NETmundial+10: Evolving Multistakeholder Internet Governance and Digital Policy Processes[1]

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The growing complexity of discussions related to the Internet and its governance mechanisms will reach a critical moment in 2024 and 2025. Different spaces compete for the leading role in discussing topics that are important to everyday Internet use, without necessarily considering their governance aspects in a more dedicated manner. In a simplified way, initiatives arising from the WSIS processes[5] and the Global Digital Compact (GDC) proposed by the UN Secretary General are some examples of efforts that have moved discussions in the field [6].

The interchangeable use of terms such as "Internet governance", "digital governance", "digital policies" and others to address very similar issues gives clues about the fragmentation of debates and topics discussed, indicating a growing demand for coordination in this environment. To face these and other challenges, mainly through the promotion and expansion of multisectoral practices, the Brazilian Internet Steering Committee (CGI.br), with the support of relevant interlocutors from different countries and sectors, approved the holding of the NETmundial+10 meeting[7], as a space to reinforce the relevance of multisectoral Internet governance and digital policy processes at the most diverse levels.

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[6]See https://www.un.org/techenvoy/global-digital-compact
[7]Various information and details about the process will be discussed in this text. Even so, many other details, materials and various references will be accessible on the event's official website at https://netmundial.br/

NETmundial+10 Background

Disputes between different groups of actors around the institutional mechanisms that aim to have decisive power over the Internet are nothing new. It is possible to trace them back to the earlier WSIS and the discussions surrounding the creation of ICANN[8], among countless other processes in the field. The advancement of the so-called Digital Agenda is something that materializes in the most diverse processes and arenas, in national, regional and global contexts, whether from the point of view of individual States, or in multilateral and multisectoral global processes. This advance is also very visible in United Nations agencies such as the ITU, which consolidates its activities around information and communication technologies (ICTs) in a broad way, Unesco and its strong performance in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) and other subjects such as the governance of digital platforms, as well as the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) itself, which has been debating much broader topics about the digital environment as a whole since 2006.

The Tunis Agenda [9]created the IGF[10], a global multistakeholder platform that facilitates discussion of public policy issues relating to the Internet, with an initial mandate of five years. In 2010 this mandate was renewed for another five years; the second term renewal was made during the WSIS+10 process, with the approval of 10 additional years, to end in 2025[11], when the WSIS+20 Review will take place. The success of the Internet derives precisely from the efforts of countless actors, both in its implementation and in its governance mechanisms. This is why the Tunis Agenda recognizes that Internet governance is "based on the full participation of all interested parties, both from developed and developing countries, within their respective roles and responsibilities". This spirit of collaboration should not only be restricted to the technical operation layers of the Internet, but must also permeate all its

[8] Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, https://www.icann.org/

[9] Document resulting from the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, held in 2005. See Cadernos CGI.br | Documents from the World Summit on the Information Society: Geneva 2003 and Tunis 2005, available at https://cgi.br/publicacao/cadernos-cgi-br-documentos-cmsi/

[10] See https://www.intgovforum.org/

[11] The IGF and UN Processes https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/the-igf-and-un-processes

coordination and governance points, including the applications and services layer.

Political tensions, with potential impact on key institutions in the functioning of the Internet, which had not been resolved since the WSIS, reached their peak during the first half of the 2010s. ICANN's link with the government of the United States of America[12], through a contract that supervised the functions of the IANA[13], was a permanent topic of discussion until the middle of this decade, as some actors understood that this contract would give preponderance to the government of that country in controlling the domain name system (DNS) and the Internet.

This perception and other concerns gained strength when Edward Snowden revealed, in mid-June 2013, a global scale scheme of mass surveillance and espionage by the US government. Snowden showed that espionage was carried out against citizens and authorities across the planet, including the Brazilian president at the time, Dilma Rousseff, who met in September[14] with CGI.br to discuss this issue and the progress of the *Marco Civil da Internet*[15]. Later, Dilma used the CGI.br *Decalogue of Principles*[16] in her speech at the opening of the UN General Assembly in September 2013, when she addressed cases of espionage and called on the international community to debate, in Brazil, the global governance of the Internet. In October, a joint letter from key actors in the Internet technical community, meeting in Montevideo (Uruguay), highlighted the clear need to reinforce and continually develop mechanisms for global multistakeholder Internet cooperation[17]. Even with the mobilization of actors on a global scale to discuss this and other issues, there was a lack of space for debate with appropriate conditions, which did

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[12] ICANN is under the laws of California and of the US government.

