting from the initiative of the Brazilian government and ICANN to convene a global meeting to discuss the future of internet governance in early 2014.<sup>1</sup>

Discussions in Bali reactivated debates on the multi-stakeholder approach to internet governance, versus a multilateral-intergovernmental model. The overriding feeling in Bali appeared to be that the multi-stakeholder model was still preferred by most actors, but in order to be legitimate and effective, it needs to be strengthened and built on common principles and frameworks, with a clarification of roles and accountabilities.

Below APC reflects on some of the "good", the "bad" and the "ugly" aspects of the 2013 IGF, an event which we feel was, overall, a huge success. We also provide input for consideration by those organising the 2014 IGF.

### **2. The good**

The generosity and warmth of our Indonesian hosts was exceptional. The venue and its location could not have been better. Food, drink and internet access were readily available at all times, and the Indonesian organising committee was clearly committed to going the extra mile to make delegates feel welcome. The presence of Indonesian public institutions, internet actors, community media networks, civil society organisations, and human rights and sexual rights activists (including people from LGBT organisations) underscored the

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<sup>1</sup> [www.cgi.br/brmeeting/announcement2.html](http://www.cgi.br/brmeeting/announcement2.html)

role of the IGF as a space that is global, yet also shaped by local issues and voices. The fact that local NGOs were included in the preparatory process clearly encouraged the meaningful participation of diverse groups in the process.

Once again the IGF succeeded as an open space for addressing challenging and controversial internet governance issues with the participation of multiple stakeholders. Against the backdrop of the Snowden revelations, human rights issues had a high profile throughout the event. For the first time there was a main session on human rights, and human rights issues, particularly rights to privacy, were constantly brought up in other main sessions and workshops. The Chair's Summary<sup>2</sup> reflected this by including strong references to rights. This broader uptake of human rights discourse at the IGF made it possible for more diverse rights- and development-centric discussions to take place at the event, including the discussion of women's rights issues.

Some innovations in the structure of main sessions were introduced. In the focus session on "Openness - Human rights, freedom of expression and free flow of information on the internet", for example, there were many different discussants providing input on a topic, rather than five or six people speaking as "experts" on stage. However, there should have been more time for general audience participation.

Internet governance principles is another topic that was covered in depth, in main sessions and in workshops. The next step should be for the IGF to facilitate broad agreement on both procedural principles (how governance processes should take place) and substantial principles (such as protection for free expression and privacy).

Issues on gender and sexuality were much more integrated and raised by participants in different sessions (that is, not only at those that specifically focused on these issues, but at others that looked at human rights broadly) as well as in workshops. There were significantly more gender and internet governance advocates at the 2013 IGF, where it was even possible to organise a party for all those who were interested in this issue (and better still, it was not organised by APC!). This also signalled more diverse and engaged voices in different spaces of the IGF, including at the Gender Dynamic Coalition meeting, where there was positive feedback from the sharing of last year's gender report card findings.<sup>3</sup>

The analysis through the gender report card for the previous year demonstrated that there was not a great deal of gender disparity in attendance (there were a fairly high number of women present at all sessions), but that this did not translate into integration of women's rights or gendered perspectives into the sessions.

### **3. The bad (or, to put it more gently, the disappointing)**

The presence of Miss Internet Bali, an initiative undertaken by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers' Association (APJII) as a flagship programme to promote safe, healthy and productive use of the internet amongst Indonesian society, raised serious concerns for numerous participants, including APC.<sup>4</sup> The intentions were good, but the result was a format that was strongly reminiscent of pageants that position women as passive objects of beauty rather than active, diverse and empowered citizens. It served as a reminder that the internet sector is an important site in the struggle for gender equality.

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2 [www.intgovforum.org/cms/Chair's%20Summary%20IGF%202013%20Final.Nov1v1.pdf](http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/Chair's%20Summary%20IGF%202013%20Final.Nov1v1.pdf)

3 <https://www.genderit.org/articles/results-gender-report-card-2012-igf-more-women-make-huge-difference>

4 See our statement here: <https://www.apc.org/en/node/18655>

What was encouraging was the response from civil society organisations in registering protest and the openness and willingness to engage in dialogue shown by APJII, the organisers of the competition.

