

# Strengthening Internet Governance: the message from the Geneva Internet Conference

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17–19 November 2014

## 1. Mapping Internet governance in a comprehensible and dynamic way

The mapping of Internet governance (IG) – identifying the issues and who deals with them – should be comprehensible and dynamic in order to facilitate easy access to IG for newcomers and improve coordination of activities among stakeholders.

## 2. Bridging policy silos

Professional and institutional policy silos exist from local to global level, both within and between institutions. Bridging them, with their different practices and vocabularies, is essential in designing and implementing effective and inclusive IG policies. These silos can be traversed using a mix of structured and *ad hoc* approaches, ranging from joint working groups to informal exchanges.

## 3. Harvesting and harnessing IG complexity

The complexity of IG can be both a threat and an enabler. As a threat, complexity may trigger policy paralysis. As an enabler, if complexity is harvested, it can enrich the IG space with diverse ideas and initiatives. If harnessed, it can help actors to address their IG priorities without losing sight of the broader policy picture. Efforts to deal with complexity should not lead to oversimplification; flexible forms of cooperation should be encouraged.

## 4. Developing innovative legal approaches to the Internet

Legal rules and jurisdiction on the Internet evolve through reinterpretation, adaptation, and expansion of existing laws. In some cases, the creation of new legal mechanisms for online space (e.g. the right to be forgotten, e-signatures) is required. Innovative solutions should be informed by the cumulative wisdom of the legal profession.

## 5. Strengthening genuine participation in IG processes

Full inclusion and genuine participation in IG processes increases the quality and also the acceptance of the policies adopted, building on the diversity of views represented. Strengthening inclusive multistakeholder participation requires a sense of community around which online participation can be implemented. E-participation requires good planning and considerable social engagement. An effective interplay between *in situ* and online participation can be achieved through changes in the organisation of meetings, adjustment of procedures, and training.

## 6. Ensuring holistic capacity development

Capacity development for IG should be holistic, going beyond simply training individuals. To be sustainable, capacity development should support the emergence of functional and robust institutions which are essential for facilitating innovation, rule of law, and protecting human rights on the Internet. Capacity development requires a smart mix of training, coaching, and the introduction of policy mechanisms adjusted to specific local and national contexts.

## 7. Aiming for full transparency, accepting occasional translucency

Transparency is a necessary condition for trust, and for the accountability that all IG processes need to adhere to and, where possible, institutionalise. Occasional translucency – being transparent about what we cannot be transparent about – can be accepted when the risks posed by disclosing information are greater than the overall benefits, in particular if they affect those in a vulnerable position.

## 8. Using subsidiarity effectively

While the Internet is a global network, policy implications are often local and national. As the Internet as a network of networks allows for a diversity of local technical solutions that are interoperable, this approach should also be used more at policy level. While adhering to globally shared basic principles, there should be room for diversity of policies responding to different local and regional needs and priorities. Using the principle of subsidiarity to address IG issues at the appropriate level will make IG more effective. It will improve trust in, and ownership and acceptance of, Internet-related policies. When it is not possible to solve a problem locally, 'policy elevators' should bring the issue to the optimal level.

## 9. Drafting IG policies in open consultation

Inclusive and participatory multistakeholder policy drafting should start with open consultations. Procedures should facilitate the involvement of diverse actors in collaborative drafting, reflecting a multitude of approaches (diplomatic, technical, civil society, business, etc.). Transparency, with checks and balances, can maximise the potential for broad consensus and minimise the risk of a few actors hijacking the process.

## 10. Prioritising evidence and data collection

Evidence and data should contribute to more solid and sustainable IG. Evidence-based IG typically starts with identifying a full range of possibly diverse needs and aims on all levels. It collects relevant data using appropriate tools and methods, measures and assesses impact, and presents findings in an understandable way for policymakers. Priority areas for evidence-based approaches are cybercrime, and monitoring the level of digital divide.

Additional points and concrete proposals for each message can be found at [giplatform.org/gic](https://giplatform.org/gic)