



## FINAL REPORT FROM THE 13th INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM

### IGF: CHANGE NEEDED TO STAY RELEVANT

The IGF will need to adapt quickly in order to remain relevant in the fast changing digital world. This was the writing on the 'IGF wall' in keynote addresses, workshops, and corridor discussions.

For the first time in the IGF's history, the annual meeting was presided over by both the host country's head of state and the UN Secretary-General. In sharp contrast with this officialdom, government representation was low compared to civil society and the business community. The Secretary-General encouraged the IGF to reach out to governments, in particular those from developing countries.

One of the potential reasons for dwindling government participation is that the IGF 'needs to produce more than just debate and reflection'. Last year, the IGF made a step forward by gathering conclusions of discussions in the form of Geneva Messages. This year, French President Emmanuel Macron made the following proposals for the IGF reform:

- The IGF needs to reform, according to Macron, 'to become a body producing tangible proposals'. Switzerland, France, and Germany, as the previous, current, and next host, have also been supporting more concrete outputs in the IGF deliberations.

[Continued on page 2](#)



## IN THIS Report

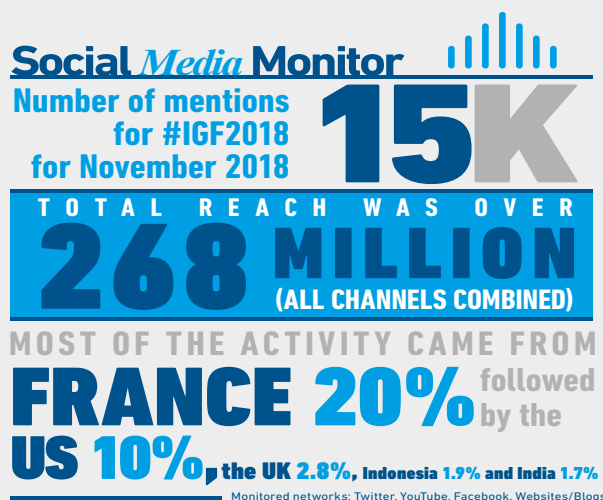
Commentary [1-3](#)  
Social Media monitor [2](#)  
Data Analysis: What the transcripts say [4](#)  
Summarising IGF 2018 [5-11](#)  
Towards IGF 2019 [12](#)  
Contributors [12](#)

## IGF 2018 *in numbers*



### Social Media monitor

This IGF generated plenty of buzz on social media, with over 15 000 mentions, reaching over 286 million people since the beginning of November. The mentions started building up slowly during the first week of November, eventually gaining momentum and culminating on the first day of the IGF with more than 6000 mentions. French President Emmanuel Macron featured in a little over 20% of the mentions (1400). Most of the activity came from France (20%), followed by the USA (10%), the UK (2.8%), Indonesia (1.9%), and India (1.7%). Monitoring was carried out on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, as well as on news websites and blogs, from 1 November to 16 November. The hashtag #igf2018 and the IGF's official website were analysed by social media monitoring tool Awario.



Continued from page 1

- Macron also proposed that the IGF fall directly under the UN Secretary-General.
- As a tangible task, he also suggested that the IGF be entrusted with monitoring the evolution of the text of the newly launched Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace, as well as recording those who are supporting it, and identifying initiatives and measures necessary to reach its goals.

The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, also proposed ways of improving the IGF:

- The IGF should not only be multistakeholder, but also multidisciplinary in order to address the lingering silos. Technological, policy, and economic perspectives should be brought into close interplay. The forum should more involve philosophers, anthropologists, and other specialists who are not typically included in technology gatherings.
- The IGF should speak with more clarity to be understood not only by those who attend events, but also by those who are affected by digital developments worldwide.
- It should reach out to those who are currently missing or underrepresented, asking them to contribute to its work. Small and developing states, youth, elderly, and women are among those whose voices should be heard more in IGF and other digital processes.

The IGF faces the test of relevance in a fast changing environment. Change and agility have been in the IGF's DNA since the first meeting in Athens in 2006. It pioneered remote participation, dynamic coalitions, Internet governance hubs, and many other policy innovations. However, digital developments are accelerating faster than ever before involving governments, businesses, and citizens worldwide. Digital issues are becoming increasingly urgent ranging from cybersecurity, fake news, and AI.

The IGF has a unique format, UN legitimacy, and the expertise needed to remain the place where digital policy issues are addressed in both multistakeholder and multidisciplinary ways. This journey of IGF reform started last year in Geneva and gained more momentum this year in Paris. The journey will continue towards Berlin next year.

### Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace

While the IGF was running from 12 to 14 November, two other events were organised (in parallel) during the Paris Peace Week: the inaugural events of the Paris Peace Forum and the Govtech Summit.

A new initiative launched during the week was the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace, a framework for regulating the Internet and fighting cyber-attacks, hate speech, and other cyber-threats. The text calls on states, international organisations, NGOs, businesses, local authorities, and local actors to work together to uphold international law

Continued on page 3

Continued from page 2

in cyberspace, protect rights online, fight against destabilising activities, and ensure the security of digital products.

