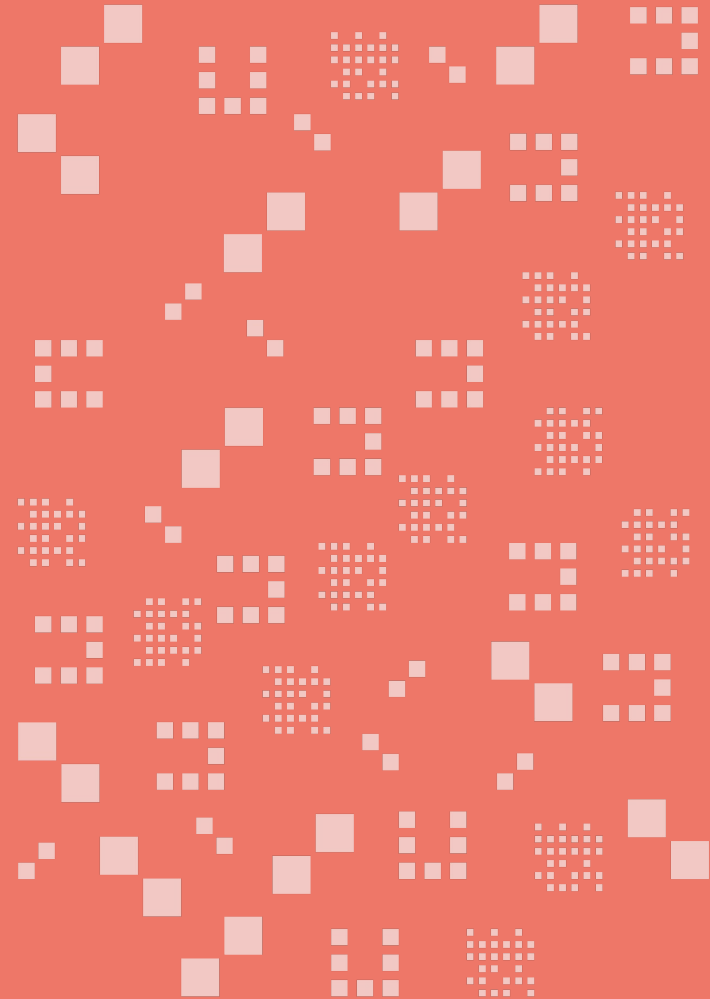


Stakeholder Positions on IGF in WSIS+20

Comparative Analysis

June 2025

GLOBAL PARTNERS DIGITAL



Summary

Areas of Agreement

- **IGF Permanency:** Near-unanimous support for establishing the IGF as a permanent institution.
- **Multistakeholder Model:** All stakeholders strongly endorse the multistakeholder, bottom-up structure of the IGF.
- **Sustainable Funding:** Agreement that voluntary contributions are insufficient; consensus on the need for secure, diverse, and ideally UN-backed funding.
- **Integration with UN Structures:** General support for IGF alignment with WSIS+20 and GDC, often framed as a “bridge” function.

Areas of Disagreement

- **Scope of IGF Reform:** Switzerland, AU and GDJF propose deeper institutional changes (e.g., rebranding, justice lens), others advocate evolutionary improvements.
- **Outputs vs. Dialogue:** Some advocate for more concrete, action-oriented outputs (EU, AU, LP), while others maintain IGF’s non-prescriptive character (ICANN, ISOC).

Areas Needing Development

- **Detail on Structural Reform:** Largely missing specifics on how IGF structures should be reformed or integrated with the wider UN system, with gaps narrowed by Switzerland and Australia (e.g., expanded Secretariat, Helpdesk)
- **Impact Metrics:** Few specifics on how IGF outcomes will be tracked or measured in policy spaces; partly addressed by Switzerland (IGF “messages”), Leadership Panel (IWW framework), and ISOC (retrospective evidence)
- **Global South Inclusion Strategy:** While widely supported in principle, detailed action plans are sparse.

