

Reflections on the 20th Internet Governance Forum

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By Judith Hellerstein

I just came back from the 20th Internet Governance Forum (IGF) in Norway, which was held from June 23-27, 2025. I am so glad I was able to participate in so many important sessions at this year's IGF. The IGF showcases the success of the multistakeholder model, bringing together governments, civil society, academia, the technical community, and the private sector to shape our digital future. This year was no exception.

Twenty years ago, the IGF was born, created as part of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). As the WSIS+20 review approaches, renewing the IGF's mandate, strengthening the National and Regional Initiatives (NRIs), and ensuring the continuation of the Dynamic Coalitions so it can become a strong voice for the future of multistakeholder governance is more important than ever.

Sessions and Panels

I'm especially thankful for the opportunity to moderate, together with former Kenyan Minister **Nyambura**, the main session of the Policy Network on Meaningful Access with so many wonderful people. Thanks to **Daphnee** for the amazing orchestration and organization of this panel.

Thanks to **Mary Uduma** for including me on her panel focusing on connectivity and affordability in Nigeria with ICT Ministers and Regulators from Nigeria. It was a great panel.

Thanks to **Nancy Kanasa** from the Department of ICT in Papua New Guinea for having me moderate and help her organize her Data Governance Panel for Day Zero. It was such a fun time.

Besides speaking at these sessions, I also organized and moderated five other sessions. I thank all for putting their trust in me and choosing me to moderate their sessions.

Thanks to **Anja Gengo** of the IGF Secretariat for assisting the NRIs to organize four sessions, where I moderated the session on Access. To **Markus Kumar** and **Jutta Croll** for facilitating DCCG's four sessions and main session, which we could not have done without help from **Roman Chukov** of the IGF Secretariat.

Key Topics and Discussions

Throughout the IGF, discussions were held on many pressing digital issues impacting our lives: connectivity, affordability, accessibility for persons with disability,

and the need for mainstreaming these issues, along with data governance, AI, Internet fragmentation, and many others.

The IGF is the primary platform for multistakeholder dialogue on digital issues, including governments, the private sector, civil society, and technical communities.

Looking Ahead to WSIS+20

As we prepare for WSIS+20, let us all reaffirm our commitment to an open, free, accessible, and human-centric digital future. This milestone offers a critical opportunity to reflect on two decades of digital progress and to shape the future of an inclusive, secure, and sustainable digital ecosystem.

The future of the IGF as part of the digital governance framework needs to remain at the centre of all discussions. The UN will not only renew WSIS but also provide a permanent mandate for the IGF and provide stable and more permanent funding for the IGF.

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