The call builds on the language used in the WSIS Tunis Agenda: actors are responsible 'in their respective roles' for improving the trust, security, and stability of cyberspace. Without a specific reference, the call also builds on (and adds to) the 2013 report of the UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE),<sup>1</sup> which reaffirms that international law is applicable to cyberspace. With the emphasis on the importance of norms during peacetime and of confidence building measures, the call also acknowledges the UN GGE's 2015 report.<sup>2</sup>

Hundreds of organisations, as well as most European countries,<sup>3</sup> have already signed the Paris Call. Of the UN Security Council's five permanent members, however, the USA, Russia, and China are notably absent.

### The future of humanity, guided by philosophy, ethics, and digital co-operation

'Technology should empower, not overpower us,' Guterres said in his speech. Technology is impacting the future of humanity, and we are now faced with a 'new generation of challenges'. Macron's views were slightly starker: The Internet we take for granted is under threat. The structure will fragment if we do not ensure its stability, trust and security; Internet-related 'pathologies' are growing; the ideals and values of the Internet are being threatened.

The writing is therefore also on the wall for actors involved in digital policy. Governments need to continue respecting the rule of law and protect their citizens through legal frameworks; the private sector needs to get ready for new regulations, especially in areas where self-regulation is proving to be insufficient; civil society needs to strengthen its role of vigilance, and check on the actions of governments and businesses.

Guterres and Macron focused on the here-and-now of the policy challenges that they face as political leaders. Many sessions at the IGF were future-oriented, discussing, for example, artificial intelligence (AI) and the role of ethics. Concerned with the risk that AI developments may widen existing divides, and lead to increased security and economic-related issues, an echoing message was that we need to deal with broader issues that will impact the future of humanity.

### New issues, missing issues

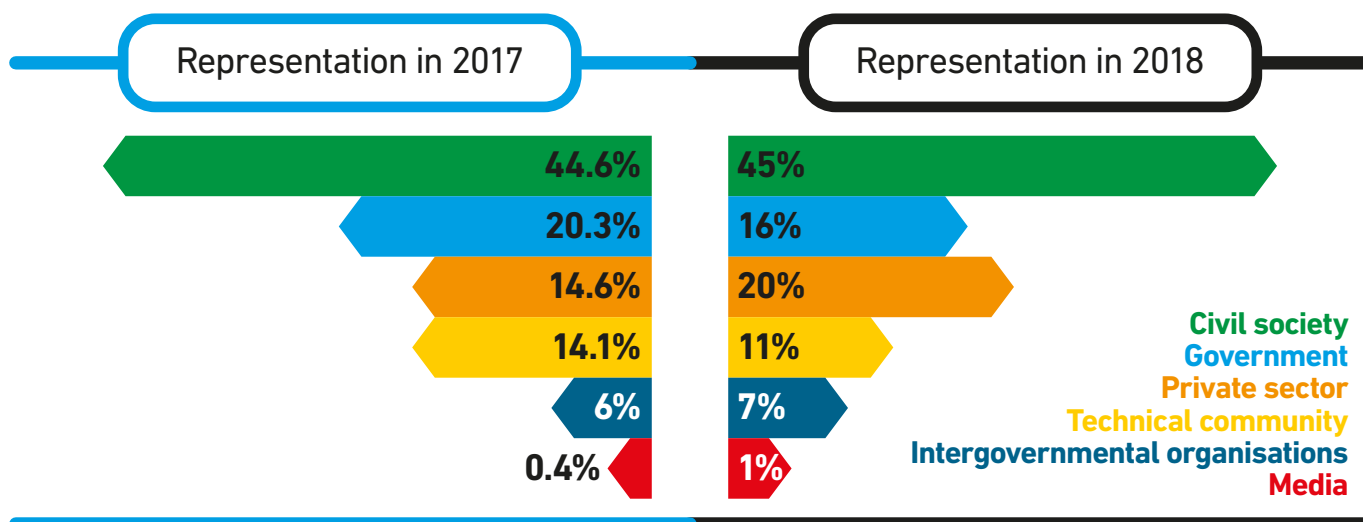
AI was one of the most prominent topics this year. It was mainly addressed in the context of future (un)known developments, but was also more specific on a few new aspects: AI's potential to improve social, economic, health, and other sectors; the need to integrate ethical considerations into its development; and the cautionary perspective that raises security concerns.

What 'cultural trace' will the digital era leave behind? 'For the youngest generations', Macron said, 'the Internet is completely taken for granted.' If today's youngest generations are starting to forget, or are even unaware of, a time when the Internet did not exist, future generations may be increasingly de-linked from the cultural legacy of humanity. The rights of future generations are rarely discussed, and it is not surprising that they were absent from this year's IGF. Yet, it seems strange that in all our discussions on the future of technology, we keep forgetting about those who will be the recipients and the users in that future.

Interestingly, although there were fewer sessions dedicated to human rights in a broad way, digital rights permeated throughout the discussions. In addition, several sessions specifically tackled children and young person's rights, the rights of persons with disabilities, and the rights of journalists.