Stakeholder Alignment Across Key Themes

	Mandate	Internal Structure	Renewal & Sustainability	UN Role
ICANN	●	●	●	●
APNIC	●	●	●	●
TCCM	●	●	●	●
UK	●	●	●	●
GPD	●	●	●	●
Leadership Panel	●	●	●	●
Switzerland	●	●	●	●
GDJF	●	●	●	●
EU	●	●	●	●
Australia	●	●	●	●
ISOC	●	●	●	●

High overall alignment on key themes – IGF permanency, MS model, sustainable funding, and integration with the UN system.

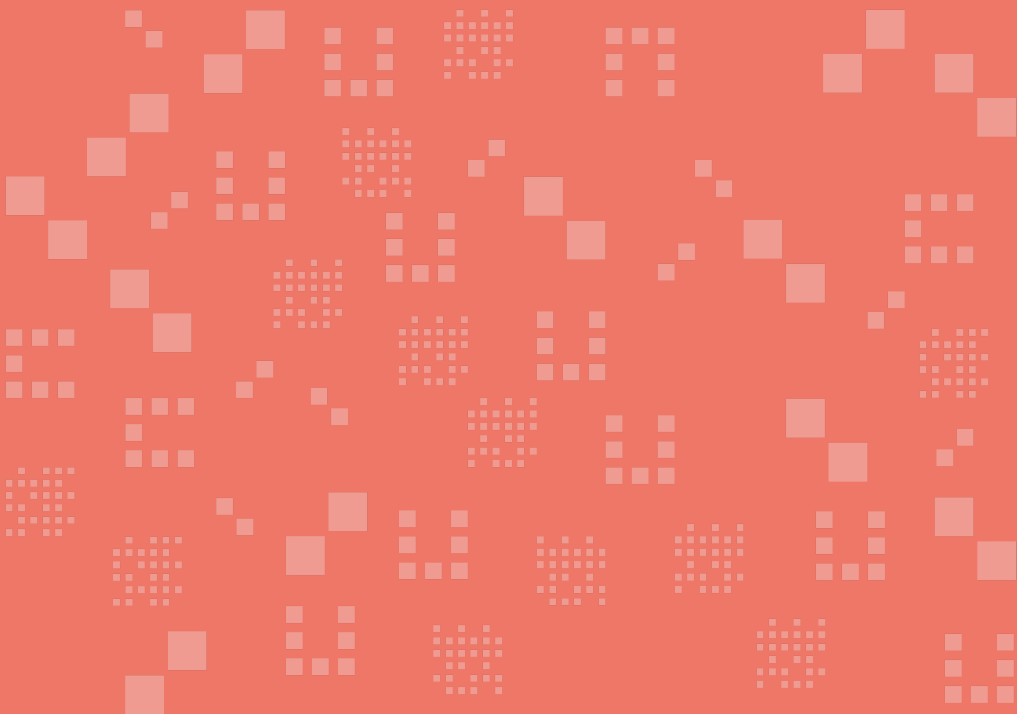
Structural reform divergence – Some propose deeper institutional changes; others emphasize continuity with moderate changes.

Outlier perspectives – GDJF stands apart in both framing and ambition—advocating for transformation of digital governance rather than technical or procedural reform.

- Strong alignment
- Partial alignment
- No clear commentary

Key Themes

Detailed
Breakdown



1. IGF Mandate

Areas of Agreement

- All analysed positions—including those of ICANN, APNIC, TCCM, UK, EU, GPD, Switzerland, GDJF, Leadership Panel, Australia, and ISOC—strongly reaffirm the **multistakeholder, bottom-up, and non-prescriptive character of the IGF**.
- IGF's **non-binding, discursive function** is broadly defended as a critical space for dialogue, not decision-making.

Areas of Disagreement

- **Switzerland and Australia** propose evolving the mandate through **rebranding**, aiming to better reflect its broadened function, without altering its core non-prescriptive nature.
- **EU, Leadership Panel, and GPD** advocate for the IGF to produce **clearer outputs**, suggesting a more action-oriented mandate. In contrast, **ICANN, APNIC, and ISOC** emphasize preserving its **non-negotiating** identity and caution against drifting into policy-setting.
- **GDJF** presents a distinct view, calling for a transformation of the IGF mandate rooted in **digital justice**, placing equity and rights at the center of digital policy discussions.