[13] The Internet Assigned Numbers Authority (IANA)'s main function is to assign and allocate unique identifiers that underlie the functioning of the Internet globally. In general, IANA is responsible for managing what are known as critical Internet resources: domain names, numbering resources and the basis of protocols for operating the network globally.

[14] https://cgi.br/noticia/releases/cgi-br-reune-se-com-a-presidenta-da-republica/

[15] See https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2011-2014/2014/lei/l12965.htm

[16] https://principios.cgi.br

[17] Montevideo Statement on the Future of Internet Cooperation
https://www.icann.org/en/announcements/details/montevideo-statement-on-the-future-of-internet-cooperation-7-10-2013-en

not exist in the forums established at the time; this led to the announcement of the NETmundial event in 2014.

The NETmundial meeting took place on April 23-24, 2014, in São Paulo, bringing together 1,480 participants in person and remotely, from 97 countries. It was based on a multisectoral model with real equality of participation for all ("equal footing"), organized in committees, which aimed for broad and diverse participation. A High-Level Committee and a Multisectoral Executive Committee, with varied actors, including high-ranking government members from different countries, took care of the dynamics and programming of the event, which was held in a partnership between CGI.br and the /1Net network , a forum that housed different global technical organizations involved with Internet governance. As a result, the event produced the "NETmundial Multistakeholder Declaration"[18], also known as the "São Paulo Multistakeholder Declaration", in two parts: a set of principles for the development, use and governance of the global Internet, and a roadmap for the future evolution of the Internet.

In the years following NETmundial, several actors considered the possibility of holding a follow-up event, to continue the success of the first. Two sessions were organized at the 2018 and 2019 IGFs, to continue the legacy of NETmundial. At IGF 2018 in Paris,[19] a workshop focused on evaluating the evolution of Internet Governance debates, the implementation of the 2014 principles and the holding of a NETmundial review event the following year. At the IGF in Berlin, in 2019, a "day zero" activity was carried out, in addition to a pre-event called "NETmundial+5"[20], which debated the sequence and implementation of the principles adopted in 2014. Although this action did not attract solid enough momentum to continue the discussions, it served to enable different actors to safeguard the legacy of NETmundial and eventually hold another round of discussion along the same lines.

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[18] São Paulo Multisectoral Declaration (NETmundial). Available at https://www.cgi.br/media/docs/publicacoes/4/Documento_NETmundial_pt.pdf

[19] IGF 2018 WS #178 Towards NetMundial +5: Available at https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/igf-2018-ws-178-towards-netmundial-5

[20] IGF 2019 Pre-Event #32 NETmundial+5: The Legacy and Implications for Future Internet Governance https://www.intgovforum.org/en/content/igf-2019-pre-event-32-netmundial5-the-legacy-and -implications-for-future-internet-governance

In 2018, in a kind of inflection point in the field, the UN Secretary General set up a high-level panel to address issues related to the topic of digital dooperation. The panel was made up of professionals from different countries, and delivered, in 2019, a report on its work, entitled "The Era of Digital Interdependence: Report of the High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation" [21]. The report deals with a diversity of topics and generated a series of responses, contributions and subsequent processes, engaging the most varied global *stakeholders*.

More recently, in 2020, the UN Secretary-General, as part of the entity's 75th anniversary celebrations, published the report "Our Common Agenda", in which he proposed a Global Digital Compact (GDC) [22], which will be approved during the Summit of the Future[23], to be held in September, 2024. Along with this, the global community is also preparing for the WSIS+20 review, to be held in 2025, which will discuss, among others, the paths and the future of the IGF. This entire framework of debates and decision-making processes, many competing and in parallel, sets the tone for the complexity of the ecosystem, which needs to deal with several overlaps and little coordination, main elements of discussions related to the fragmentation of Internet governance and digital policy processes. To this fragmentation is added a multiplicity of other global spaces for discussing specific topics, such as Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity, largely in an intergovernmental context, with little opportunity for significant participation from other sectors.