Continued on page 4

## Stakeholder representation



Continued from page 3

## The IGF and the UN Panel on Digital Cooperation

The IGF and the UN Panel on Digital Cooperation created many synergies during the November meeting following an opening statement by the UN Secretary-General who invited the IGF and the Panel 'to inspire new thinking and language on digital cooperation; create shared references; propose new approaches; and look for possible ways to reframe existing problems, be they in trade, security and human rights'.

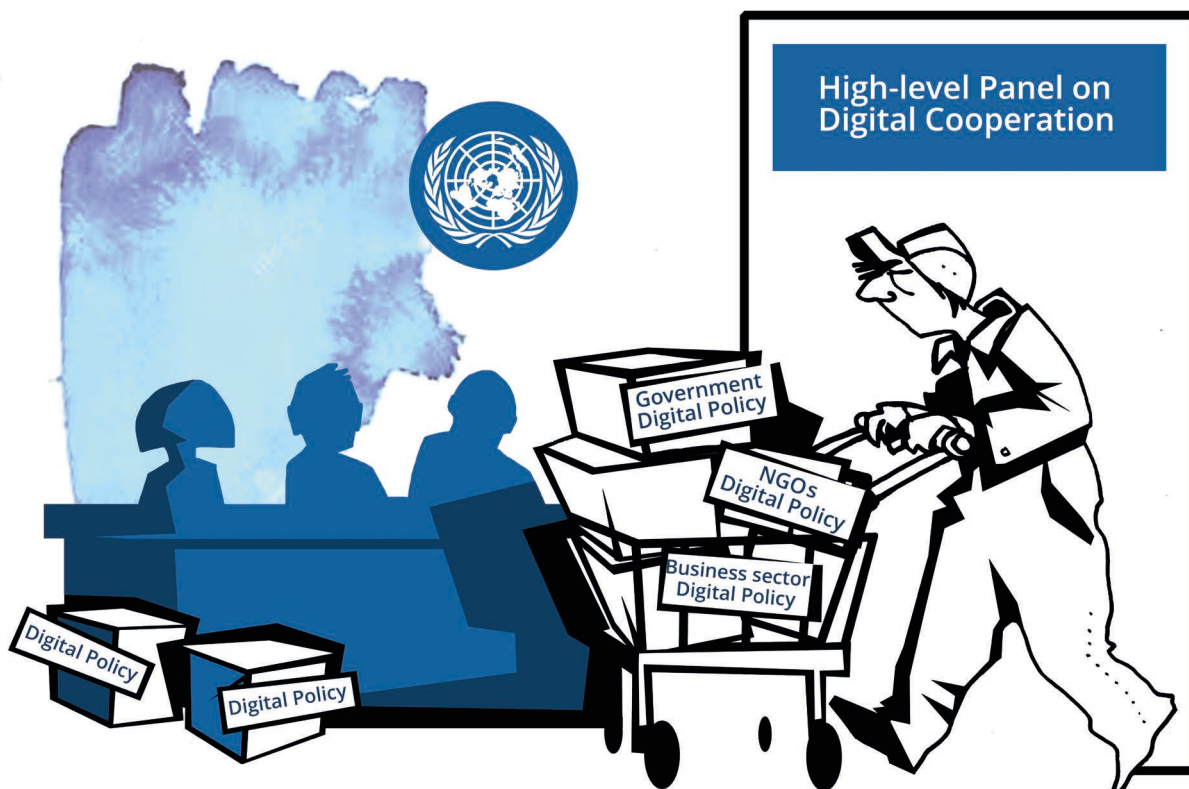
IGF discussions provided a lot of ideas and inputs for the Panel's deliberations on values, principles, and mechanisms for digital co-operation. In particular, many workshops focused on the Panel's action areas: inclusive development, data, inclusive economy, trust and security, and human rights and human agency. According to the IGF transcripts, the Panel was discussed or referred to in 17 sessions at the IGF.

At the open forum session, the Panel briefed the IGF community about the current consultative process and next steps in its activities. Panel members were active in many IGF sessions. Ms Doris Leuthard, Swiss Minister of Telecommunication, indicated that the Panel's report can

provide new ideas and proposals for strengthening the IGF as a unique example of multistakeholder governance and digital co-operation.

Mr Nikolai Astrup, Norwegian Minister of International Development, highlighted the relevance of digital public goods for digital cooperation. Dr Cathy Mulligan, from University College London, reflected on the multidisciplinary relevance of data for overcoming policy silos in a digital policy space. Ms Nanjira Sambuli, from the World Wide Web Foundation, focused on the accountability of all actors involved in designing technologies for ensuring the protection of human rights and human-centred digital developments. Dr Jovan Kurbalija, Executive Director and Co-lead of the Panel's Secretariat, focused on the engagement process and the Panel's efforts to hear views on digital co-operation from communities worldwide. In this context, consultation meetings were held with civil society, the tech community, and dynamic coalitions dealing with disabilities and the digital needs of small and developing countries.

