Stakeholders' Dialogue on the Digital Cooperation Architecture

Results of the online Dialogues

DRAFT 1
15. June 2020

Executive Summary

On 5 and 6 June, 2020, Missions Publiques with the support of a broad coalition of partners worldwide held a series of four online dialogues, in which stakeholders from more than 80 countries around the world discussed in three-hour sessions the future of the digital cooperation architecture. The dialogue was divided in two moments: Participants started by assessing the three models presented in the UN High Level Panel (HLP) Report on digital cooperation. They then focused their work on developing recommendations on how to reform the current internet governance architecture.
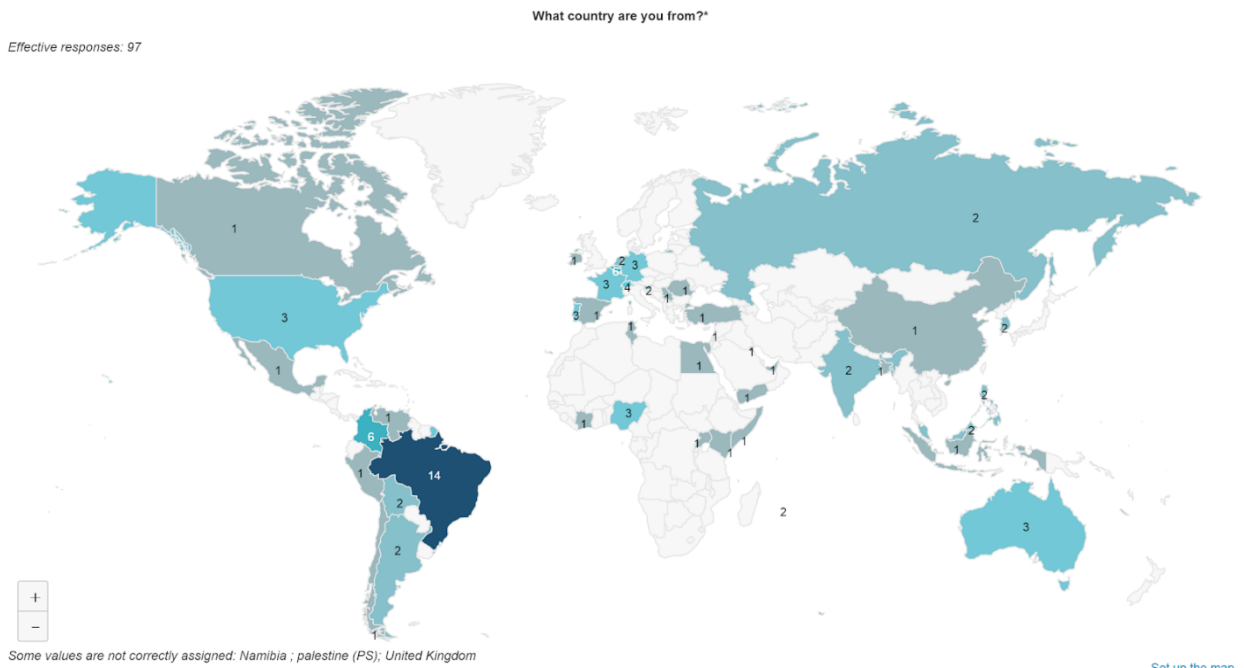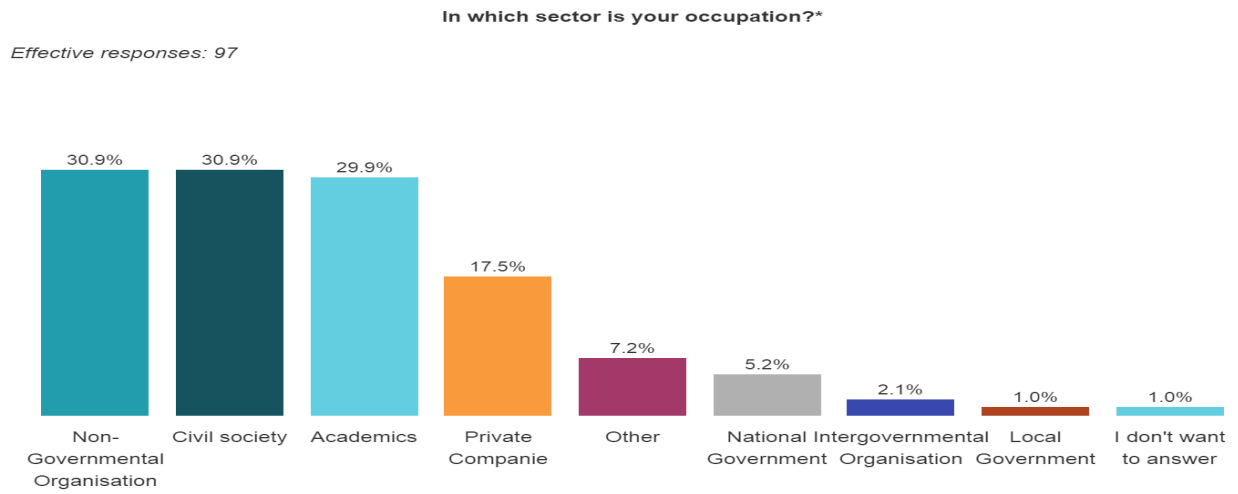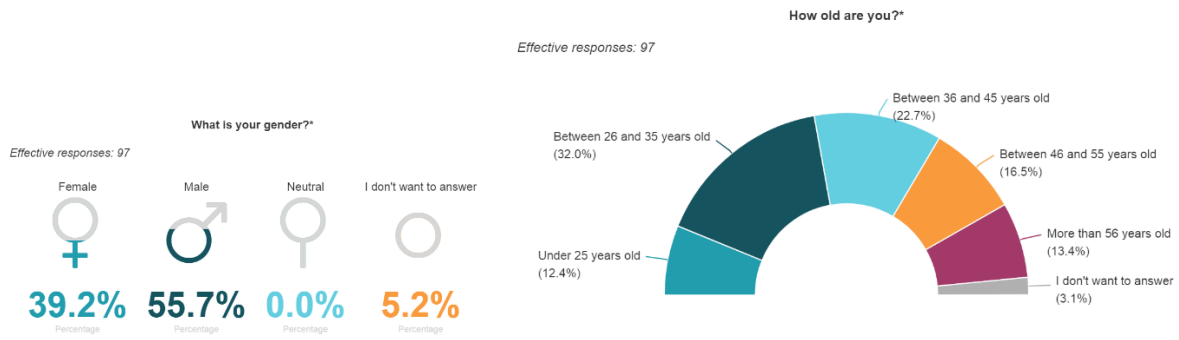