Areas Needing Development

- While stakeholders broadly agree on preserving the IGF's discursive, multistakeholder role, few articulate what this means in practice when also calling for **clearer outputs or policy relevance**.
- Proposals to rebrand the IGF (e.g. as a "Digital Governance Forum") lack wider engagement / do not clarify whether this would entail **functional change, perception adjustment**, or both.
- The relationship between the IGF's non-binding mandate and its ability to influence formal processes (e.g. GDC, WSIS+20 outcomes) remains **conceptually underdeveloped**.

2. IGF Internal Structures

Areas of Agreement

Most analysed stakeholders — including the **Leadership Panel**, **ICANN**, **UK**, **EU**, **Switzerland**, **GPD**, **APNIC**, and **TCCM** — support strengthening the IGF's internal structure. This includes:

- Enhancing the **Secretariat's operational capacity**
- Ensuring better integration of **National and Regional Initiatives (NRIs)** and intersessional work (e.g. **Dynamic Coalitions**, **Policy Networks**)
- Improving the **Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG)** processes and transparency

Areas of Disagreement

Stakeholders vary in the **scale and specificity of reform**:

- **Australia** proposes a significantly expanded **Secretariat** with a blended staffing model (UN staff + stakeholder secondees) and a dedicated **Helpdesk** function.
- **Switzerland** also calls for a **Helpdesk**, as well as stronger linkages between MAG, NRIs, and outputs.
- **ICANN** and **ISOC** prefer improvements within current administrative structures, focusing on continuity and logistical efficiency.

Areas Needing Development

- Most stakeholders support enhancing IGF structures, yet **specifics on institutional design remain sparse**. Only a few actors (e.g. Australia, Switzerland) propose concrete changes such as blended staffing models or a Helpdesk function.
- Roles and interdependencies among the **MAG**, **Leadership Panel**, and **Secretariat** are mentioned inconsistently and without operational detail.
- There is limited commentary on the **functional contribution** of **Dynamic Coalitions**, **Policy Networks**, or other intersessional mechanisms beyond general support for inclusivity.

3. IGF Renewal & Sustainability

Areas of Agreement

- There is **universal support** among analysed positions for renewing the IGF mandate **permanently**, moving beyond its current cycle of extensions.
- Stakeholders broadly agree that the IGF requires **more secure and sustainable funding**, with calls for inclusion in the **UN regular budget** and/or a more reliable voluntary contribution system.

Areas of Disagreement

While funding needs are broadly recognized, proposals differ:

- **Australia** suggests a **multi-source funding model**, combining UN budget, stakeholder contributions, and event-based fees.
- **Switzerland** proposes formalizing IGF funding and governance structures within the WSIS framework.
- **GDJF** ties financial reform to broader digital equity and justice considerations.
- **ICANN** and **ISOC** emphasize continuity and practical improvements without structural overhaul.

Areas Needing Development

- Although there is agreement on the need for more stable funding, few contributions explain **how this should be sourced, governed, or allocated**. Only Australia proposes a multi-channel funding model.
- Commentary on the **implications of funding models for participation**, especially for under-resourced actors in the Global South, is largely absent.
- The long-term **governance and accountability frameworks** tied to new financial models remain unexplored across most contributions.

4. Role within the UN Architecture

Areas of Agreement

- A majority of stakeholders analysed — including the EU, UK, Leadership Panel, GPD, TCCM, Switzerland, Australia, and ISOC — support the IGF being more clearly and effectively **embedded within the UN system**.
- There is consensus that the IGF should contribute to **GDC and WSIS+20 implementation**, without duplicating other UN processes.

Areas of Disagreement

Differences on **how integration should occur**:

- **Switzerland** proposes structural linkages such as **joint WSIS–GDC implementation roadmaps**, and integration through **UNGIS** and **CSTD** reform.
- **Australia** suggests aligning **timing and messaging** between the IGF and WSIS Forum, and elevating NRIs as **implementation channels**.
- **GDJF** proposes more radical transformation — centering digital governance on **rights, justice, and non-alignment**, rather than reinforcing existing structures.

