CONSULTATIONS ON PARAGRAPH 93(a) OF THE ROADMAP FOR DIGITAL COOPERATION

Summary of input

Between 24 February and 9 March 2021, a public consultation was held on the way forward on paragraph 93(a) of the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation. Stakeholders were invited to respond to an online questionnaire prepared by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) Secretariat, in collaboration with the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology. The questionnaire included several questions related to the proposed multistakeholder high-level body (MHLB): functions, relations with the Multistakeholder Advisory Group (MAG), composition, governance structure, support and funding.

This summary reflects main points raised by stakeholders. While in most cases it tries to highlight common points (supported by multiple stakeholders to various degrees), it also makes reference to some individual positions. The summary is structured in two main parts: (a) an overall, high-level summary and (b) a summary by stakeholder groups. The individual submissions can be consulted separately.

Table of contents

A. OVERALL SUMMARY

1. MHLB creation
- Stakeholders had different views on whether and how the MHLB should be created. For most stakeholder groups, these different views were also expressed within the groups. Government views varied between strong opposition, some degree of support (for instance, for a MHLB within the MAG or outside of the MAG), and strong support. Civil society stakeholders had different views too: some strongly opposed the creation of the MHLB, while others supported it to various degrees. Different views were also shared by stakeholders within the technical community. The only group that seemed to converge towards a common view was the private sector, with support for a MHLB created within the MAG.
- Broadly speaking, the option that seems to have received the most support is to **create the MHLB within the MAG**.

2. MHLB functions
- MHLB functions recurrent across multiple submissions included:
    - Linking IGF discussions and outputs with decision-making bodies and spaces (at the level of states, regional and international organisations, large companies, technical organisations, etc.).
    - Facilitating the feeding in of input from decision-making bodies/spaces into IGF processes.
    - There were a few suggestions for these functions to be carried out in cooperation with existing IGF processes, such as Best Practice Forum (BPFs), Dynamic Coalitions (DCs) and national and regional IGF initiatives (NRIs).
- Some stakeholders also suggested that the MHLB performs some strategic roles, such as contributing to the development of IGF multianual strategic plans, taking a lead on designing and implementing the transition to an IGF Plus model, and providing strategic input into the development of programmes of IGF meetings (e.g. advising on high-level participants and providing input in the selection of themes).
- A few contributions indicated that the MHLB could contribute to fundraising efforts.
- Several contributions noted the importance for the MHLB to act in line with the IGF mandate and IGF key principles – open, inclusive, bottom-up, multistakeholder, transparent.
- While some contributions suggested that the MHLB translates IGF outputs into policy recommendations/guidelines, others clearly opposed such a role.

3. Relations with the Office of the Tech Envoy and the UN Secretary-General
- A few contributions suggested that there are some connections between the (Office of the) Tech Envoy and the MHLB (e.g. strong cooperation between the MHLB and the Tech Envoy; the Tech Envoy as observer/participant/ex-officio member/involved in the chairing of the MHLB).
- There were a few explicit suggestions for the MHLB to report directly to/be under the supervision of the UN Secretary-General.

4. MHLB composition

- Opinions varied greatly on the number of members the MHLB should have. The options that seemed to have received most support are:
  - If within the MAG: between 5 and 20 members.
  - If separate from the MAG: between 15 and 25 members.
- There was strong support for the MHLB to have stakeholder, regional and gender diversity. Inclusion of youth was seen as particularly important by some groups.
- Strong support was expressed for membership rotation and limited terms (between one and three years).
- There was also support for transparent, clear and predictable nomination and appointment criteria and procedures. Existing processes used for the MAG may be built upon (e.g. nomination by stakeholders and appointment by the UN Secretary-General).
  - A few contributions suggested that the Office of the Tech Envoy appoints MHLB members.
- Views were divided on whether members should be at the high-level or senior/expert level. But there were also suggestions to find a balance between both. A few contributions noted that, if high-level members are appointed, consideration could be given to a sherpa system.
  - A few contributions suggested that at least some of the MHLB members are appointed from among MAG members.
  - Involving representatives of the past, present and future IGF host countries was also suggested.
- In terms of governance, there were a few suggestions for some common or connected leadership structure(s) between the MHLB and the MAG (e.g. MAG Chair to chair both bodies; having the MHLB Chair as the Vice-Chair of the MAG, and the MAG Chair as the Vice-Chair of the MHLB).
- A few contributions made suggestions regarding MHLB work modalities: monthly meetings (online); two meetings/year; meetings in conjunction with the MAG face-to-face meetings.

5. MHLB support and funding
- While strong support was expressed for the MHLB to be supported by the IGF Secretariat, it was generally acknowledged that the Secretariat is currently under-resourced and will need additional funding and extra staff.
- With regard to funding, the option that seems to have received most support was for the MHLB to be funded through the (enhanced) IGF Trust Fund. Here too it was noted that additional contributions to the fund will be needed. Some suggested that MHLB members might be invited to contribute funds, without this being a condition or an advantage.
  - Other options suggested varied from separate UN funding to funding by the private sector or by international donors.

