

RIPE NCC Response to the Report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation

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As an organisation that plays a key role in managing the infrastructure upon which the global Internet operates, and as a facilitator of Internet technical community coordination throughout Europe, the Middle East and Central Asia, the RIPE NCC is committed to a multistakeholder approach to Internet governance, ensuring that Internet governance decisions (including public policy decisions at all levels) are informed by the knowledge and concerns of all relevant stakeholders.

While the core functioning of the Internet is not directly referenced in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the continued development and health of the global Internet is key to many of the solutions and innovations that will help to fulfil the SDGs. In this light, there is an urgent need to identify approaches and structures that can ensure the effective participation of all stakeholders in global Internet governance.

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) has provided a unique and valuable function for the past 13 years, bringing together a diverse range of Internet stakeholders, including the technical community, to share their perspectives and further discussions around all aspects of Internet governance. Over this period, it has offered the chance for people to learn about, examine and discuss a wide range of Internet governance issues, and through processes such as Dynamic Coalitions and Best Practice Forums, it has facilitated the production and publication of valuable background and analysis on issues including IPv6 adoption, cybersecurity, Internet exchange points and the Internet of Things.

However, the RIPE NCC recognises that both the technology and policy landscapes have changed considerably during that time and that, faced with a growing range of Internet governance challenges, many stakeholders (including some in the Internet technical community) are seeking global governance structures that can provide more in the way of concrete outcomes and the active participation of high-level policymakers and industry representatives. For all the value that we believe the IGF has generated, it is clear that the forum, as currently constituted, has not been able to meet the needs of all stakeholders.

We believe, however, that building on the successful aspects of a proven model offers the greatest chance of success moving forward. We therefore support the general concept of an "Internet Governance Forum Plus" model as outlined in the Report of the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation. Specifically, we support a next-generation model of digital governance that maintains the core values of inclusiveness, transparency and a multistakeholder approach.

We would encourage the Secretary-General to place a high emphasis on the valuable role played by national and regional Internet governance forums and events. These events provide important venues for discussion of region-specific issues, challenges and opportunities, and it is vital that we recognise that the Internet experience, and the associated challenges, vary hugely across different countries and communities. We also note that such regional structures have provided important venues for raising awareness of, discussing, and responding to the work of the panel. We urge the inclusion of a formal process for ensuring that the perspectives and strategies identified at the regional and national levels are transmitted into the global “IGF Plus” model outlined in the panel’s report.

We would also encourage the Secretary-General to prioritise securing concrete financial commitments from the full range of stakeholders as a fundamental aspect of implementing the “IGF Plus” model. The RIPE NCC is among those that have proudly and consistently contributed to the financial sustainability of the IGF since its inception; however, along with many others, we have noted the increasing difficulty in securing adequate funding and the adverse effect that this has had on successful IGF planning. A broad base of reliable financial support, drawing on contributions from all Internet stakeholders (inasmuch as they are able) and collected via the panel’s recommended IGF Trust Fund, is essential to secure the model’s sustainability for the foreseeable future.