The process of GDC negotiations has raised several questions from the global community, mainly from the point of view of transparency and participation of non-governmental actors[24]. Such concerns are not only related to the actions of governments, but also to the way in which this process views other relevant actors. In June 2023, the United Nations Secretary-General's Technology Envoy, Ambassador Amandeep Singh Gill, declared that a tripartite model would be necessary to form a new Digital Cooperation Forum, with participation of the private sector, governments and "civil

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[21]"The Age of Digital Interdependence: Report of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation", in the original English. See https://cgi.br/publicacao/cadernos-cgi-br-a-era-da-interdependencia-digital/

[22] https://www.un.org/techenvoy/global-digital-compact

[23] https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future

[24]Negotiation and approval of the GDC will take place between the Member States of the UN.

society" (understood here in a broader sense which would also include the technical community and academia). The statement provoked a reaction from relevant actors in the technical community: ICANN, ARIN[25] and APNIC[26] published a joint statement[27] strongly criticizing the Tech Envoy's statements and in defense of the Internet's multistakeholder model that treats the technical community as an actor with interests distinct from others sectors.

Since the publication of the report *Our Common Agenda*, by the UN Secretary General, the holding of the Summit of the Future has presented itself as a concrete risk for open and multisectoral discussions, aimed at achieving consensus between different groups of actors interested in development and use of the Internet, taking into account that the decision-making power of this summit is restricted to the governmental instance. In the same sense, the reinforcement of multilateral spaces brought about by the discussions currently underway regarding the GDC brings risks to the IGF as a global multisectoral effort capable of being improved to deliver even more relevant results. Thus, given the current dominance of multilateral initiatives that aim to be responsible for the development and use of the Internet, the multisectoral governance model would need to be reaffirmed before these decision-making processes progress further.

Understanding the moment as critical for defining the direction of digital ecosystem governance, several actors from the interested global community, especially those already traditionally involved with Internet governance, identified the need for an essentially multisectoral discussion space that could provide an adequate environment for actors from different sectors to meet and agree on strong messages, with concrete recommendations on the preservation and application of multisectoralism in the most diverse governance spaces, including multilateral spaces. Thus, after several dialogues and articulations within this community, NETmundial+10 was proposed as a possible tool to address all these issues.

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[25] One of the 5 Regional Internet Registries, responsible mainly for North America.
[26] One of 5 Regional Internet Registries, responsible for the Asia-Pacific region.
[27] The statement is published on the ICANN website: https://www.icann.org/en/blogs/details/the-global-digital-compact-a-top-down-attempt-to-minimize-the-role-of -the-technical-community-21-08-2023-en

The conception of NETmundial+10

In September 2023, based on an analysis of the scenario described above, CGI.br approved the holding of the NETmundial+10 event to debate global challenges related to the Internet and digital governance, with the condition that the event would only be viable from a political point of view through coordination with international partners. In this way, CGI.br started to dialogue with actors and potential partners in the main Internet governance events, such as IGF 2023, held in Kyoto, Japan; ICANN78, held in Hamburg, Germany; and the World Internet Conference, held in Wuzhen, China, among others. These first contacts provided the general outline of what a NETmundial+10 should address, taking into account what was approved by CGI.br and the wishes of the different actors consulted. During these meetings, possible institutional support was also sought for the event. Among the most frequent topics at meetings, the following can be highlighted:

- the defense of the multistakeholder model for Internet governance;
- NETmundial+10 should not overlap activities or replicate IGF structures;
- strengthening the role of the IGF; and
- the need for an agile work methodology, given the short deadline for organizing the event.

