



Dynamic Coalition on Accessibility and Disability

IGF-DCAD Meeting – April 15 2024

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Ladies and Gentlemen, we are good to start the first meeting of the Dynamic Coalition on accessibility and disability of 2024. Welcome to the meeting. Thank you very much.

We will without any further delay go to the first item on the agenda. This is the activity report of 2023. I will ask Judith to just quickly brief us about the activities that we did in 2023. Judith?

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: The first item of the agenda was actually the main IGF report. One of our works with the IGF is to make sure that there is always an accessible version of the report on the Web, because the communication people like to make things very pretty and oftentimes as accessible for the screen capturers. We worked with the Secretariat and they posted a Word version and an accessible PDF version which we both tested on there. That was one of the things.

The item that Dr. Shabbir was referring to was our annual report, which we wrote as the Dynamic Coalition which summarized the work that we were doing for the year of 2023.

As everyone knows, with Lidia's help, and Andrea and Deirdre's help, we worked to create some new governance documents as well as a code of conduct and other related activities. We were active participants on the monthly NRI calls, which are the national regional initiatives, those are the national IGFs. We worked with them on several accessibility issues. We also worked very closely with the Dynamic Coalition's coordinating group calls.

And with them, we presented at the MAG meetings at the consultation workshops on accessibility, on different groups. We also were very much involved, besides the monthly calls, we helped organize the main sessions at the IGF, where Dr. Shabbir was there as one of the speakers. We also were able to convince the host to provide International Sign Language as Dr. Shabbir was one of the speakers. So, we have been very actively working with them.

We were also working with the IGF Secretariat on making sure that the venue was accessible. And then we also, after, as Lidia was one of our fellows this year, and with all the other fellows, we had a first year of the DCAD travel fellowship, where we sponsored four people from Asia, Africa, Europe, which was a very competitive fellowship sponsored by Vint Cerf, and then we also had some other fellows from Japan. So, we're going to be doing the fellowship again this year, courtesy of Vint Cerf.

After the fellowship we did an official letter to both the IGF and the leadership team headed by Dr Vint Cerf about a lot of the accessibility issues that we found in the IGF, and so we got the official recording with the leadership team and others, and we are hoping that it is going to be working out better this year.

That's a summary of our annual report.

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Thank you very much, Judith, for this brief report. The activity report is also available online. The link was given in the email.

The next item on the agenda is the update from the IGF Secretariat. The agenda item 2.

This information basically is for every year IGF participants. IGF Secretariat creates a page, gives information for the IGF participants, and this page will keep updating the time for the event comes closer.

We all know that this year Internet Governance Forum is going to be held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, from December 15 to 17, if I'm not wrong. So, we do have sufficient time, but there is a call for the workshop proposals that we wanted to get the input of the participants that how DCAD should approach the call for workshop proposals by the IGF.

MAG has floated the call. It will be selecting the proposal from amongst the proposed sessions that would be proposed.

So the point here is in the second agenda item, last year we also emphasized that there were still issues with the IGF website that they made for the IGF event 2023 in Japan, though they had made it accessible, they claimed it as well, but still there were some usability issues. And, as we move forward in time, it comes back again and again there are still issues that remain with the IGF website.

I cannot emphasize more on to making the IGF event website accessible for all kinds of Persons with Disabilities. We have recommended to Secretariat, to the leadership panel, and to all concerned in the UN and IGF system, that there should be accessibility testers, professionals who should test the IGF website as it is being developed and updated, and

the content should also be made accessible. It should be ensured that the Web Accessibility Content Guidelines criterion , according to 2.2 AA standards are followed at least, so that, no information, no person is left behind, no information is missed out from and by the people with disabilities. We will continue this work with the IGF Secretariat this year as well.

I think now is the time to move forward to agenda item 3, which is the main purpose of organizing this meeting. Judith, do you want to take honours, and the lead on this? I think you are again

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: . Yes. So agenda item 3 is what we were calling the DCAD workshop proposal. So, the Dynamic Coalitions, we usually have our own session. It is running a little bit different this time. They have added a whole number of new Dynamic Coalitions, and one of the main points that people last year, who had come, is that they said there was too many sessions, and too many overlapping sessions, so they are trying to restrict the number of sessions, and they're also trying to restrict some of the Dynamic Coalition sessions, and so they are asking people to partner with others.