This report, submitted to the co-champion Germany, represented by the Federal Foreign Office, summarizes the outcome of the dialogues. It formulates a series of seven recommendations oriented along the six gaps and ten functions identified by the UN HLP Report and suggests a set of specific action points for each. The recommendations are:
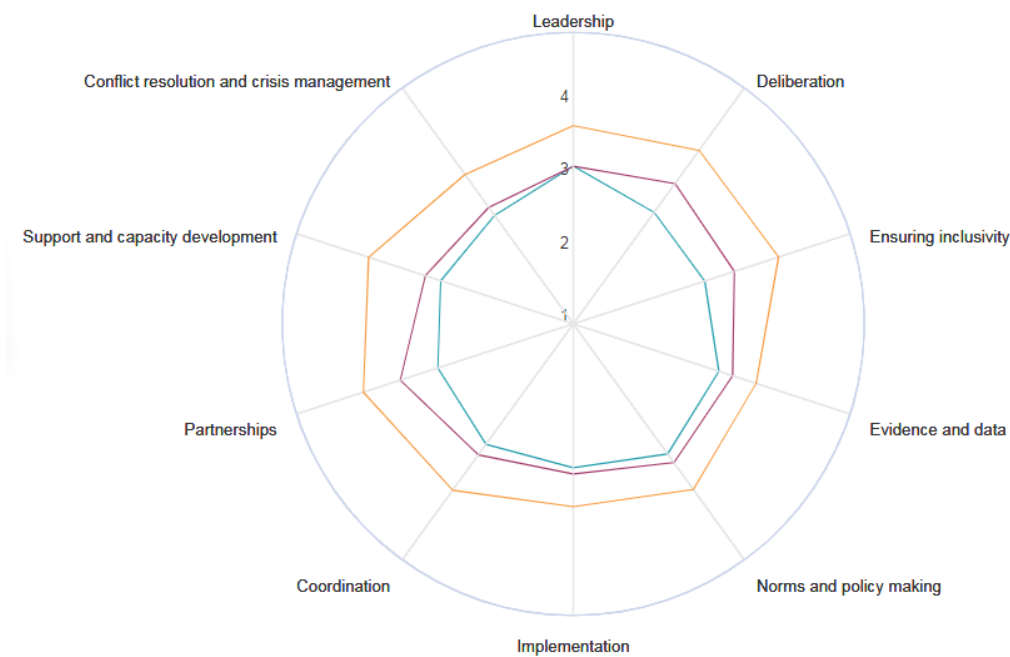
1. Towards a hybrid architecture for the future of Digital Cooperation
2. Putting the right resources and in a fair way is key to an impactful Digital Cooperation
3. Improving effective inclusion must be at the heart of governance reform
4. Strengthen coordination and cooperation between stakeholders and different bodies
5. Transparency and guidance are essential in navigating the complex system
6. Create trust with transparent, fair coordination and effective, stable leadership
7. The IGF+ needs to move from a discussion forum to a decision body