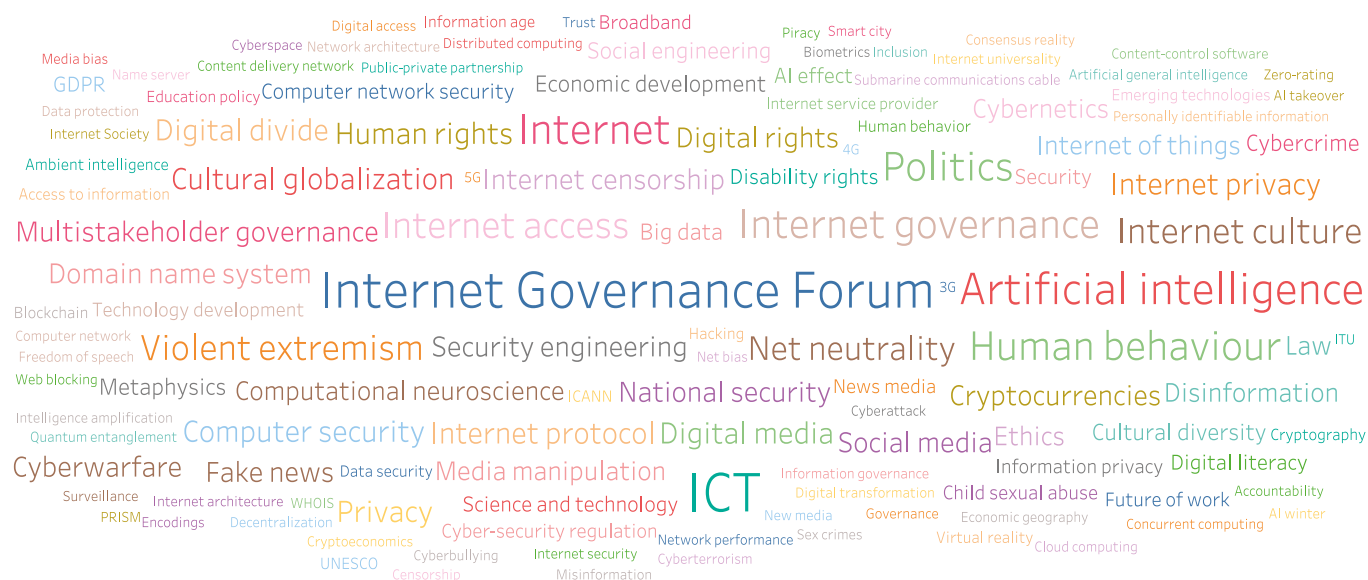
The IGF and the Panel will continue their close collaboration via national/regional IGFs in the build-up to IGF 2019 in Berlin.



## DATA ANALYSIS: WHAT THE TRANSCRIPTS SAY

### Tag Cloud

What were the most pressing issues? Which topics were most mentioned? The data analysis carried out on 135 transcripts during the three days of this year's IGF shows that the main discussions centred on AI, digital rights, cybersecurity, infrastructure, and content-related issues. The tag cloud shows 120 digital policy terms used during the discussions.



### Prominent Issues

Data analysis of the IGF 2018's transcripts confirms that the main discussions centred on AI, digital rights, jurisdiction issues, and cybersecurity. The issues are based on the *Digital Watch* taxonomy.

Discussions on these topics cut across many sessions. A survey of the session descriptions shows that Access had the highest number of sessions. This was closely followed by Trust, ethics, and interdisciplinary approaches; Content policy; Artificial intelligence; and Network security.

Data analysis of the transcripts was carried out by DiploFoundation's Data Team, using transcripts captured from real-time captioning, which were then processed by text analysis software using a custom digital policy dictionary.

#### TOP 10 DOMINANT ISSUES

**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**

PRIVACY, DATA PROTECTION, AND OTHER DIGITAL RIGHTS

**JURISDICTION CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE**

**CONTENT POLICY RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

GENDER RIGHTS ONLINE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND YOUTH ISSUES

**NETWORK SECURITY ACCESS**

## SUMMARISING IGF 2018: THE ISSUES THAT MATTERED MOST

This thematic summary highlights the main issues of this year's IGF, grouped according to the seven baskets in the *Digital Watch* taxonomy. [↗](#)

### Technology and Infrastructure

#### Emerging technologies: Leaving no one behind

New emerging technologies – artificial intelligence (AI), big data, and blockchain – have reopened the old question of whether technological developments will widen or reduce digital gaps in modern society. Many see a solution for digital inclusion via an inclusive digital economy. [↗](#) Other mechanisms include pro-inclusion national and international legal frameworks, public-private partnerships (PPPs), [↗](#) alignment of technology with core ethical values and socio-cultural contexts of communities worldwide. [↗](#) A potential new digital division could diminish trust among those who are falling behind regarding the potential of technology to improve their lives. [↗](#)

Take AI as an example. It can help achieve the sustainable development goals (SDGs). [↗](#) But for this to happen, education and capacity development are needed so that individuals can have the skills and knowledge to develop and use AI products and services. [↗](#) A new gap is emerging in the absence of the Global South in AI-related policy debates on international level. [↗](#)