B. CIVIL SOCIETY

1. MHLB creation

There were different views among civil society (CS) stakeholders on whether and how the MHLB should be created.

- Some stakeholders strongly opposed the establishment of the MHLB, noting, for instance, that it would risk becoming a norm-setting body in digital policy.
- Others expressed reservations, noting, for example, that the creation of a new body should be considered only after a careful cost-benefit analysis. If the body is formed, it should be part of the MAG.
- Some stakeholders were in favour of a MHLB within the MAG, while others opted for a separate body.

2. MHLB functions

Views on the functions of the MHLB varied greatly among CS submissions:

- Many suggested that the body acts as a bridge between the IGF discussions/outcomes and decision-making bodies in the field of Internet governance and digital policy.
- While some stakeholders suggested that the MHLB contributes to some extent to the planning of IGF activities (e.g.supporting the MAG in planning IGF meetings, contributing to attracting more participation at the IGF, and making IGF meetings more inclusive), others noted that the MAG should remain the key body in charge of such issues.
- Various other individual suggestions included: supporting the MAG in strengthening the IGF; contributing to strengthening linkages between the NRIs and the global IGF; offering a space for dialogue between the IGF community, the UN Secretary-General and the Office of the Tech Envoy; taking up various broader roles such as translating IGF outcomes into policy recommendations/guidance and even following-up on/monitoring their implementation.

3. Relations with the Office of the Tech Envoy and the UN Secretary-General

- A few suggestions were made that the MHLB coordinates with the Office of the Tech Envoy and the UN Secretary-General. Another suggestion was that the MHLB could provide advice to the UN Secretary-General and the Tech Envoy on strategic issues, based on IGF discussions.

4. MHLB composition

Number of members, terms and rotation

- In general, CS opted for a MHLB of 6 to 20 members. There were also individual suggestions for a MHLB of anywhere between 30 and 75+ members.
- Some support for membership rotation and limited terms (e.g. two or three years).

Diversity

- Broad support for the MHLB to be multistakeholder, as well as have geographical and gender balance. Inclusion of youth was seen as particularly important by some groups.

Appointment/selection
- Some support for nomination and selection processes to be built on the current MAG procedures, and be fully transparent and participatory.

Profile of members
- Some stakeholders supported the idea of the MHLB being composed of senior members from different stakeholder groups, ideally recognised for their contributions and commitment to the IGF and Internet governance. Others were in favour of a MHLB including high-level members.
- There were a few suggestions to have representatives from DCs, BPFs and MAG in the MHLB. Another suggestion was to create a 'Citizens' Council' to support the MHLB and ensure consideration of views and concerns of people.

5. MHLB support and funding
- Broad support for the MHLB to be supported by the IGF Secretariat.
- Multiple stakeholders supported the idea of having the (strengthened) IGF Trust Fund or a similar mechanism for funding the MHLB. Others suggested a wide variety of options, such as UN and member states funding, funding by international donors or the private sector, multistakehoder funding, etc.

C. GOVERNMENTS

1. MHLB creation
UN member states had different views regarding the creation of the MHLB.
- Some strongly opposed a MHLB, arguing, for instance, that the proposed body could undermine/affect the nature of the IGF (e.g. due to its proposed role of relaying policy approaches and recommendations to decision-making forums) and/or would bring a risk of duplication with the MAG (removing resources and focus from it).
- Others expressed various degrees of support for the MHLB, as either a body within the MAG or a separate structure.

2. MHLB functions
- There was broad support (among those in favour of the MHLB) for the body to: (a) link IGF discussions and outputs with decision-making bodies and spaces (at the level of states, regional and international organisations, large companies, tech organisations, etc.); (b) facilitate the feeding in of input from decision-making bodies/spaces into IGF processes.
  - A few contributions recommended that the function of linking IGF discussions with decisions taken elsewhere is carried out together with BPFs, DCs and NRIs.
- A few member states also suggested that the MHLB is involved in the selection of IGF high-level participants and policy areas for discussion.
- A few member states noted that the MHLB could perform some additional strategic functions, such as providing strategic leadership to the development of the IGF Plus model and contributing to the development of IGF multi-annual strategic plans.
- Some member states noted that the MHLB functions should be performed with respect for the IGF mandate and IGF key principles – open, inclusive, bottom-up, multistakeholder, transparent.
- A few individual contributions outlined other possible roles for the MHLB, such as translating IGF outcomes into policy recommendations, working towards strengthening digital cooperation, and developing capacities in digital policies.