Summary timeline

- September 22, 2023: Approval of the holding of NETmundial+10 by CGI.br: https://cgi.br/reunioes/ata/2023/09/22/
- October and November 2023: meetings with potential supporters and partners, during the IGF in Kyoto, Japan; ICANN78, in Hamburg, Germany; and the World Internet Conference in Wuzhen, China.
- November 23, 2023: publication of the note "NETmundial+10 – Global challenges for the governance of the digital world": https://cgi.br/noticia/notas/netmundial-10-global-challenges-for-the-governance-of-the-digital-world/

- December 2023: meetings of the NETmundial+10 scope group, which defined the main lines of the event.
- December 22, 2023: Joint statement from NETmundial+10: https://netmundial.br/statement/joint-statement-of-the-netmundial10
- January 2024: Collecting signatures for the Joint Declaration.
- February 2024: composition and start of work of the High Level Executive Committee (HLEC).
- March 2024: process for expressions of interest to participate in the event.
- March 22, 2024: launch of the NETmundial+10 online consultation and preliminary schedule.
- April 10, 2024: closure of the NETmundial+10 online consultation.
- April 25, 2024: publication of the preliminary version of the final declaration, based on the content received through the online consultation.
- April 29-30, 2024: holding the event and collecting contributions in the work sessions.
- April 30, 2024: final HLEC meeting and publication of the NETmundial+10 Final Document, at the end of the event.

Process before and during the event

NETmundial+10 was heavily based on the 2014 event, with necessary content and dynamic adaptations. As in 2014, the event was designed to provide meaningful multisectoral dialogues that could generate tangible results on the topics under discussion. Unlike 2014, when the event focused on thematic discussions in the field of Internet governance and generated principles in several areas, such as innovation, security and human rights, the 2024 event focused on a more restricted section of the agenda, seeking to offer concrete proposals on mechanisms and guidelines for the advancement of multisectoral practices in all relevant spheres.

At the beginning, informal dialogues were held with potential partners of the initiative, from different sectors and geographic regions, in order to identify

strengths, weaknesses, risks and opportunities, as well as to establish a network of key supporters to make the event politically viable. After several dialogues and positive feedback about the idea and objectives, the general outline of an event was improved and CGI.br began to actually build a network for NETmundial+10. The first step was to establish a "scope group", which worked basically during the month of December, 2023, and defined the bases and guidelines of the event, materialized in the joint declaration that was widely disseminated at the beginning of January, 2024, for collection of signatures.

The group was assembled mainly from the group of people and organizations with whom CGI.br had spoken during governance events in the second half of 2023. It was a group formed by around 15 people, with gender, sectors and regions' diversity. With remote meetings in December 2023, the group debated and created a joint statement, through which CGI.br and its partners disclosed to the global community the ongoing process to organize the event, in addition to specifying the scope of discussions on the advancement of multistakeholderism for the governance of the digital world, especially with regard to the mechanisms and practices that should be the basis of its functioning.

With the declaration published at the beginning of January, a signature collection process began and lasted until the end of the month, receiving around 300 pieces of support from individuals and organizations around the world. All supporting manifestations were registered and documented on the event website. From then on, the process of composing what would become the event's Executive Committee began. In 2014, the event had a structure around four different committees, with well-established missions. For 2024, there was a reduction in this structure, in order to adapt expectations to the time and resources available to hold the event. The structure of the 2014 Executive Committee was taken as a basis and joined with the others, giving rise to what became known as the High Level Executive Committee (HLEC). The HLEC began its work in mid-February 2024, when the event production process was accelerated.

After just over two months of intense work, HLEC, supported by a reduced Secretariat, held several online meetings in order to debate and make the

various decisions related to the organization of the event. Due to the more compact structure, some functions were separated. While HLEC was responsible for the event content, the host, CGI.br, was fully responsible for infrastructure and logistics decisions for the event. CGI.br, through the .br Information and Coordination Center (NIC.br), organized all the necessary physical infrastructure. CGI.br/NIC.br, through the allocation of resources and personnel, also provided the secretariat necessary for HLEC activities from October 2023 until the completion of all processes related to the event.

