



MINISTRY  
COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## DEPUTY MINISTER PINKY KEKANA

**.Zadna ZAIGF 2021**

**24 March 2021 | 9am**

Good morning

- .Zadna Board Chair Ms. Palesa Legoze
- .Zadna CEO, Mr Molehe Wesi
- Executives and Board members that will coming in for their sessions over the next 2 days, from BBI, FPB, ICASA, Google, PAICTA, ISPA, ZACR and many others that the CEO will thank individually on my behalf at the end of the conference
- I especially recognise representatives from the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies
- Ladies and gentlemen

The Internet Governance Forum is a global multistakeholder platform that facilitates the discussion of public policy issues pertaining to the internet.

It is a United Nations' process that provides an open, multi-stakeholder, and inclusive platform for dialogue and best-practice-sharing on public policy issues inherent to the governance, regulation and development of the Internet.

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) serves to bring people together from various stakeholder groups as equals, in discussions on public policy issues relating to the Internet. While there is no negotiated outcome, the IGF informs and inspires those with policy-making power in both the public and private sectors.

At their annual meeting delegates discuss, exchange information and share good practices with each other. The IGF facilitates a common understanding of how to maximize Internet opportunities and address risks and challenges that arise.

This year's 16th annual IGF meeting will be hosted by the Government of Poland in Katowice from 6-10 December, under the overarching theme: "Internet United".

The national IGF event, with the theme "Digital Interdependence", ahead of the global event in December, is where we find ourselves this morning – with .Zadna and the ZAIGF that is now in its 6<sup>th</sup> year.

As technologies emerge increasingly, they fundamentally change relationships between individuals and societies. This creates new ways of connectivity. While it is welcomed, this (inter) dependence also contributes to the increase of the digital divide. Universal human rights of inclusion and diversity, that exist offline must also apply in the digital world. Digital (inter) dependence brings a refreshing perspective for new ways of work and life, as we undertake life in the 'new normal', but it is a cautionary tale, as inclusion is a not-negotiable.

National and Regional IGF initiatives (NRIs) are organic and independent formations that discuss issues pertaining to Internet Governance from the perspective of their respective communities, while acting in accordance with the main principles of the global IGF.

The ZAIGF annual event is aimed at strengthening linkages and collaboration among relevant stakeholders in South Africa as a means of maximizing our country's benefit from the ever-growing digital economy. The audience of the ZAIGF consists of government, ICT community, business, research, academia and civil society representatives, most especially people from previously disadvantaged communities.

The ZAIGF's focus areas of discussion/theme for the next 2 days, are:

- Education and Access
- Universal Access and Connectivity
- Enhancing a Multi-Stakeholder Approach
- Digital Economy
- Unlocking the Digital Potential
- Disinformation and fake news
- Cybersecurity
- IP & Copyright
- Privacy and Protection of Personal Information

- Critical Resources, and more.

The Forum also serves as a platform to solicit views on public internet policy issues. The ZAIGF Multi-Stakeholder Committee, industry, APC and ICT Research for Africa, Google, etc., have been consulted about the convening of the ZAIGF in this regard.

In planning and executing the programme, the needs of the vulnerable groups must be taken into consideration e.g., women, children, disabled people and those from underprivileged communities.

Every year, there is an open call for submissions by the public, for the theme of the conference. The call was open between 28 December 2020 and 31 January 2021, and the global IGF community was invited to suggest issues for the IGF to prioritise in 2021, according to need, especially after a year of the impact of Covid-19.

507 submissions were received in total, with an overwhelming response from civil society being 50.2%, and the most common issue being 'inclusion', of the 10 themes in total, closely followed by 'security & trust'.

Technical issues such as infrastructure development, or rather a lack thereof. The digital divide, data privacy, and AI development and adoption are all critical areas of discussion and resolution.

The IGF NRI initiatives are expected to send written reports of their annual intersessional work activities, including the main annual event. All received reports are shared with the NRIs network and published on the IGF website.

Community-driven intersessional activities and Best Practice Forums have offered additional complementary platforms for multistakeholder dialogue on topical Internet policy issues such as Cybersecurity, Gender and Access, and Local Content, among others.

The Dynamic Coalitions of the IGF stand as an example of its successful efforts towards having continuous, expert, multistakeholder discussions on various issues pertaining to the Internet and Internet governance.

Issues taken up by the Dynamic Coalitions include innovative approaches to connecting the unconnected, IoT, network neutrality, platform responsibility, blockchain technologies, community connectivity, core Internet values, gender and Internet governance.

More than 135 countries and regions have established firm IGF processes for their respective communities. A high level of enthusiasm and activities in addition to a growing number of National, Regional and Youth IGFs are a testament to the success of the IGF's multistakeholder model.

By increasing the linkages between the global IGF community and the NRIs, the IGF has also benefited tremendously through a bottom-up approach on issues pertaining to Internet governance and technologies. These important collaborations between the IGF and the NRIs are showcasing how Internet related issues are different across countries and regions, implying that a relevant change can only be made if we all work together through an open and inclusive process.

To the Board, the Executive and our partners and stakeholders who will join us over the next 2 days, I want to extend my wishes of success for an impactful 6<sup>th</sup> ZAIGF. I also want to take this opportunity to say Thank you to all who have put this event together – a platform to discuss and deliberate South Africa's digital and internet future.

I thank you.