In terms of the structure of the event, some of the same problems from past IGFs recurred:

- Too many workshops in parallel, many of which had similar topics and were scheduled at the same time. Having fewer workshops at the same time would focus discussion and help avoid poor attendance at some.
- Workshops in which there was little time for discussion after the numerous panellists finally finished speaking.
- Criteria for participation in the high-level leaders meeting on “day 0” was not clear, nor was the status of the event and its outcomes.
- Insufficient “white space”: after the Brazil meeting was announced, numerous side meetings that took place in parallel to the IGF to discuss the issue made it difficult for concerned delegates to participate. An open plenary about it would have been helpful. Some space for sessions to address issues that emerge along the way should be kept.

In terms of gaps, we were surprised that in spite of some excellent workshop proposals on the topic, intellectual property-related concerns were not addressed at the 2013 IGF. Also absent were discussions of the internet and environmental sustainability and climate change.

#### **4. The “ugly”**

An unintentional but major security vulnerability was built into the registration process for the 2013 IGF that would potentially allow eavesdroppers to access participants' personal information. When alerted by an APC partner, the IGF Secretariat immediately responded by deleting the personal information of delegates from the website.<sup>5</sup>

### **5. Recommendations for IGF 2014**

#### **5.1 Participation**

It is critical that the IGF encourage the participation of local stakeholders, particularly civil society and grassroots organisations. Language is still a barrier to local participation. We propose that the IGF Secretariat, the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) and the local organisers should make efforts to provide English/local language interpretation for workshops to supplement the interpretation in UN and local languages for main sessions. This will expand the opportunities for local stakeholders to participate actively in the IGF.

Overall, participation remains diverse, but there are some gaps:

- Many workshop panels lacked regional diversity and, in particular, sufficient voices from developing countries. We urge the MAG to continue its efforts to address this gap during workshop selection.
- In spite of large delegations from some countries (notably Brazil and the United States), participation by governments, particularly developing country governments, is on the decrease. We urge the MAG and the Secretariat to find creative mechanisms to address this issue, and we urge governments to show their

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5 <https://www.apc.org/en/node/18676>

commitment to open and participatory governance by being present and active at the 2014 IGF.

- There is a need for participation by more internet stakeholders rather than just “internet insiders”. We would like to see more content producers, development and human rights groups, people from creative industries, and those working for democracy and social equality present at the IGF. The internet is key to their work, and they should be more vocal in discussions on its governance.

## **5.2 Cross-fertilisation between national, regional and global spaces**

There is a need to strengthen spaces for collaboration between regional, subregional and national IGFs, and to make sure that gender, sustainable development and human rights issues are incorporated in those discussions. The methodology adopted in 2013 to identify and systematise the various initiatives and experiences in organising and running national, subregional and regional multi-stakeholder dialogues on internet governance is a very good starting point. In 2014 the MAG, Secretariat and organisers of other IGFs should build on that initiative and strengthen it. This strategy should be translated into concrete ways in which the regional IGFs feed into the global agenda. It would also be useful for regional IGFs to reflect on key outcomes of the global IGF now that it is becoming more outcome-oriented. A concrete example of this would be deliberation on “IGF Internet Governance Principles”.

## **5.3 Programme**

Open sessions/white spaces: The MAG should consider building some open slots into the programme which can be used for networking or unscheduled sessions.

Limit the number of workshops: It is necessary to reduce the number of workshops and to avoid overlap between workshops and main sessions. This has long been identified as a key and structural problem of the IGF. It is also necessary to prevent related events from running in parallel. We recognise that the Secretariat tried their best to achieve this during the 2013 IGF but it was impossible to have no conflicts as there were so many workshops. The norm should be to not have main sessions and workshops at the same time. The risk of having clashes between similar workshops is reduced if the overall number of workshops decreases. We believe that rigorous application of existing criteria can achieve this.

Main session topics: In 2013 there was space for new themes for main sessions, such as human rights online and internet governance principles. APC suggests that they be kept in 2014, particularly the main session on human rights, to allow room for maturing and advancing the discussion around those issues. This will facilitate a substantive continuation of the debate, particularly around the diverse ways in which the technical and policy decisions surrounding internet governance contend with human rights. It will also allow for the inclusion of new human rights issue areas (such as anonymity) and less talked-about rights (such as LGBT rights). Issues such as network neutrality, affordable access, public access and accessibility should also be addressed as part of the rights discourse.