Now, we are a bit different because we cannot really, partner well with others, because of the structure of our session, and of the requirements of our sessions.

And so we feel confident, we will get our session, if we don't get a main session that's on the agenda, we will still have our session, but we will have to do a lot more self promoting of it, because, if worse comes to worse, and we are not picked, we will be in a room with captioning and with sign language interpretation, but not on the session. So, we will cross that bridge when we get there.

But, this is the requirements of the dynamic sessions, and so there are four areas of subthemes that we need to look at. We need to talk about harnessing innovation and balancing risk in the digital space. One of these four themes, or two or more, we have to focus our session around. So, the themes are harnessing innovation and balancing risk in a digital space, enhancing the digital contribution to peace, development and sustainability, advancing human rights and inclusion in the digital age, and improving digital governance for the Internet we want. So, it's very easy to frame our session around at least two or more of these points.

We then have to go and fill out the application, and so we are then going to fill out and then we have to respond to that. So, we are looking for people with ideas of what kind of session, what areas we want. Thanks, Deirdre, third and fourth, improving digital governance, looks like what we are focusing. So should we focus on two themes, one theme? Should we have a layout being a round table, a classroom or a theater? And then who do we want to invite and how do we want to deal with on the session, and then also choosing the Sustainable Development Goals that we relate to.

So, that's sort of one of our goals on that. Dr. Shabbir and I are going to be working, we want to work with a team, on the session. The sessions are due at the end of April, so, in two weeks, so we we don't have much time to work on it.

And yes, Deirdre, advancing human rights, but I also see us related to improving digital governance for the Internet we want, because the Internet we want is one that's accessible, and that's one that everyone can complete.

Why is this happening so late? They only announced it in the beginning of April, when we were setting up the meeting,

and they gave everyone a month's time to do a session, and they want to give people more time to review and set up the MAG panels and everything else, and so they are restricting us to just a month which is only two weeks for us.

It is just the way the cookie crumbles. Yes, they could have given people two months. But it is what it is. We did circulate them right away., Deirdre. We circulated them a couple of weeks ago. We had the issue of the mailing list that Joly had to fix. So, they were circulated then.

We had the DCC meeting the first week in April, and then after that we circulated the information. We only had gotten it very late from them.

And we didn't know what the Dynamic Coalitions were doing because the information wasn't out yet until we had our DCC meetings and how they would be structuring it. We did try to get it out early but it wasn't really possible. Dr. Shabbir, do you want to add anything?

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Thank you very much, Judith for the update. I have a couple of things to say as the coordinator of the DCAD, as well, but first I would add in my voice as a member of the DCAD, and that is my view on the proposal that DCAD should propose for the IGF 2024, and I think instead of hopping into two or more themes, we should stick to one theme, and put a good proposal, and my recommendation there would be. And this is my individual view, that's why I have taken off my coordinator's hat, that we should stick with theme 3, the Human Rights in the Digital Age, because that's something which really reflects the rights of the human and focuses on human. If we wanted to, if I were to ask to put in a proposal, I could fit in an accessibility related proposal in all four of the themes, but what really concerns us, as Persons with Disabilities, is our rights on the Internet, and as humans, all should be treated as equal, not some are more equal than others. So, this disparity and inequality should not just be decreased but it should be ended.

This is my personal view, and I am open to other ideas, or even opposing ideas to what I propose here.

Now I wear my coordinator's hat and have a couple of things to say.

As coordinator, yes, Deirdre, when you say that, why this is so late, this seems late because we are having our first meeting in the middle of April. When we were planning this meeting the IGF call for proposals were not out. We circulated a doodle, meanwhile the call came out. We sent the information on email to the DCAD list, to the whole membership. We unfortunately did not receive any responses.