As a cross cutting result, participants pointed out that the deliberative format of the stakeholders dialogues, such as the one conducted here are a powerful showcase of how future digital cooperation can evolve and how deliberative dialogues can become an integral part of the institutional set-up. Participants have expressed their willingness and capability to engage in internet governance if given the appropriate infrastructure and support. 92% have stated that they would continue their engagement or recommend their friends / colleagues to participate in such a dialogue.

The results of the Dialogue are highly aligned with the Roadmap presented by the Office of the UNSG and are hence a strong support for both the options paper and the general discussion on the Future of Digital Cooperation.

Demographics

What is your gender?*

Effective responses: 97

Female	Male	Neutral	I don't want to answer
39.2%	55.7%	0.0%	5.2%
Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage

How old are you?*

Effective responses: 97

- Between 26 and 35 years old (32.0%)
- Between 36 and 45 years old (22.7%)
- Between 46 and 55 years old (16.5%)
- More than 56 years old (13.4%)
- Under 25 years old (12.4%)
- I don't want to answer (3.1%)

In which sector is your occupation?*

Effective responses: 97

- Non-Governmental Organisation: 30.9%
- Civil society: 30.9%
- Academics: 29.9%
- Private Companie: 17.5%
- Other: 7.2%
- National Government: 5.2%
- Intergovernmental Organisation: 2.1%
- Local Government: 1.0%
- I don't want to answer: 1.0%

What country are you from?*

Effective responses: 97

Some values are not correctly assigned: Namibia ; palestine (PS); United Kingdom

Set up the map

3

MODEL A: THE DIGITAL COMMONS ARCHITECTURE   MODEL B: THE DISTRIBUTED CO-GOVERNANCE ARCHITECTURE   MODEL C: THE INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM PLUS

Recommendations

1.1. 1. Towards an hybrid architecture for the future of Digital Cooperation

Key finding

The Internet Governance Forum + (IGF+) model is the most relevant starting point to organize the future of Digital Cooperation, provided it includes elements of both the Distributed Co-Governance model (CoGov) and the Digital Commons Architecture (DCA). This finding is strongly aligned with the Roadmap from UNSG about Global Digital Cooperation. The strength of the CoGov concept is primarily in its horizontal structure which brings in more focused expertise that is likely to lead to better outputs/norms and inclusion of different networks. This set-up facilitates the participation of smaller organizations based on common interests/goals and has the potential to increase the involvement of the private sector. This stronger horizontal dimension would be an important supplement to the IGF+ which is perceived as a top-down oriented approach. DCA's major advantage is to put norms at the center of the discussion. Deliberative processes can support a high-quality discussion.