To facilitate and streamline the organization of the event, HLEC was divided into three subgroups: Participation, Programming and Consultation. The Participation Subgroup was responsible for defining criteria for selecting participants, rules and guidelines on participation in the process, in addition to other issues related to information, participation and engagement. The Programming Subgroup was responsible for the entire construction of the event's programming, debating the criteria, general lines, dominant formats, interaction dynamics and composition of sessions. The Consultation Subgroup was responsible for designing the online consultation that prepared the basis for the event, defining the themes and content of the consultation, as well as other necessary implementation aspects, in addition to a subsequent assessment of the results.

Throughout the process, the dynamics was basically that of subgroup meetings followed by general HLEC meetings. Each individual subgroup meeting dealt with specific aspects of that subgroup's agenda, with subsequent reporting at the general HLEC meeting. The HLEC meetings also had the role of discussing open topics, in addition to forwarding questions to the subgroups, or even dealing with other unforeseen and/or pending issues. In total, there were seven online HLEC meetings before the event. Subsequently, HLEC held its first in-person meeting the day before NETmundial+10, on April 28th, 2024. The committee met on the 29th and 30th, during the event, to continue processing community contributions and prepare the final document. On the 30th, HLEC remained in session throughout the afternoon, in order to process all the contributions received and finalize the document that was presented at the final plenary. The subgroups, in turn, held several meetings throughout the event organization

process, in a not necessarily uniform manner, always depending on the demands of each group.

The online consultation was the backbone of the entire process until the final declaration of the event. The HLEC subgroup responsible for outlining the content and process of the consultation held several meetings to reach a final version of the consultation that was published on the platform. The final format involved a mix of open and closed questions, the latter being based on a Likert scale structure, in which respondents needed to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with certain statements. The set of questions also included a ranking-type question and another about prioritization. The consultation was launched on March 22, 2024, and closed on the following April 10, receiving various contributions from a total of 154 respondents. A dedicated team analyzed and categorized the content received, producing a report that was used by the secretariat and HLEC in discussions on the event's final document. Based on the consultation report, the secretariat prepared a set of content structured by the contributions, so that this was the initial input for HLEC's work to prepare the final declaration.
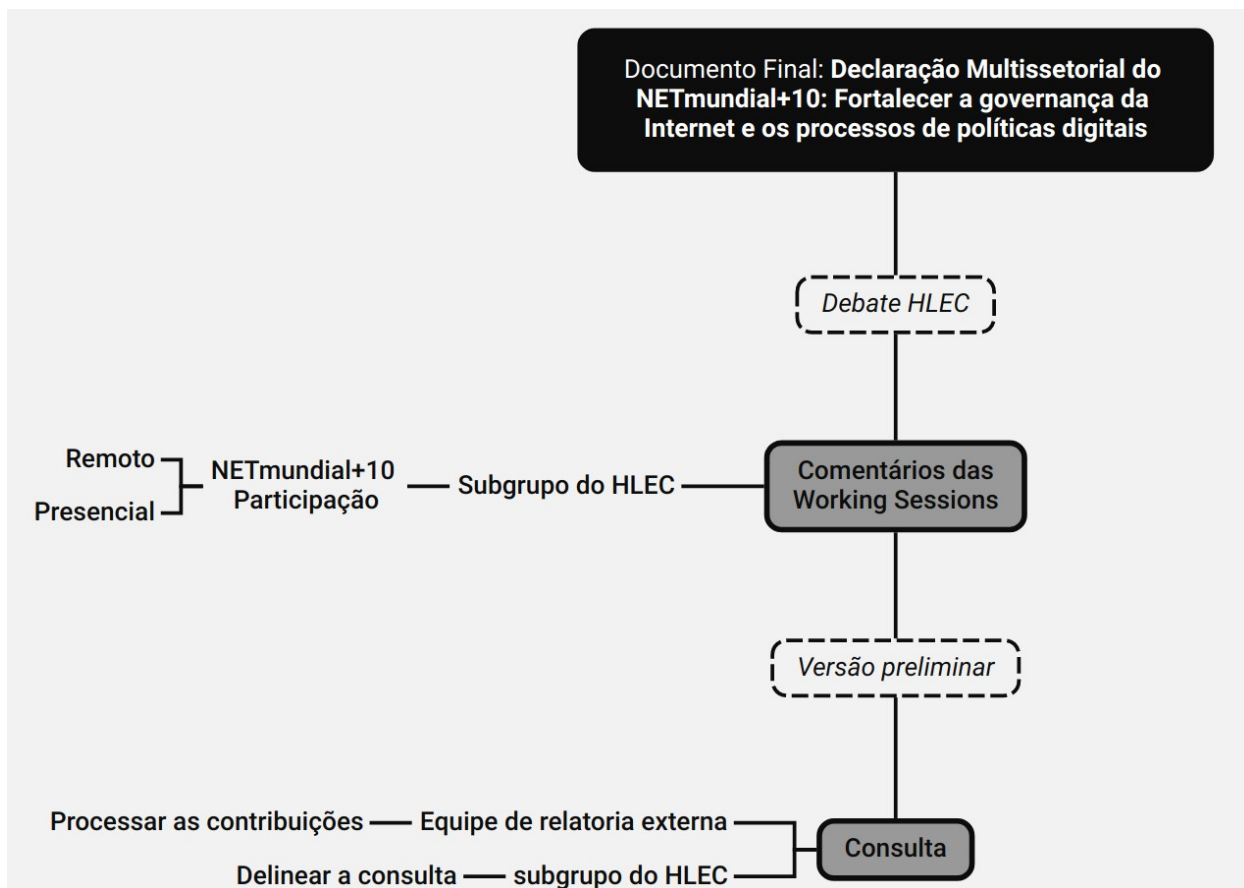
After the first phase of consultation processing, a second phase was initiated in which HLEC chose members responsible for drafting specific parts of the final document (pen holders). The pen holders worked for a very short period of time and delivered proposals for consolidating the sections based on the inputs provided to them. The structure of the final document was almost entirely based on the topic structure of the online consultation, in order to maintain the coherence of the process and ensure the addition of community contributions in a more direct way. After this first work of consolidation by the pen holders, HLEC met and finalized the preliminary version of the document, which was published on April 25th, 2024, a few days before the event, in order to give the community prior knowledge of the contents, to provide time and space for debates within sectors.