Also this was the time which was selected by few of the members, the responses that we received on the doodle circulated for the arrangement of this call. There was some technical issues as well that some people were not getting the email due to some issues with the listserv, I hope those issues are fixed by now. But, if someone is still facing issues not receiving emails or the emails are going into spam, please let myself, Judith, or Joly know, and we will try to fix the issues. This was due to a technical problem with the gmail and the listserv that we use, that we had to face this technical problem.

And last but not the least, we still have 15 days to submit a proposal, so if there are any ideas we could still incorporate and consider in the DCAD workshop proposal that we are going to submit. If there are any points or questions on to this, I am open to those.

And one more thing. We have this call, after, if someone reads the transcript of this call and they have any ideas to share with us, they can share those ideas on the DCAD list, or send those ideas directly to myself or Judith.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Okay, well thanks so much, Dr. Shabbir.

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Any comments in the chat, Judith?

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Deirdre says she will try to send some ideas for draft proposals. And then Lidia wants us to first create a draft and then she can sign in with help. So those were the comments on the chat.

And then the next item on the agenda, other activities. We have several other activities going on. Besides our fellowship program, I will talk about the other related events. We were offered a spot for a DCAD session at the European Digital Government School, which is happening in mid June. And so we are preparing a session. They are doing a series of presessions, and we were offered a spot, and we have been working with other groups to arrange it. We hope to also have Lidia as one of the correspondents talking about the

efforts of the hard of hearing in Europe, and what's been done with the new act. We are having two other people who are going to be in person. We are having Jackamo Mazzoni who is going to talk about journalism and accessible journalism areas in Europe and a lot of other stuff. He is also co-head of the policy network for meaningful access. And, we are then also having our colleague talking about other accessibility issues.

I will send out the section again for EuroDIG session, but Klaus Hoeckner, who many of you know, is going to be talking about also the implementation of Europe Accessibility Act.

And then, we were reached out by the host community which is in Lithuania, and we are hoping that they are going to talk about the efforts of the Lithuanian disability community. We are still trying to get someone to talk about cognitive issues. We only have a 75 minute session, but it was great that we were asked to do it.

And Deirdre, unfortunately it is going to be very early in the morning Eastern time. Dr. Shabbir is going to give an overview, introducing the session. I think it is like 4 a.m.

Is AI have a lot of issues? Oh. Yeah. I'm sure they are. So yeah. Will leave the Dr. Shabbir to talk about other activities, which is namely the fellowship.

Yes. Thank you very much, Judith. We yes. We still plan to continue as Judith mentioned in her earlier remarks. We are going to continue with the fellowship program of the Dynamic Coalition on accessibility and disability with the generous support of Vint Cerf and Google. We will be sending Persons with Disabilities to Riyadh as well. Hopefully we will be able to improve upon the last year's fellowship program that we ran.

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: This year, again I will be sending a call for the committee members for the selection Committee for the fellowship and applications who would evaluate the applications and then sort of select amongst the best candidates for the IGF in Riyadh. Those fellows would be Persons with Disabilities and DCAD's fellowship program is unique in a sense is that we sort of try to look at the needs of the individual. And accessibility requirements that they may have in their own assessment and try to fulfill those requirements remaining within our limited resources.

So learning from the last year's experience, Deirdre was one of the Committee members with myself and Judith and Masahito. Thank you so much for your last year's contributions, Deirdre. Learning from that experience we will be starting early and I shall be sending in a request for the Committee members in this or early next week.

Next, we I also have in my mind to update the DCAD accessibility Guidelines, which were last updated in 2015. Much has been has happened since then. Though, those Guidelines

are still relevant and valid to a large extent, but I think in ten years it is now high time that we should review those Guidelines and update them according to the current requirements and circumstances.

So I would also request if you know anyone who would be interested or if you yourself are interested in contributing into updating those Guidelines, please contact me directly.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Yes. Dr. Shabbir, one of the other things that we will be putting, Lidia and some of the other fellows from last year, did excellent work on a letter. We're going to be put those items also into the Guidelines. Because we we are working with other groups. And some of them

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: That's what I said. Much has been done. There are a lot of new strategies and ways through which the meetings be it online or in physical spaces they are being made accessible for Persons with Disabilities. So we want to include those strategies into our updated guideline documents.