Action points

Action point 1.1: The discussion on the concrete Hybrid for Digital Cooperation should be pursued in an open and inclusive manner. This aligns with the way forward proposed in the Roadmap: "While there appears to be momentum in support of the Internet Governance Forum Plus model, some have highlighted the need to continue examining the other two architectures, including how various features may complement that model. Member States are considering working with a multi-stakeholder task force to pilot the distributed co-governance model at the national or regional levels."

Action Point 1.2: Include the "network of networks" as a common platform which would significantly improve coordination within the various existing IGF fora (if this is not addressed by the "collaboration accelerator"). The concept of the network of networks enables a better visibility for the support generated in these cooperation networks, as well as coordination between peers. This element would also give more attention and voice to existing networks and is reflected in recommendation 4 on improving coordination and collaboration.

Action Point 1.3: Increase efforts to include the private sector, especially technology companies. The current IGF is characterized by a broad range of debate but not often anchored in technical reality, which hinders real outcomes. With the greater focus on including subject matter expertise to inform norm building, the CoGov concept has a good approach to integrating that technical reality and thus provide more room for private sector to engage. This could also be achieved by integrating a dedicated "tech panel" as proposed in the DCA model.

Action Point 1.4: Consider increasing the role of the UN as a global leader on digital cooperation similar to the DCA model. In a commons regime, the UN would be a stronger arbitrator or even champion for addressing the internet as a common interest for all. This would also serve as trust-building among stakeholders on internet governance issues (compare action point 6.3.). However, voices have also articulated concerns about a too prominent role of the UN.

Action point 1.3: Deliberative formats can be a way to pursue the discussion and gain broad support for a solution because they tap into collective intelligence and allow a solid process of information, discussion and prioritization involving a high diversity of participants.

Background and Data

To be delivered in final report in August.

2. Putting the right resources and in a fair way is key to an impactful Digital Cooperation

Key Finding

The key to unlock the potential for an improved Digital cooperation is an adequate and sustained funding. Participants have identified funding as a key gap on the road to improved Digital Cooperation. A majority (60%) of participants see the current IGF trust fund as a good mechanism that needs to be increased. More than a pure question of the amount of funding, the critical question is around its distribution.

Action points

Action point 2.1: Increase funding, with particular attention to the contributions of large companies. This was discussed controversially, addressing the potency and responsibility of the private sector but also the risk of undue influence and thus needs further elaboration.

Action point 2.2: Strengthen the trust fund as the vehicle for funding.

Action point 2.3: Have a transparent and fair distribution of funds between the Global activities and secretariat and the local and national initiatives.

Action point 2.4: Give the IGF secretariat a real margin of maneuver in terms of Human Resources and finances.

Background and Data

To be delivered in final report in Aug

3. Improving effective inclusion must be at the heart of governance reform

Key finding

Inclusion needs not only an increase in quantity but also in quality. Under such consideration it can serve as a "precondition" for good leadership and legitimacy in the system. Inclusion needs to broaden among different sectors, with a special focus on expanding to the private sector (both small, medium size enterprises and multinational corporations) and governments, in particular from the legislative branch, so that the IGF doesn't become a "civil society chamber" with little implementing power.

Action points

Action Point 3.1: Increase dedicated funds to participants from the Global South to enable their participation in IGF meetings and other relevant fora.

Action Point 3.2: Introduce new or improve existing digital formats for participants to effectively join remotely.

Action Point 3.3: Include affected stakeholder groups in the whole decision-making process, from agenda-setting, to discussion, and implementation.

Action Point 3.4.: Strengthen the role of NRIs across all levels, from local, national, to regional.

Action Point 3.5.: Install an external and independent evaluation mechanism that monitors progress on adequate representation across all stakeholder groups.

Background and Data

To be delivered in final report in Aug

4. Strengthen coordination and cooperation between stakeholders and different bodies

Key finding

There is an understanding of the already very high amount of existing fora and discussion groups as well as the complexity of the overall internet governance structure(s). Thus, introducing new platforms must be considered carefully and only introduced if effective and in support of better coordination. Overcoming the divide between technical knowledge and policy and process expertise is critical. The whole internet architecture calls for a strong global moderation for which the "cooperation accelerator" could play a vital role.