With the preliminary document published, HLEC continued the debates and preparation for the event, already debating and defining methodological and process issues. HLEC members remained responsible for specific parts of the document, with the mission of processing contributions received from

participants during the event to propose final versions of sections of the document. The event featured three working sessions, focused on each of the main thematic sections of the final document. After each session, a reporting team sent summaries of participants' contributions so that HLEC members could process the content. This work fed into a final version of the document, which was debated by HLEC throughout the afternoon of the second and final day of the event. The final version resulting from this meeting was presented in the final plenary, with a complete reading by the HLEC members who were in the session. The result was very well received, both by the event participants and by many other actors in the Internet governance community.

Following the event, several dialogues were initiated to publicize the final document and increase its impact. Actors from the global community have used the results of NETmundial+10 in dialogues within their own communities, in addition to mentioning them in other relevant processes. Much has been said about the need to expand such dialogues and raise awareness about the NETmundial+10 declaration, in order to qualify debates and bring multisectoral consensus to other decision-making processes.

 Several members of the community have already made explicit reference, including to what has come to be identified as the "São Paulo Guidelines", which correspond to an important part of the document, with essential recommendations for the implementation of multisectoral governance mechanisms. The community is also starting to think about the possible implementation of another express recommendation included in the NETmundial+10 final document, which indicates the IGF as the guardian of these guidelines.

Simplified diagram of how the process of creating the final declaration took place.

Final declaration and the São Paulo Multisectoral Guidelines

As in 2014, the main product of NETmundial+10 was its final statement[28]. The document almost entirely followed the structure presented during the online consultation, preserving its three main thematic sections: "Principles for Internet Governance"; "Guidelines for the Implementation of Multisectoral Mechanisms"; and "Contributions to Ongoing Processes". Given that the event only lasted two days, and in order to advance the drafting work, a preliminary version of the document was prepared by HLEC based on the contributions sent in response to the online consultation. Several editorial changes were made during the two days of the event, as a result of the community engagement process, and materialized in the text of the final document.