So if you are interested, do contact me or Judith directly so that we can start working on that.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Right. And also why this is also important is a lot of other organizations, when they are creating accessibility policies, they don't they would rather link to a guideline which is an official thing that won't change, rather than to a letter or to something else and we have been finding that they are linking to old Guidelines. And new things have changed and we haven't updated this. It is very important that we get it. Because we have been posting on accessibility funding, I and the Internet Society and ICANN other areas. We need to link to these guidelines and working to getting these Guidelines up to date and working closely with them. That's why it is also very important to do that. And why we need to do it quickly because we told Internet Society that who was linking to our old Guidelines that we are revising them in another few months to them.

So that's why we want to get this project jump started very quickly.

As for the fellowship any other questions?

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Or comments related to these points.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Deirdre had an earlier comment on possible sessions. She was talking about, is AI having a lot of issues with Persons with Disabilities. So maybe framing a session somehow around these issues. Wanted to make sure that people were aware and get that into the captioning, that that's another question that we could also deal with.

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes, I think this is a very crucial question that I have been pondering for the last few months as well. But we need more data and information before we are able to propose a proposal, workshop proposal on to this topic. This is a topic of concern for me as well. But I acknowledged my own limitation here. There is there is AI and accessibility discussions going on. Particularly in the AR and VR domains. But for that, we and in the gaming industry as well, in the other AI domains, there are lots of developments going on. But how they are impacting accessibility, we have seen some good uses of AI, such as the Be My Eyes app and CIA is also using. We are using Otter AI for the captioning and stuff like that. I do understand there are limitations. And the problems that these AI solutions create for Persons with Disabilities. For instance, AI persons with hard of hearing or deaf people, they do not like the captioning by done by AI based softwares. They still like the human captioning.

So no matter how good they are, these tools and softwares are, and they are improving, but people with disabilities still prefer the human captioning. That proves that still those systems are not up to the up to the level that we could confidently say that yes, we can use these systems in any of the meeting.

Any other comments?

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: AI was active in Japan, one of the things that we have been looking at is also possibly doing some accessibility research and seeking donations for a research idea. And Dr. Shabbir was talking about partnering with other groups to submit a research Foundation grant

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: We are not discussing those topics here. There is also one agenda point I also want to ask people for any other business before I submit an idea for the any other business.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Sure.

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: I'm sorry to stop you there.

No problem. Deirdre is we need to have continuing meetings after AI and AI is about language. We were looking at those topics. Going back to fellowship, we have already created website and already taken a lot of the learnings that we had from last year and restructuring the application. And also making sure that all fellowship awardees are also members of the DCAD. We found out last time that several of them were not. And we want to make sure that everyone, that one of the criteria of that is becoming a member of DCAD. And any panels we put on are organized with parts that we have done, everyone all the

speakers have to be members. If we are calling it a DCAD thing we want it to be member driven. Sorry. Dr. Shabbir.

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes. Before I move on to any other business, any comments, questions? Seeing none

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: I do not see any.

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes. There aren't any. Are there any points from the members who are attending this call in the any other business to bring up? To bring up any agenda points

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Do you have anything?

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: I do.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: One minute. Deirdre, any questions you want to bring up? Oh, only that we need to keep on with the meetings. Lidia, we hope to work with you later on after this session on the firming up our June session. Deirdre, do you want to say something? Okay.

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Okay. So under any other business agenda

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Deirdre. Yes, we hear you. I can't hear her. Dr. Shabbir, go ahead. Sorry about that.

So under any other business, I wanted to bring up the engagement of DCAD members. How I think we have over a hundred members. And it has been observed, I have observed that there are very few members who participate in the discussions, when they are sent online on the mailing list. Or any other questions, such as doodle for this meeting. Or the participation in this meeting. I do agree with Deirdre that we need to organize more meetings of the DCAD. But if in the meetings only myself, Judith and Deirdre and some other people are sitting and discussing ideas, those could be counterproductive. I'm looking for any suggestion and recommendations that how do we engage those silent members, over 100 or so. They are wonderful people. I do acknowledge that. We need strategies and I need ideas to how to best engage them. If you have any ideas, any strategies, do share those with me. If you are a dormant or silent member reading the transcript after this call and you can share your insights why you stopped participating in the activities and discussions of the DCAD, and what should have been what should be done to motivate or to create your interest into the activities of DCAD, just send me an email. Send Judith an email. And let us know that what are your ideas and thinking so that

we will we are able to bring more people into these discussions. This is really, really important.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Great. Thank you. Lidia, you came on camera. Did you want to say something? Okay.

