

Internet Governance Forum Preview: Bound for Bali

by [Emma Llansó](#) [1]
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Next week, the 8th annual [Internet Governance Forum \(IGF\)](#) [2] kicks off in Bali, Indonesia. Matthew Shears, Director of CDT's Global Internet Policy & Human Rights Project, and I are headed to Bali for a full week of meetings and workshops on pressing issues of Internet governance and policy. The IGF brings together human rights advocates, Internet policy experts, academics, engineers, governments, and members of industry from around the world to share information and expertise on a wide range of Internet policy topics.

CDT will be busy during IGF (which runs from 22-25 October) and three days of pre-events. We'll be highlighting several CDT policy papers, including our paper on [Unpacking Cybersecurity](#) [3], our thoughts on [Network Neutrality and Human Rights](#) [4], and an upcoming paper on Network Shutdowns. And we're looking forward to convening with our civil society colleagues through the [BestBits meeting](#) [5] on the 19th and 20th of October. (Remote participation registration for [BestBits](#) [5] is still available.) See our [IGF Resources](#) [6] page for more on our schedule of workshops and events.

Why the IGF?

So why are hundreds of Internet policy enthusiasts headed to Bali? It's not just for a love of interesting conversation (or the beach) – the IGF is one of the truly global, multistakeholder venues for Internet policy deliberation. Attendance is open to all comers, and participants have an equal ability to engage in open discussions during workshops, roundtables, and meetings of [dynamic coalitions](#) [7] that work on topics such as network neutrality or Internet rights and principles throughout the year.

The IGF provides stakeholders with the opportunity to learn about new and emerging issues in Internet policy and to exchange views with leading experts on some of Internet policy's [thorniest challenges](#) [8]. Workshop topics run the gamut from [online child safety and children's rights](#) [9] to [secure routing protocols](#) [10] to [understanding privacy and data protection in cross-cultural contexts](#) [11] to [gender equality in Internet governance processes](#) [12] – and many more. Each year, the IGF is organized around particular themes that are driving Internet policy around the world. This year's themes include human rights, free expression, and the free flow of information online; access, diversity, and using the Internet as an engine for growth and sustainable development; and the legal and other frameworks that can be used to address security issues such as spam, hacking, and cyber-crime. Of course, given the months of revelations about widespread [communications surveillance by the U.S. National Security Agency](#) [13] and other governments we expect that state surveillance – and the role of the US in particular – will be a major focal point of discussion this year.

Another key theme at this year's IGF is “principles of multistakeholder cooperation.” “Multistakeholder” is a favorite buzzword in Internet governance debates – the basic idea behind the term is that industry, civil society, governments, technical experts, academics, and others with a stake in Internet policy should be involved in policy development processes. But what multistakeholder cooperation looks like, how it's implemented, and in which venues, are all subjects of continued debate. As many governments advocate for a greater role for government in the [multistakeholder model](#) [14], there's a clear potential for “multistakeholder” to be defined in a way that cuts non-government stakeholders out. The IGF presents a great opportunity for stakeholders to come together on equal terms to hash out the meaning of “multistakeholder” and better understand the concerns and challenges faced by different stakeholders. On Wednesday of next week, Matthew will be co-moderating a focus session on [this year's theme](#) [15], which follows a session on [Internet governance principles](#) [16].

We're also looking forward to the Best Bits meeting of civil society groups who are active in Internet

governance and policy work. Best Bits met for the first time before last year's IGF. At that meeting, we developed a [joint statement](#) [17] from civil society concerning the barriers to our participation in the ITU's [2012 World Conference on International Telecommunications](#) [18]. This year, we'll be focusing on ongoing Internet governance activity in the [CSTD Working Group on Enhanced Cooperation](#) [19] and the ITU's upcoming [WSIS+10 review meeting](#) [20]. We'll also be taking up the topic of state surveillance and human rights, and investigating what opportunities there are for organizing civil society and other stakeholders in efforts to resist and reform state surveillance activities.

The IGF is a crucial opportunity for those involved in Internet policy – whether as civil society, industry, government, or simply as users – to develop a broader context for the issues they work on. Whether it's discussing the essential elements of national-level network neutrality policy, catching up with Brazilian colleagues about the [developments for the Marco Civil](#) [21], or strategizing with [civil society and other stakeholders](#) [22] about ways to respond to the NSA surveillance revelations, we're looking forward to accomplishing a lot during a few short days.

We'll be providing regular updates from the IGF on Twitter ([@cendemtech](#) [23], [@matthew_shears](#) [24], and [@ellanso](#) [25]) and our [IGF](#) [6] [Resources page](#) [6].

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