21 June 2025

The Leadership Panel of the Internet Governance Forum
The Multistakeholder Advisory Group of the Internet Governance Forum

Dear Excellencies,

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) institutional bodies, specifically the Leadership Panel and the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG), first wish to thank you both for your presence and ready engagement at the 2025 Internet Governance Forum in Lillestrøm, Norway. We believe that such open, transparent communication with the range of stakeholders present at the IGF has contributed greatly to the community's confidence in the inclusive and multistakeholder nature of this review process.

The discussions held in Norway highlight the unique strength of the IGF as a platform for multistakeholder dialogue, and we urge you to recognise the clear calls from the community to permanently renew the IGF, to strengthen the overall WSIS framework, and to integrate the implementation of GDC commitments into the WSIS process.

In this letter, we wish to share reflections on the Elements Paper, within our mandate as institutional bodies of the United Nations Internet Governance Forum, and suggestions for consideration as you work to develop the Zero Draft of the WSIS+20 Review Resolution.

Framing Internet governance

While the Elements Paper acknowledges the centrality of multistakeholder cooperation to the WSIS processes (par. 5), its description of Internet governance in par. 59 fails to capture the diversity of global Internet governance stakeholders. We suggest that more suitable agreed language can be drawn from the WSIS+10 Outcome Document (also echoed in the 2024 Global Digital Compact), recognising that Internet governance should be multistakeholder in nature, with:

> …the full involvement of Governments, the private sector, civil society, international organizations, technical and academic communities and all other relevant stakeholders in accordance with their respective roles and responsibilities. (A/RES/70/125, par. 57)

We also propose that the Tunis Agenda's working definition of Internet Governance (par. 34), affirmed by the WSIS+10 Outcome Document, be referenced specifically. In framing the scope of Internet governance as, "shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programmes that shape the evolution and use of the Internet", the Working Group on Internet Governance (2005) wisely anticipated that the range of issues related to Internet governance would grow and evolve. This is reflected in the growth and evolution of digital policy topics discussed at the IGF over the past two decades, highlighting that the IGF has been an essential facilitator of the WSIS effort to understand and address the diverse range of technology and policy issues that converge around the concept of an "Information Society".

Reflecting the nature and reach of the IGF

In paragraph 60, the Elements Paper acknowledges the IGF as "an established forum for discussion", recognised as "the primary multi-stakeholder platform for discussion of Internet governance issues".

We feel that the IGF is a more impactful and far-reaching element of the WSIS architecture than the Elements Paper conveys, and we believe that the Resolution should reflect this. More than just an annual event, it is an ecosystem of multistakeholder collaboration on global digital policy issues that includes intersessional work programs (Dynamic Coalitions, Best Practice Fora, and Policy Networks) and the growing network of local, national, sub-regional, regional, and youth Internet governance initiatives (collectively referred to as NRIs, and now numbering more than 175 individual initiatives). The outputs of these various workstreams have informed digital policy discussions across a broad range of issues, enabled stakeholders to engage with Internet governance issues at the local and community level, and have helped introduce participants from around the world to Internet governance discussions at the global level.

Reflecting this practical, evolving, lived experience of multistakeholder Internet governance over the past two decades is key to accurately capturing the impact and success of WSIS in facilitating global and inclusive engagement with issues that impact all of our communities. Such perspective is also vital to informing decisions about the renewal or modification of the IGF mandate.

Renewing the IGF mandate

Reflecting the points made above, we strongly urge that the Zero Draft be unequivocal in renewing the mandate of IGF on a permanent basis and recognising that the IGF has evolved into a complex and constructive ecosystem for work and dialogue on a broad range of Internet and digital governance issues. At the same time, it is vital to strengthen the interconnection between IGF and other WSIS mechanisms, such as UNGIS, CSTD, and the WSIS Forum.

The certainty that such commitment and recognition conveys would help to address key challenges, including funding (building donor confidence in the Forum's stability and longevity) and the continuing improvement and evolution of the IGF itself - ongoing work that is a necessary and ongoing response to the changing technology and policy landscape. This will also provide certainty around the role of the IGF as a platform for dialogue and cooperation relating to implementation of the Global Digital Compact and the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals.

As we move forward with the WSIS+20 process, it is critical to reaffirm our commitment to human rights, privacy, and inclusivity as core principles guiding the future of the internet. These principles must remain central to our collective work, ensuring that the digital space is safe, accessible, and inclusive for all.

Moving forward in the review process

Finally, we wish to again commend you for your efforts to date in engaging all WSIS stakeholders in this process, whether at the IGF, various NRI events, or in online consultations. We strongly urge you to publish a timeline of the consultations and negotiations that will take place between now and December, and to continue creating opportunities for stakeholders to engage, comment, and suggest changes as we move forward in this process.

We also support the requests heard in Norway for innovative consultation processes that can bring state and non-state actors together for direct conversation and joint consultations, and we welcome the recent announcement of such a session on 29 July. We urge that such consultations employ a hybrid (in-person and remote) approach to ensure inclusivity, and that reporting on such sessions be published quickly and publicly.

While not specific to the Elements Paper, we also acknowledge and welcome your proposal for the Informal Multistakeholder Sounding Board (IMSB). We believe that such a body can be a valuable and efficient engagement conduit with the multistakeholder community. However, we caution that such a body cannot replace broader consultation processes, particularly given the diversity of views and perspectives across members of the different stakeholder groups. As the full Leadership Panel and MAG, we look forward to working in support of those members selected to be part of the IMSB.

Thank you for your dedication to this review process, to ensuring that it is inclusive and multistakeholder, in the best tradition of WSIS, and to engaging so openly with the IGF community in Norway. We look forward to continuing to work together for an outcome that will facilitate inclusive, multistakeholder Internet and digital governance into the future.

Yours sincerely,

Vint Cerf, Chair, IGF Leadership Panel
Carol Roach, Chair, IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group

On behalf of the IGF Leadership Panel and the IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group