

## Messages from Berlin 2024

The German IGF took place on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September in Berlin. Representatives from different stakeholder groups came together for this one-day event to discuss various topics on internet governance and put together the following messages for the IGF in Riad.

The German communities' stance on the lessons and consequences from the **Global Digital Compact** is:

- **Good overall result with weaknesses in the process and support for the IGF fell short of expectations:** Overall, we welcome the GDC and are grateful that a consensus was reached. However, the position of the IGF could have been stronger and the intergovernmental process could have benefitted from more transparency.
- **Further development of the IGF is necessary:** We think that the IGF needs to be further developed. The GDC is already proposing implementation by the NRIs, which are very well suited for this as a multi-stakeholder community.

The Global Digital Compact contains a commitment to the **multi-stakeholder approach**, but the process around the GDC also raised questions about it. The session 'One for all? The multi-stakeholder process and its future' at the IGF-D therefore addressed the topic and came to the following conclusions:

- **Back to the basics:** Multi-stakeholder processes must be scrutinised to determine whether they still correspond to their ideals. Implementations should correspond to their own principles.
- **Use multi-stakeholder approaches where they fit, but do not overstretch them:** The good multistakeholder approach cannot be applied to all challenges. The shifting policy field from internet policy to digital policy at the same time shifts the central objective of the policy field. It is no longer about the internet, but the much broader subject of digital transformation.
- **National responsibility is justified - and increases the importance of national multi-stakeholder approaches:** A governance approach that was developed to secure a decentralised, global network cannot always – or only with a sense of proportion – be transferred to a policy field that includes many aspects that have always been a national responsibility (economic policy, industrial policy, security policy, etc.). National multi-stakeholder processes can enrich this responsibility.

Another relevant topic during our German IGF concerned the Internet and its impact on the climate. We have an urgent pressure to implement **sustainability on the Internet**. Findings have been available for a long time. Science has been providing us with stable data and facts for decades. The following key messages have been derived from the session's discussions:

- Our short-term goal is to develop a common understanding of how we want to govern digital public infrastructure and digital public goods.
- Social sustainability must be considered too, like integration of actors in local communities (e.g., public appearances, funding of local events etc.) or sustainably supporting employees (e.g., providing public transport tickets etc.).
- The application of well-known climate protection and sustainability practices (5R rule, high temp. cooling, renewable energy etc.) are often not viable due to financial and market considerations, hence, for being part of the climate and sustainability solution, the legal and economic framework conditions must be addressed too. Operating with a focus on shareholder value often contradicts sustainability measures, we need to address this friction.
- Self-commitments as low-threshold instruments can serve as first steps for a route to more sustainable operating models
- Stakeholders voiced the desire for better know-how transfer between each other. How can we institutionalize the exchange including all stakeholders?
- How can elements of ICANN's multi-stakeholder model for the sustainable operation of Internet infrastructures be adopted? In this context - who can "afford" being a volunteer?
- We should not put only efficiency at the center of concern, since total emissions and resource use still rise. Concepts such as rebound-effects and sufficiency measures need to be part of the toolbox

AI-supported applications and virtual reality are already having an impact on our everyday lives and will play an increasingly important role in the future with the spread of the **metaverse**. As **young people are among the early adopters in this field**, one of the German IGF's discussion's focus laid on this target group.

- A forward-looking digital policy must create the conditions to enable everyone to utilise the associated opportunities without discrimination and to manage the risks.
- To realise the rights of young people in the digital environment in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, existing regulatory approaches must be examined for their suitability for future technologies, new approaches must be developed where necessary and skills for the responsible use of AI-supported applications, virtual realities and the metaverse - including by minors - must be promoted.