We believe that one session on internet governance principles that addresses both procedural and substantive principles will be enough (rather than two sessions as was the case in Bali).

Access to infrastructure and internet-conveyed knowledge remains a significant challenge for many people, in all parts of the world. The IGF should look again at the issue of public

access, in particular, and infrastructure sharing as key elements for achieving sustainable access for all.

Gender report card: This has proven to be a useful tool towards formulating strategies for the integration of the gender perspective in the IGF. We encourage the MAG to adopt and propose it as a formal part of the workshop evaluation process.

Interactive dialogue: Frequently there is too little opportunity for participation by the audience in the discussions. This could be due to time allocations or a result of having too many panellists. Ensuring reliable connectivity to facilitate remote participation could also improve the amount of interactive dialogue.

Speakers: Recruiting good speakers is not easy. Nevertheless, we encourage the MAG to limit the number of times that any one individual speaks on main session and workshop panels. Gender, age and geographic diversity should be considered.

Accessibility: The programme needs to be made available in a mobile phone application form.

Remote participation: Time zone difficulty resulted in less remote participation in Bali than in previous IGFs. Nevertheless, we believe this remains important, and one of the IGF's success criteria. Efforts to improve and resource it should be maintained.

Capacity-building "track": We propose that this commendable initiative by the 2013 MAG be evaluated and continued, integrating learning from the 2013 experience.

#### **5.4 Functioning of the MAG and the Secretariat**

To optimise the functioning of the MAG and the IGF Secretariat we urge the UN Secretary General to appoint an IGF Special Advisor and an Executive Secretary. We recognise the successful and hard work of the Secretariat, but convening such a huge event and facilitating the work of a large group of diverse volunteers (the MAG) is not a trivial exercise and requires strong leadership, resource mobilisation and coordination capacity.

The MAG could expand its role to include the production of an annual report focused on the outcomes of the IGF each year. Outcomes emerge (and have emerged) in multiple ways and it is necessary to capture and communicate them. This will reaffirm the value of the IGF as an open space for internet governance debate. Workshop and main session organisers could be asked to identify the outcomes of the sessions. In addition, the IGF Secretariat could develop a survey for the internet community to indicate what they view as being the three main outcomes of the IGF each year.

It is also crucial that guidelines for workshop selection by the MAG be communicated more clearly and that the overall selection process be more transparent.

We also recommend that the Secretariat, working with the MAG and the chair and participants of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) Working Group on Improvements to the IGF, compile a progress report on implementation of its recommendations finalised in 2012.

With regard to financing the IGF, we would like the MAG, working with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the Secretariat, to identify mechanisms that can facilitate the collection of smaller contributions and donations from the IGF community.

## **5.5 The role of the IGF in the internet governance ecosystem**

The IGF is a space for debate and the convergence and cross-pollination of ideas and perspectives: The IGF should be used as a platform for open public debate, consultation and discussion with the broader internet governance community of what emerges from the CSTD Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation, the Global Multistakeholder Meeting on the Future of Internet Governance (NetMundial) and the WSIS+10 review process. Even though those processes are of great relevance, they should not be seen as substitutes for an annual, UN-linked, open-to-all-stakeholders, bottom-up-organised event such as the IGF.

Internet censorship and the 2014 host country: APC is concerned with the increasing censorship and filtering of content and expression online in Turkey. We urge the 2014 host country to cease all its efforts to censor the internet. If Turkey continues to do so, we recommend that the MAG consider identifying an alternative host country.

## **6. Acknowledgements**

APC extends our appreciation to the Indonesian Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) and the local organising committee for making the IGF happen in 2013 in spite of many obstacles faced along the way. APC wants to thank the IGF Secretariat which once again managed to pull off a huge and successful event under challenging circumstances (we say this every year!). Thank you also to UNDESA and other UN staff (including the familiar and now often friendly faces of the security team) for their invaluable operational support. We also thank all those who contribute the financial support which makes the IGF possible, and the interpreters, the captioners and the remote participation team who make it such a uniquely inclusive event. Thanks also to the members of the MAG for the intensive effort they put into developing the programme – work that is not always visible to IGF participants. We thank the workshop organisers for their effort and commitment and the many hundreds of participants who make the IGF the dynamic space that it is. We believe it should continue to play its pivotal role as “the” common, open, international, multi-stakeholder and interactive platform for debate, learning and innovation in people-centred and public interest-oriented internet governance.