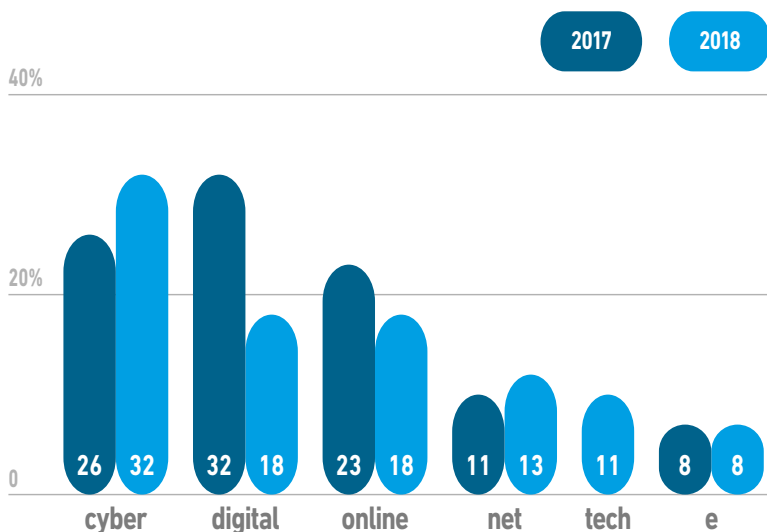
#### Infrastructure: Between community networks and 5G technology

The IGF's focus on the latest tech developments in the AI field was balanced out with discussions on the challenges of basic connectivity faced by millions worldwide. [↗](#) Community networks are simple, effective, and affordable solutions for increasing connectivity in developing countries. Enabling regulations can facilitate the development of community networks by inclusive finance, effective use of spectrum (better spectrum allocation), [↗](#) transferring knowledge, and sharing infrastructures. [↗](#)

Encouraging PPPs, using universal service funds, providing incentives to the private sector, and using innovative approaches (such as the reuse of TV white spaces) can also help improve infrastructure deployment around the world. [↗](#)

5G as a technology needs to be progressively introduced in all parts of the world to allow users to enjoy its beneficial features. Proactive regulatory approaches and partnerships to explore the full benefits of 5G could be stepping stones in that direction. [↗](#)

### Prefix Monitor



The use of prefixes in digital policy is indicative of the trends and developments in the field. For the six identified prefixes, their prominence is suggestive of the stance that actors take in relation to a particular issue.

In comparison to last year, the prefix *cyber* was the most prominent, surpassing *digital* and *online* – terms typically associated with development and economic issues, and human rights. This is mainly due to a significant number of sessions this year dedicated to *cyber*-related issues, including cybercrime, cybersecurity, cyberconflict, and cyberbullying. In discussions on human rights, the distinction between online and offline is losing relevance (mainly because of the several resolutions which declare offline rights to be applicable online), and hence the prefix *online* is used less overall.

A new prefix which has emerged in digital policy parlance and in data analysis is *tech*. The *tech* industry and *tech* companies typically refer to giant companies in the private sector, particularly in the Silicon Valley. *Tech* diplomacy and *tech* embassy reflect the emerging field which describes efforts by governments to increasingly interact with the industry, given its role in global cybersecurity and the protection of critical infrastructure, and other trends.

## SUMMARISING IGF 2018: THE ISSUES THAT MATTERED MOST

### Cybersecurity

#### Need to define rules of behaviour

States are increasing their capacity to conduct cyber-attacks. While there is agreement on the application of international law for wartime, there is a lack of clear rules for state behaviour in peacetime. Further exploring the concept of (cyber)sovereignty, which is vital for international law, may help states to endorse common rules, yet encouraging them to adhere to the agreed norms remains challenging.

Offensive measures by the private sector to defend against cyber-attacks, known as hack-backs, can cause additional security consequences. They are also illegal in some countries. Several processes are discussing norms and responsibilities of state and non-state actors, such as the Geneva Dialogue on Responsible Behaviour, the Global Commission on Stability of Cyberspace, and now the Paris Call for Trust and Security in Cyberspace.

#### Internet of Things: Governments propose new principles

In response to concerns over security of the Internet of Things (IoT), the UK has developed the Code of Practice for Consumer IoT Security with guidelines for manufacturers, which may be turned into a standard for the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI). Other governments are also stepping in to create rules.

Service providers need to integrate encryption more strongly into these services, particularly for IoT applications. Users should be able to control their personal data on connected devices, have the opportunity to make clear choices and know how long vendors will support devices in terms of security updates.

#### User-centric approach to regulation

Effective cybersecurity requires inclusivity and buy-in from the wider population. Internet users should be at the centre of participatory and consultative processes to develop cybersecurity policies and legislation. Civil society can play a vital role in strengthening the participation of Internet users and citizens worldwide by raising awareness, developing cyber competences of citizens, devising policy mechanisms to involve society, understanding technologies, and increasing public trust in political processes. Developing countries in particular can benefit greatly by building cybersecurity awareness and capacities of Internet users.

Cybersecurity regulation should be aligned with human rights provision and overall ethics. It should also ensure the strengthening of cyber-capabilities. One IGF discussion highlighted the focus on infrastructure rather than content in regulating cybersecurity. In addition to regulation, business modes for new digital products should also integrate human rights and ethics, and transparency.