So I wanted to make sure. She said perhaps Lidia writes in perhaps organize interactive meetings with interesting speakers. We would love to do that. Happy to organize them. Deirdre says keep sending people invitations. Maybe they will start coming in six or nine months things will happen.

Thank you so much for your words of wisdom, Deirdre. And we would love to have other meetings. We look for all opportunities. So if you have any interesting or interactive speakers we are happy to have them and we can do partnerships with other groups. And we also will send we also will talk to Joly. He records a lot of the accessible New York meetings. And we can send the links to these meetings to the DCAD list. And they are all on Zoom. So maybe they are not necessarily at friendly times for European audiences but we could possibly send those to the list and maybe get more people interested in some of those topics. He is always posting some really interesting Zoom meetings that the accessible New York group is doing. Dr. Shabbir, we have four minutes.

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes. Do Deirdre or Lidia want to say something?

Any lost call Lidia or Deirdre? Lidia.

LIDIA BEST: Nothing more. I think it is fine. Thank you very much for organizing this meeting. I have been listening in but I'm at work. So it is difficult for me to talk today. Good job you have done. Yes. Let's keep going and there is a lot of different speakers. And it could be around the user's experience more. We can learn.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Yes, I would love that. If you can help organize these, we could put them on. We need someone to help organize them and we could have captioners and sign language, whatever. But we need someone to help do that. And Lidia, do get back to me with your comments on the EuroDIG session so we can firm it up. But I think it is great that we were reached out by the Lithuanian host.

I'm going to have a GM on Saturday. I'm sort of pressed for time. If you can wait until Sunday when I can respond.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Sure we can wait until then. But we do need after Sunday also your comments on the sessions.

LIDIA BEST: Yes.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: We like to organize a very active DCAD session, interactive and then have our fellows whoever they may be, discussing their experiences on that. Which will make our session more unique.

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes, on that topic of the session, Judith will start drafting the session around the themes that we discussed. And then by the if anyone has any ideas, we she can just take lead on that from those ideas. Before I conclude I wanted to hear there was a draft 0 on the Global Digital Compact, that's going to be drafted and adopted September, the Summit of the future. Different stakeholder groups, they are sending in their inputs and comments on to the draft 0 of the Global Digital Compact. I also drafted sort of response from the perspective of Persons with Disabilities, which is available on the DCAD website. You can see that there. We are also promoting this response in different webinars and sessions as well.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Right. Dr. Shabbir, we also that the GDC is closed now because there is going to be the Summit, it is going to be the they are talking about it now. But we want to encourage people about the NETmundial that's happening at the end of the month. We hope to have Dr. Shabbir hopes to be participating virtually in that and get some more, make sure that accessibility is mentioned there. And we put in some comments on that. They were due last week. And we are waiting for them to release the comments. But we submitted some comments on accessibility issues to NETmundial.

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: Yes. Thank you very much. I think we are top of the hour. This concludes our first meeting of the year. Thank you so much for participating. Thank you so much, Judith, for organizing this meeting with me. For the other people to participate. And last but not the least, our captioner, Tina, for her very wonderful captioning. The transcript and the recording of the call will be shared with all of the DCAD members soon. So we look forward to having your inputs and responses and proactive engagement in the DCAD activities in the upcoming weeks, months and years. Thank you.

JUDITH HELLERSTEIN: Thank you. And thanks to our late comers. And we will send you transcript who came late and Lidia and Deirdre and Daniel who came earlier, thank you so much. We look forward to working with you on our draft proposal. Thank you.

DR. MUHAMMAD SHABBIR: That's so much. Bye.

Bye.