[28]See https://netmundial.br/pdf/NETmundial10-MultistakeholderStatement-2024.pdf

The final declaration contains, in its initial section, its main objectives. In this way, NETmundial+10:

- *Ratifies the 2014 NETmundial declaration, which states that the Internet is a global resource that must be managed in the public interest, in accordance with international law and international human rights legislation;*
- *Recognizes the relevance of transparency and accountability to improve Internet governance and digital policy processes;*
- *Reaffirms that the 10 principles for Internet governance processes adopted in 2014 remain relevant and recommends their application in addressing current and future digital policy challenges;*
- *Proposes operational guidelines for implementing these principles in different situations;*
- *Makes contributions to several ongoing processes related to the evolution of governance architecture for digital policies; and*
- *Recommends that the principles and guidelines presented in this document are implemented by all interested parties, at all levels.*

Therefore, the NETmundial+10 multisectoral declaration has basically three pillars: reaffirmation of the principles of governance processes adopted in 2014, recommendation of operational guidelines for the implementation of the principles, and consolidation of messages for other ongoing processes that can benefit from the contents of the declaration.

The document presents several relevant content elements that deserve careful analysis, such as recommendations for implementing the multisectoral principle and messages about coordinating governance spaces. The heart of the declaration, however, is the set of guidelines and process steps for multisectoral collaboration and decision-making, the "São Paulo Multisectoral Guidelines". In total, there are 13 guidelines, covering specific aspects of how multisectoral participation should take place, the need for deliberation, transparency and accountability, among others. The process stages, in turn, involve guidelines that include the identification and engagement of actors, information sharing, equitable participation,

community powers, among others. It is expected that the guidelines and process steps can be integrated into the most diverse multisectoral and/or multilateral processes, at all levels.

Another strong aspect of the document is the section dedicated to sending messages to other ongoing processes. Among the messages expressed, one can highlight the recommendation that the GDC does not create new spaces that could overlap with existing ones, indicating that current spaces should be reinforced to achieve the expected objectives. Another relevant aspect was the defense of the IGF as a preferred space for coordinating processes and monitoring relevant decisions. Furthermore, the NETmundial+10 document also recommends that the IGF be the guardian of the São Paulo Multisectoral Guidelines, monitoring their implementation and evolution in the ecosystem.

As part of the multisectoral debate process itself, and even as part of the process of listening to the community, a "new" expression to refer to the field is also a result of NETmundial+10: "Internet Governance and Digital Policy Processes". The expression was the result of the Executive Committee's multisectoral consensus, when it debated the community's contributions and tried to consolidate the different visions. The adoption of this expression was an attempt to resolve the cacophony pointed out in several contributions, regarding the use of different expressions to refer to the same things, interchangeably (eg: digital governance, Internet governance, digital policies, etc).

The success of NETmundial+10 is grounded in the future

NETmundial+10 was a multisectoral effort that was undeniably successful from a logistical and political point of view. The decision to hold it in the first half of 2024 not only met a wish to repeat or commemorate the 2014 event, but also to provide an opportunity for the final document to be used in key events on the 2024-2025 agenda. . In this way, all those interested in defending the multisectoral model of Internet governance and digital policy processes have the opportunity to take ownership of the format for holding the event and its results, such as its final document and the São Paulo Guidelines contained in it, applying them in all multisectoral and multilateral

governance spaces. The real impact of NETmundial+10 is not in the holding of the event, but in the effective improvement of the architecture and mechanisms of Internet governance and digital policy processes.

Despite the permanent urgency that permeated the entire organization and holding of the event, the community interested in defending the multisectoral model was strengthened by the provided mobilization. NETmundial+10 enabled those interested in continuing to build and evolve Internet governance mechanisms and digital policy processes to take several concrete steps towards building consensus for the future of the Internet. This achievement, in itself, already constitutes a strong message for negotiations increasingly carried out in silos, conducted by different actors, especially intergovernmental, in increasingly fragmented and overlapping spaces, without the community having a strong and adequate tool to advance actions and really concrete positions for improving the governance of the global digital ecosystem.