Areas Needing Development

- While most actors support greater IGF integration with WSIS+20 and GDC processes, only a minority outline **institutional mechanisms** for how this coordination should occur.
- Proposals from Switzerland and Australia suggest structured uptake (e.g. IGF “messages”, aligned calendars), but no shared position has emerged, and other stakeholders offer **little engagement or critique**.
- The relationship between the IGF and existing UN digital governance bodies (e.g. **UNGIS, CSTD, WSIS Forum**) is inconsistently referenced and remains **poorly mapped in terms of roles and mandates**.

Table Summary

	Mandate	Internal Structure	Renewal & Sustainability	UN Role
ICANN	Support multistakeholder model, keep discursive	Improve admin/logistics, MAG support	Support permanent IGF, need stable funding	IGF as key digital governance platform
APNIC	Support multistakeholder model, uphold bottom-up agenda	Strengthen NRIs, inclusive agenda-setting	Permanent IGF, sustainable resources needed	Align WSIS/GDC, avoid duplication
TCCM	Support multistakeholder, propose IGF permanency, evolve IGF to play a role in digital governance	Better resources, enhance NRI + Dynamic Coalitions integration	Permanent IGF, more resources, avoid process proliferation	Support São Paulo Guidelines, recognise WSIS/ GDC overlap and avoid duplication
UK	Support IGF as bottom-up, permanent role	MAG reform, more output focus, more developing country voices	Permanent mandate, strengthen secretariat	Embed IGF in WSIS+20 and GDC follow-up
GPD	Support IGF, want stronger human rights anchoring	Increase accessibility, transparency, better procedures	Renewal needed, secure sustainable funding	IGF to support WSIS, GDC and SDGs implementation, human rights-based digital governance
Leadership Panel	Support IGF permanency, clearer role, concrete outputs	Clear outputs, integrate NRIs, involve govts	Permanent IGF, stable UN/voluntary funding mix	IGF to play a role in GDC implementation, clear UN linkage
Switzerland	Support IGF, propose rebranding to DGF, stronger outputs	Propose IGF Helpdesk, Secretariat reinforcement, NRI ecosystem integration	Permanent IGF, UN funding, inclusion programs	Formalize IGF's WSIS+GDC role, CSTD, UNGIS links; Support São Paulo Guidelines
GDJF	Support IGF but demand structural justice framing	No specific IGF structural proposals	Calls for rethinking IGF in just governance vision	Radical overhaul of digital power, justice-based approach
EU	Support IGF permanency, open to IGF rebranding without reopening Tunis Agenda, human rights framing	Continuity of MAG and Leadership Panel, UN DESA as institutional home; strengthened structures, more NRI funding	Permanent mandate, UN budget support and voluntary contributions, improved participation from developing countries	Reinforce IGF in UN system, avoid forum duplication, support São Paulo Guidelines including via MS governance sandboxes
Australia	Support IGF, propose rebranding to Digital Governance Forum	Propose expanded Secretariat (UN + stakeholder secondees), Helpdesk function	Permanent IGF, UN budget, voluntary contributions, attendance-based funding	Synchronize IGF and WSIS processes, empower NRIs as implementation channels
ISOC	Reaffirm multistakeholder discursive mandate, emphasize practical impact	Highlight NRIs, DCs, youth/parliamentary tracks as core structure	Permanent IGF, evidenced impact, stability focus	IGF complements formal processes, reinforces global-local policy coherence

Methodology and Sources

This analysis maps stakeholder positions on the future of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in the context of the WSIS+20 review process. It is based on a structured research framework including:

Research Areas

- Areas of Agreement
- Areas of Disagreement
- Areas Needing further development

Key themes

1. IGF mandate
2. Internal structure and reform
3. Renewal and sustainability
4. Role within the broader UN digital governance architecture

Data sources

Over a dozen position papers and statements known at the time of publication (June 2025), including:

- **Governments** (e.g. UK, Switzerland, EU, Australia)
- **Technical community** (e.g. ICANN, ISOC, APNIC, TCCM)
- **Civil society** (e.g. GPD, GDJF)
- **Multistakeholder bodies** (e.g. IGF Leadership Panel)

Statements were drawn from both the WSIS+20 stakeholder consultation process and independent publications.

The findings were synthesized into a comparative matrix to illustrate alignment and divergence (p.3)



By **Lea Kaspar, Maria Paz Canales, Ellie McDonald**
12 June 2025

www.gp-digital.org