The Center for Democracy & Technology (CDT) is pleased to submit these comments for consideration in the upcoming stock taking of the 10th IGF and in the planning for the 11th IGF.

IGF Joao Pessoa - a more rewarding IGF but further enhancements are necessary

There were significant improvements and innovations at IGF2015, including a greater willingness to experiment with session formats, more in-depth and substantive discussions on a range of key issues, and, most importantly, intersessional work that culminated in substantive outputs.   The IGF continues to demonstrate its added value to policy, development and human rights discussions, as well as cementing its important place in the Internet governance ecosystem. This said, certain organizational, structural and session related elements continue to need review.

Venue/location

The IGF 2015 conference facility was impressive; its day to day management was effective and responsive to the needs of the participants. However, the location selected for the IGF was not ideal. Joao Pessoa is a small resort town at least a one-hop from a major international airport, adding travel time and costs, the latter being a significant deterrent for some.   For IGF2016 and future IGFs it is essential that the venue be close to a major international airport to facilitate travel and participation.

The accommodation in Joao Pessoa was passable but Internet access was poor in a number of hotels. The distance to the venue was too far (although the buses were relatively efficient). Connectivity, comfort and distance to the venue are important considerations that must be taken into account in the selection of future locations.   Such challenges would likely be mitigated by holding IGF 2016 and future IGFs in - or close to - capitals or large cities reachable by international airlines.

IGF session topics

IGF2015 dealt relatively successfully with "hot" topics such as Zero-rating and there was generally

good coverage of increasingly important issues such as Internet governance and trade and cybersecurity. The IGF must focus more on hot and upcoming policy issues in the future to ensure that it remains relevant and spends less time rehashing familiar issues. Where there are important governance issues that have been addressed extensively, the focus of future sessions should be on new challenges, new approaches, new research and other dimensions that would not have been previously covered. The IGF should ensure that there is a good balance between new and existing issues, as well as fully account for the increasingly broad set of issues that involve or touch upon Internet governance.

Session format/structure

The IGF sought to increase the number and types of session formats. This was well-intentioned but did not materialise in some cases. One workshop proposal specifically sought a "roundtable" format to be able to fully engage with the participants. The room was set up as if for a panel and it was only through the participants' goodwill and some artful reorganizing of the room that a semblance of the intended interactive and working "roundtable" format was achieved. Different workshop formats should be encouraged but only if the venue/facilities can accommodate such formats.

The mix of sessions and their structuring still needs work. The main sessions need further enhancement: there was, yet again, more of the same – familiar talking heads, not enough audience interaction, overly large panels, etc. The choice of speakers for whatever reason still appears to err on the side of caution and familiarity. If the thematic track approach (workshops leading into a main session which worked particularly well for Zero-rating) continues the workshops need to be better represented and integrated into main sessions (rather than just reporting in). The session formats and speaker choices need to be more audacious, focussed on expertise and with the express aim of bringing new, diverse and relevant voices to the discussion.

And, finally, the little things really matter. At future IGFs there needs to be greater space for organized side meetings as well as informal and impromptu meetings. And, coffee, tea and water should be available throughout the day.

The road to IGF2016:

The intersessional work should continue

The intersessional activities have been a significant and welcome enhancement to the scope and focus of the work of the IGF. There has been on-going discussion within the IGF and the broader community about IGF outcomes and outputs. Much of the time this is about whether or not the IGF

itself should make recommendations. However, what the "Policy Options for Connecting the Next Billion" (CNB) intersessional work and the Best Practice Forums demonstrate is that the IGF can produce useful outputs that do not cause the IGF to go beyond its (often differently interpreted) mandate.

The CNB intersessional work is in its nascent stages. The myriad of issues its raises and on-going challenges in connecting the next billion merit further research, identification of best practices and pursuit of policy options. Subsequent to the publishing of the CNB output paper, the World Bank and the Alliance for Affordable Internet published important reports on the same and related challenges. Their findings should also be taken into account in the intersessional CNB work of the IGF going forward. The intersessional work should also be undertaken ever more closely with the national and regional IGFs - and all stakeholders - to build a body of knowledge and best practices that can be accessed and used by policy-makers and others around the globe.

The CSTD recommendations and WSIS resolution "asks" must be addressed

The WSIS UNGA Resolution from December 2015 identifies the following priorities for the IGF:
- accelerated implementation of the recommendations of the CSTD WG on improvements to the IGF
- progress on working modalities, and
- (progress on) participation of relevant stakeholders from developing countries

We suggest that MAG WGs be formed to take responsibility for and report regularly on progress in fulfilling these important asks.

The purpose of the workshop/main session proposal and report forms needs to be re-assessed:

The workshops and main sessions should do 3 things: 1) enlighten the audience through informed discussion; 2) address related challenges and/or identify opportunities; and 3) bring the discussion to a point where ways forward might be agreed. These three criteria should guide workshop and main session proposals as they would allow for more focussed and purposeful discussion and more useful take-aways.

The workshop/main session proposal and report forms can help in this regard by encouraging a more policy-relevant approach. Workshop organizers could be asked to identify key questions that the workshop will seek to answer; the ensuing debate would hopefully result in suggestions as to ways forward in addressing those questions (including possibly policy options). The workshop report

should similarly encourage the workshop rapporteur to reflect on the answers to the questions posed in the workshop, to synthesize the responses and to note where there may have been agreement and/or dissension on ways forward. This type of approach could encourage workshop "recommendations" on a range of policy matters (noting that these would be workshop recommendations and not IGF recommendations).

Other considerations

There remains a pressing matter that has yet to be adequately addressed and that is how to make available the vast amount of information that has resulted from the workshops and main sessions of the past ten IGFs. The Friends of the IGF are collating this incredible accumulation of data and such efforts need to be encouraged and supported. Far more needs to be done to ensure that this wealth of knowledge is made more readily available to the IGF community and beyond.

Finally, a number of excellent suggestions as to the way forward and enhancements that could be made by the IGF can be found in the transcript of this IGF2015 workshop: *WS 82 IGF beyond 2015 - extend mandate, strengthen institution*. The link to the transcript: **http://www.intgovforum.org/cms/187-igf-2015/transcripts-igf-2015/2913-2015-11-13-ws-82-igf-beyond-2015-extend-mandate-strengthen-institution-workshop-room-10-finished**

***