Even if there is effective cybersecurity regulation, there is a problem of jurisdiction across national borders. The main challenge is how investigating authorities in one country can request data from private actors in another country (e.g. tech platforms).

#### Protecting children from harm

For a long time, there was unproportional focus on inappropriate content for children on the dark web. The IGF discussion provided more realistic focus on the risks for children that exist on the more easily accessed open web. There, the tech industry remains a crucial actor in detecting and removing such harmful content. In addition, developing children's digital and media literacy helps them protect themselves. While child protection is important, child safety should be put into the context of children's rights in the digital age and be at the heart of products and services developed for them.

#### The need for more cyber capacity building

The Delhi Communiqué on a GFCE Global Agenda for Cyber Capacity issued on the occasion of the 2017 Global Conference on Cyberspace, placed the need for cyber capacity building on the high-level political agenda, and outlined five focus areas. The Global Forum on Cyber Expertise is an example of a global public-private-civil partnership which encourages international co-operation on cyber capacity building.

In this context, other initiatives are gaining prominence, including the the Geneva Initiative on Capacity Development in Digital Policy which focuses on the development of individual, institutional, and national capacities in the field of cybersecurity.



## SUMMARISING IGF 2018: THE ISSUES THAT MATTERED MOST

### Human rights

#### Concerns increase over use of biometric data

The recent report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern over the use of biometric data by governments and the private sector. Many developments worldwide show an increasing number of cases of data misuse, and therefore the need for better safeguards and mechanisms to secure and minimise the collection and processing of sensitive data. Many NGOs and humanitarian organisations are advocating for improved language around biometric rules, and for more transparency, accountability, and remedial action in cases of abuse.

#### Journalists need more protection

Journalists face increasing online harassment and abuse. In some parts of the world, female journalists are under additional pressure with threats of rape and leaking private information publicly. This places journalists in a constant state of risk, and is driving many to self-censor or change careers.

Capacity building measures and the provision of legal support and other types of material assistance are needed to support the victims and avoid the increasing trend of self-censorship.

#### Call for strengthening support for rights of persons with disabilities

The venue of this year's IGF was criticised over the lack of physical access, the difficulty in accessing online information, poor signage, and the lack of facilitation for those with other disabilities, such as autism. A call for an improvement in the lead-up to upcoming IGFs was made; regular meetings will take place to ensure that persons with disabilities have better opportunities for access and participation.

Sessions offered recommendations for closing the accessibility gap for persons with disabilities. Discussions focused on the broader perspective of building a more inclusive society and providing training for ICT developers and policy shapers in ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities. Since persons with disabilities are functionally limited by their environment, technology should be made accessible to them and standards should be both developed and enforced.

#### Countries assessing data protection frameworks

The EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into effect in May 2018, triggered many discussions at the IGF on approaches to data protection worldwide. A number of Commonwealth states, for instance, have limited legislation to address data protection. Such countries need assistance to build capacity and raise awareness. The aim of the newly established Common Threat Network, supported by the UK and Canada, is to help countries develop national data protection frameworks. In Africa, several countries are updating their laws in line with the GDPR.

### Highlights for Day 1



### Highlights for Day 2



#### Threats to human rights

Threats to freedom of expression and privacy, and the persistent gender digital divide, dominated discussions on human rights. That unfettered access to data is eroding users' privacy is one of the main findings of Freedom House's latest *Freedom on the Net* report. Online manipulation was another important threat identified in the report. The growing number of cases of blocking, filtering, and Internet shutdowns continues to threaten the Internet's freedom. In some cases, stakeholders shy away from discussing these issues, making it more difficult to have meaningful multistakeholder dialogues, conducive to solutions.

The gender digital divide continues to persist in low-income countries, due to cultural beliefs that tend to favour men over women. Women's access to technology is often restricted or monitored by their own family members. This hampers any possibility for women to be equally represented in the technology field or to participate on an equal footing with men in politics.



## SUMMARISING IGF 2018: THE ISSUES THAT MATTERED MOST

### Legal and regulatory

#### AI: Ethical and legal challenges need to be considered

The big AI narratives – dystopian and utopian – remain vibrant. Yet, AI discussion is maturing as AI applications are being developed in a wide range of sectors, from public services and agriculture, to environmental protection and multilingualism.

For these applications to meaningfully benefit society, they need to be 'pro-people'. Ethical and legal challenges need to be seriously considered. Ethics and human rights should be used as guiding principles in the design and use of AI. Human rights impact assessments should be carried out early in the development process. A thorough look at the challenges related to transparency, accountability, fairness, due diligence, and the rule of law is also needed.

Discussions on AI also included the interplay between law and ethics, and its impact on the future development of AI systems. Yet many questions remain unanswered. Which ethical aspects need to be considered in the development of AI, and how will we ensure that AI systems are not harmful to society? Who will ensure this?

#### EU's Copyright Directive criticised

In 2018, two contentious provisions related to the so-called link (or snippet) tax (Article 11), and the upload filter (Article 13) of the EU Copyright Directive.