3. Relations with the Office of the Tech Envoy and the UN Secretary-General
- There were some suggestions for the (Office of the) Tech Envoy to be involved in one way or another in the MHLB: involved in (co-)chairing the MHLB; ex-officio member; participation in MHLB; strong linkages/cooperation with the MHLB.
- A few explicit suggestions were made that the MHLB reports directly to/be under the supervision of the UN Secretary-General.

4. MHLB composition
Number of members, terms and rotation
- If within the MAG: between 5 and 20 members. If separate from the MAG: between 15 and 25 members. One suggestion for up to 45 members.
- Strong support for membership rotation and limited terms (between one and three years).

Diversity
- Strong support for the MHLB to have stakeholder, regional and gender diversity.

Appointment/selection
- Support for transparent, clear and predictable nomination and appointment criteria and procedures. Existing processes used for the MAG may be built upon (e.g. nomination by stakeholders and appointment by the UN Secretary-General).

Profile of members
- Views were divided on whether members should be at a high-level or senior/expert level. Some suggestions were made to find a balance between both. A few inputs also noted that, if high-level members are appointed, consideration could be given to a sherpa system.
- Involving representatives of the past, present and future IGF host countries was suggested in a few contributions (i.e. a troika similar to the EU Presidency).

Governance elements and work modalities
- A few suggestions for some common or connected leadership structure(s) between the MHLB and the MAG (e.g. MAG Chair to chair both bodies; having the MHLB Chair as the Vice Chair of the MAG, and the MAG Chair as the Vice-Chair of the MHLB).
- One suggestion for the MHLB to meet twice a year, and another suggestion for the body to meet every month (in this case online).

5. MHLB support and funding
- Strong support for the MHLB to be supported by a strengthened and better resourced IGF Secretariat. Most contributions noted that the already under-funded IGF Secretariat will need to be consolidated (in terms of funds and staff) to be able to support the MHLB.
- Support for the MHLB to be funded through the (enhanced) IGF Trust Fund. A few additional suggestions were also made: additional funds from UN DESA; requiring MHLB members to support the body, on a voluntary basis and without this offering them any advantage; funds either from the initiating countries or on a voluntary basis from various stakeholders.
- A few suggestions for separate funding from the UN and/or member states.

D. PRIVATE SECTOR

1. MHLB creation
- Strong support for the MHLB to be created within the MAG.

2. MHLB functions
- Broad support for the MHLB to act as a bridge between the IGF discussions/outcomes and decision-making bodies in the field of Internet governance and digital policy. Individual members could act as liaisons with international decision-making and normative bodies.
  - One suggestion was made for this function to be carried out in cooperation with existing IGF processes, such as BPFs, DCs and NRIs.
- Some contributions indicated that the MHLB could also provide strategic direction/input to the IGF (e.g. drafting a multi-year strategic framework, taking a lead on designing and implementing the transition to an IGF Plus model). Facilitating cooperation and coordination with UN bodies and multilateral organisations, as a way to elevate the IGF's recognition, was also suggested.
- Another MHLB function could be to assist with fundraising initiatives/efforts to attract contributions to the IGF Trust Fund.

3. Relations with the Office of the Tech Envoy and the UN Secretary-General
- One suggestion to have the Tech Envoy engage closely with the MHLB, for instance as an observer or honorary member.

4. MHLB composition
Number of members, terms and rotation
- Multiple submissions indicated support for eight (8) members (two representatives from each stakeholder group).
  - A suggestion was made that, given that one of the body's main roles would be to provide a link to relevant international organisations, it would not be necessary for it to include intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) among its members.
- Other options (individual submissions): 5–7 members, 10–12 members, 75 members.

Diversity
- Strong support for the MHLB to have stakeholder, regional and gender diversity.

Appointment/selection
- Some suggestions for MHLB members to be appointed by the Office of the Tech Envoy.

- One option could be for four members to be selected either by or from the MAG, and the other four appointed by the Office of Tech Envoy, based on nominations from the community.
- Support for nomination/selection processes to be open, democratic and transparent, and to some extent similar to the ones used for the MAG.

Profile of members
- Many submissions indicated support for MHLB members to be officials at the 'senior working level', familiar with the Internet governance ecosystem and digital policy-making.

Governance elements and work modalities
- Some suggestions for the MHLB to be led by the MAG Chair.
- Some suggestions for MHLB meetings to be held in conjunction with the two or three face-to-face meetings that the MAG has every year. It could also meet at the request of the UN Secretary General's Envoy on Technology or the MAG Chair.

5. MHLB support and funding
- Broad support for the MHLB to be supported by a strengthened and better resourced IGF Secretariat.
- Broad support for funding from the IGF Trust Fund (together with calls to enhance financial stability).
  - A call was made for more accessible and transparent mechanisms within the IGF Trust Fund, to enable contributions of any sizes.
  - One suggestion regarding the Trust Fund was for the UN to forego or reduce its 'Programme Support Costs'.