Action points

Action Point 4.1: Open a communication channel between NRIs at country level and the "policy incubator" to improve national policies.

Action Point 4.2: Re-organize panels around current or emerging specific issues instead of broad areas of work to produce more targeted solutions.

Action Point 4.3: Introduce a two-step approach in which tech and policy community discuss individually to address specific challenges and then come together to develop joint (policy) solutions.

Action Point 4.4: Ensure a diverse range of stakeholders in the Advisory Group to facilitate a holistic approach.

Action Point 4.5: Form a global vision to build consensus and generate support for needed policies.

Action Point 4.6: Establish a "regulated involvement" of the private sector (also at national level) as it is the source of technical innovation and potential funding and also the direct channel to the end-users of digital products/services. Here, a future IGF+ could integrate aspects from the CoGov model based on networks (see action points 1.2 / 1.3).

Background and Data

To be delivered in final report in Aug

5. Transparency and guidance are essential in navigating the complex system

Key finding

Increasing transparency on processes and providing systematic guidance to navigate through the various layers and platforms of internet governance should be guiding principles. It is vital to communicate clear definitions and understanding of roles and relationships, responsibilities and accountabilities. Also, due to different levels of available resources and capacity it is difficult to ensure a simple entry point for marginalized stakeholders. In this context, special attention should be paid to the role and function of the "observatory / help desk" proposed in the IGF+ model. Although the motto "keep it simple" was mentioned on several occasions, as the stakeholders acknowledged the high complexity of the governance system, there was little discussion on how to reduce this complexity.

Action points

Action Point 5.1: Define the roles and function of elements in the IGF+ structure. In particular, the "observatory / help desk" could be mandated as a proactive facilitator to help navigate the system. The process within the "policy incubator" and how it develops policy proposals needs more clarification.

Action Point 5.2: Make entry points more accessible by leveraging the vertical levels of the NRI structure.

Action Point 5.3: Raising Digital literacy via capacity building and targeted support.

Action Point 5.4: In order to enter the governance system, stakeholders need clear procedural rules on the election / selection process of various bodies so that there is an understanding about how to participate meaningfully.

Background and Data

To be delivered in final report in August.

6. Create trust with transparent, fair coordination and effective, stable leadership

Key finding

Ensuring transparency is not only important for navigating the highly complex internet architecture but is also at the core of increasing and maintaining trust among all stakeholders. In particular, coordination efforts must build on transparent rules, so that stakeholders can rely on fair procedures. Thus, the "cooperation accelerator" needs to be designed in a way that it also serves as a "trust generator".

Action points

Action Point 6.1: Avoid "behind the scenes" decisions. Though informal and confidential discussions remain a valid part of international diplomacy, it is essential that decisions and the decision-making process are open and transparent.

Action Point 6.2: The raising and allocation of funding must be open for tracking.

Action Point 6.3: Build on existing and trustworthy institutions. The UN itself generally enjoys a high level of trust among stakeholders and the IGF has proven to be a reliable forum for internet governance discussion. The IGF+, with a continued UN mandate, can build on this trust by enhancing effective and stable leadership.

Action Point 6.4: Have transparent and clear rules, and establish rotations within the secretariat, so that everyone can have a fair share in taking up important roles.

Background and Data

To be delivered in final report in August.

7. The IGF+ needs to move from a discussion forum to a decision body

Key finding

One of the recurring concerns and complaints about the mandate of the IGF has been that it is seen rather as a "talking shop" instead of a "doing shop". Even relevant and timely discussions rarely find their ways into the policy making process at all levels, from the local to the international. The proposed "policy incubator" has the potential to change this deficit if designed correctly.

Action points

Action Point 7.1: Create more continuity. It is insufficient to have only one single major event each year. Digital cooperation needs to be discussed more throughout the year to create increased relevance.

Action Point 7.2: Produce more soft law or norm-building outcomes in the IGF, so that governments and companies have a greater incentive to participate.

Action Point 7.3: Create link with decision-making instances, international organisations and national / local governments.

Action Point 7.4: As the evolution of the internet is largely driven by technology innovations, inputs from this community need to be linked more strongly with policy-makers, in order to create real political impact.

Background and Data

To be delivered in final report in August.