The link tax, which gives news publishers the right of remuneration if snippets of their news are made available by another entity, could negatively affect the decentralised nature of content sharing, and could stifle competition. Internet giants are more likely to have the economic and legal power to face the burden of the new tax, but startups may find it harder to enter the content market.

The directive also requires online service providers hosting copyrighted content to take measures to safeguard the rights of their authors. While these rights need to be protected, the directive was criticised for endangering the accessibility of content due to filtering rules. Content filters

### Economic

#### New technologies bring new economic challenges

There is still much to learn about how new technologies, such as AI, will affect trade, regional integration, and education. However, there seems to be some general agreement on the need to consider their potential harmful impact on human society. The interplay between AI and employment was particularly discussed during the IGF. Governments and the private sector share responsibility to make young people

have already experienced problems: Algorithms are unable to recognise parody and often take down legal content.

#### WHOIS: Privacy issues unresolved

The IGF hosted another round of discussions on adjusting the WHOIS system to the EU GDPR requirements. While these discussions have traditionally been held within ICANN, opening up the debate to the broader IGF community offered an opportunity for more input to be collected on the following main questions: Who should be allowed to access personal data related to domain names and Internet protocol addresses, and under which conditions?

On the one hand, actors such as computer emergency response teams (CERTs) and law enforcement agencies argue that they need to continue to have access to WHOIS data, as such data is crucial in their crime-related investigations. On the other hand, privacy advocates underline that personal data should be safeguarded from mining and abuse, due processes should be put in place, and the users of data should be held accountable for how they process the data.



employable in the future. Public authorities also need to tackle the issues that the platform economy creates, such as challenges related to pensions and labour rights.

#### Blockchain: When technology impacts governmental structures

New technologies, such as AI and blockchain, have great potential to boost economic development. Many argue that

## SUMMARISING IGF 2018: THE ISSUES THAT MATTERED MOST

blockchain can also improve the governance of nation states. To achieve that, efforts towards improving the governance of these new technologies, fostering transparency, trust, and co-operation, need to be made. [↗](#)

### Self-regulation by online platforms no longer sufficient

Online platforms have grown in reach and scope. The self-regulatory model is no longer enough. A participatory approach involving both public authorities and the platforms themselves is required. [↗](#) The community of users needs to be included in the process. [↗](#)

## Development

### Digital tools and the SDGs

Development discussions emphasised that digital tools are essential for achieving the SDGs. [↗](#) [↗](#) [↗](#) Technology has a positive impact on development. AI, for instance, has the potential to help attain the SDGs; so do other emerging technologies. [↗](#)

The involvement of the business sector is essential for achieving the SDGs. It has a responsibility for the secure use of technology, and through a multistakeholder setting, a role in shaping policies for an innovation-enabled environment. [↗](#)

### Humanitarian issues in focus

Solutions for access should not focus only on technology, but also on the human aspects of connectivity. Given the plight of refugees, Internet access – especially through mobile devices – is crucially important to them, in addition to the more intuitive and widely recognised rights. Up to one-third of disposable income among refugees is spent on connectivity. [↗](#)

### Inclusive access and last mile

Innovative approaches should be put in place to connect the still high number of people in underserved areas to the Internet. Low-cost connectivity options and low power solutions are important options for deprived settings. [↗](#) [↗](#) [↗](#) [↗](#)



At the same time, policymakers should refrain from seeking to regulate societal problems by regulating the Internet's underlying technology. Regulation should not undermine the core values of the Internet, such as its distributed and end-to-end nature. [↗](#)

Since the early days of the Internet, users have been sharing an extensive amount of personal data, mostly because they were not aware of the risks involved in doing so. In the past two decades, online platforms have also evolved substantially; the data underlying their business models is much more sensitive. [↗](#) Platforms therefore need to be more proactive in assessing and informing the risks of sharing personal data. [↗](#)

The Dynamic Coalition on SIDS in the Internet Economy addressed the issues of affordability (broadband and Internet price control measures), accessibility (the digital divide, and the role of community Internet resources in education and social development), and emergency accessibility due to the high vulnerability of SIDS. [↗](#)

Libraries, whose traditional role could diminish in the Internet era, may find new functions as promoters and providers of Internet access, especially in underserved areas and marginalised communities. The draft toolkit from the Dynamic Coalition on Public Access in Libraries empowers librarians with the knowledge necessary to discuss and advocate for Internet access. [↗](#)

The open forum organised by the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation introduced digital public goods as a conceptual framework to address the digital divide. [↗](#)

### Capacity development remains an issue close to the IGF

While many sessions confirmed the need for capacity development in Internet governance, one session focused on practical steps to achieve it. [↗](#) How do we avoid competition, create meaningful co-operation and partnerships between various actors, and ensure sustainable impact?