E. TECHNICAL COMMUNITY

1. MHLB creation
There was diversity of views among stakeholders.
- Some opposed the creation of the MHLB, noting, for instance, that they do not see the need for a new body and that support should be allocated to a strengthened MAG. Should a MHLB be established, it should be a sub-group within the MAG.
- Others supported the MHLB either as a separate group or a sub-group within the MAG.

2. MHLB functions
- Some individual suggestions for the MHLB to: contribute to more actionable/actual IGF outcomes; convene the high-level segment and ministerial and parliamentary tracks of the IGF; contribute to strengthening the corporate identity of the IGF; assist with fundraising initiatives/efforts to attract contributions to the IGF Trust Fund.
- Where opposition was expressed towards the MHLB, it was noted that, if created, the body should not oversee the MAG (which should remain the lead authority on matters such as developing the IGF programme and implementing IGF changes stemming from the Roadmap for Digital Cooperation), nor influence IGF policy discussions or prioritise its outcomes.

3. Relations with the Office of the Tech Envoy and the UN Secretary-General
- No specific reference

4. MHLB composition
Number of members, terms and rotation
- If within MAG: 5–20 members. If separate from MAG: no more than 10 members.
- Rotation every two or three years.

Diversity
- Support for the MHLB to reflect geographical, gender and stakeholder diversity.

Appointment/selection
- Various suggestions made by different stakeholders: nominations made by the IGF community; MHLB members to be selected from within the MAG; clear, predictable, open, accountable, and transparent nomination/selection procedures.

Profile of members
- Some suggestions for MHLB members to be senior level and high-profile professionals. Other suggestions for members to have direct experience with the IGF and NRIs, and to demonstrate ability to effect change and drive agendas in various venues.
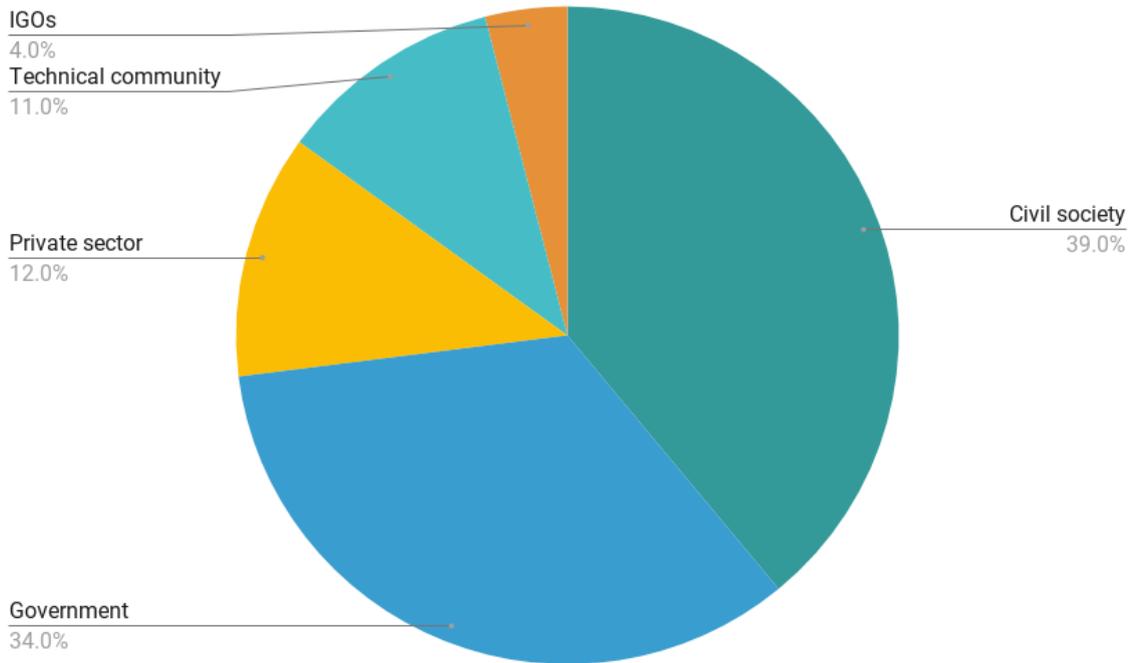
5. MHLB support and funding

- Support by the IGF Secretariat and funding through a strengthened IGF Trust or a mechanism similar to it.

ANNEX | Statistics

Contributions: 84 (excluding duplicates)

Distribution by stakeholder group

IGOs
4.0%

Technical community
11.0%

Private sector
12.0%

Civil society
39.0%

Government
34.0%

Distribution by region

IGOs
4.0%

Africa
10.0%

Asia Pacific
14.0%

Eastern Europe
16.0%

WEOG
37.0%

GRULAC
19.0%