Capacity development is a cross-cutting issue impacting economic, social, and infrastructure aspects of digital growth. The need for people to acquire the new skills needed to effectively use new technologies remains an over-arching capacity development theme. To prepare for the jobs of tomorrow, continuous learning is a task not only for educational systems, but a cultural challenge for all of society. [↗](#) [↗](#)

Discussions on capacity development also covered awareness and knowledge development for effective data regulations, [↗](#) closing gender gaps, [↗](#) training journalists to deal with misinformation, [↗](#) and strengthening the capacities of individuals and communities to deal with cyberbullying and hate speech. [↗](#)

## SUMMARISING IGF 2018: THE ISSUES THAT MATTERED MOST

### Socio-cultural

Among the sociocultural issues, the interrelated topics of online misinformation, fake news, hate speech, and violent extremism took centre stage. The danger of fake news arises from its virality, its cross-border nature, and the challenges related to regulation.

#### Political implications of misinformation and fake news

One discussion suggested the term ‘information disorder’ to describe factual information that is released with malicious intent, for example by political adversaries. There are concerns about the rise in extreme ideas in mainstream discussions and the strategic and disruptive use of fake news in times of elections, especially in light of the recent cases in Brazil. Democracies need to navigate the tension between free speech and addressing fake news.

#### Content policy to tackle misinformation and fake news

A number of discussions focused on content policy as a possible response. Participants stressed that multistakeholder approaches are key to providing checks and balances and to avoiding the concentration of regulatory power in the hands of just one actor. Facebook’s partnership with the French government to use fact-checking tools to combat fake news emerged as a positive example.

Additional debates suggested that broader solutions that look at systemic effects and take cultural differences into consideration are needed. Concerns were raised about the gatekeeper role of social media platforms and other digital intermediaries. Yet, we also saw suggestions about adding civil liabilities to hold platforms accountable and those that mentioned criminalising fake news. In contrast, softer regulation models take the form of standardisation and certification schemes.

#### Hate speech and self-regulation

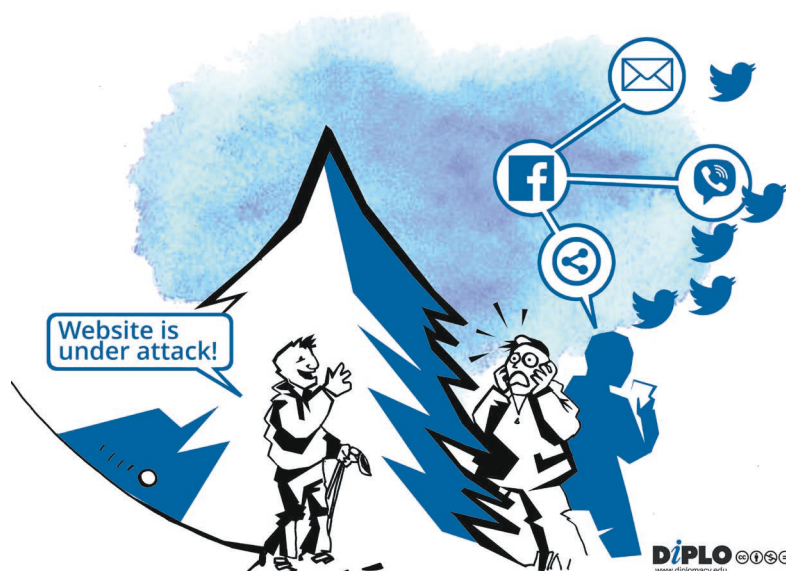
With regard to hate speech, self-regulation complements legal approaches and should be transparent. The EU’s Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online offers a good partnership model for governments and Internet companies. General Policy Recommendation No. 15 on combating hate speech, by the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), is also considered an important document, as it covers legal and administrative measures, self-regulatory mechanisms, and effective monitoring of online content.

#### Digital literacy and online learning

At the same time, we should not forget to strengthen digital literacy as a means of countering misinformation and fake news. Related to this, discussions highlighted online learning opportunities in the area of Internet governance and stressed that digital skills need to be built from an early age, not least to prepare people for the future of work. Taking this further, the right to online education was emphasised and noted in conjunction with the right to culture and access to knowledge.

#### Digital identities, local content, and multilingualism

With regard to digital identities, discussions called for more choice in defining online identities, offering reminders not to forget the human rights dimensions of this discussion, and demands to strengthen privacy and security. This IGF saw the expansion of coverage of local content, and discussions stressed the challenges surrounding empowering local content, especially in minority languages. Lack of access, digital skills, and additional funding were identified as the main barriers.



## TOWARDS IGF 2019

The next IGF will be hosted by Germany, in Berlin, on 25–29 November 2019. Described as a full-year process, preparations began during IGF 2018 itself, with a session aimed at gathering inputs to shape the 2019 event. The German government, convener of the next meeting, plan to involve governments and the private sector more prominently. Funds have been allocated to support the participation of developing countries.

Additional events will take place in the city in the lead-up to the IGF. The annual meeting of the Freedom Online Coalition (FOC), an intergovernmental coalition of 30 countries currently under the chairmanship of Germany, will take place in Berlin on 28–30 November 2018. The Internet & Jurisdiction Policy Network will then hold its 3rd Global Conference on 3–5 June 2019, also in Berlin.



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## Session reports available on the *Digital Watch* observatory

Throughout the IGF, the Geneva Internet Platform reported from most sessions. Read the reports by the GIP's rapporteurs, at <https://dig.watch/igf2018>

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