

GDC Input - 8 March 2024 - As Submitted

This is a response to the consultation (closing 8 March) on [proposed elements](#) of the Global Digital Compact Zero Draft.

*Email**

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*Affiliation**

Co name

Type of organization/group*

Member States

Civil Society

International Organization

Private Sector

Technical Community

Research / Academia

Region

Africa

Asia and the Pacific

Eastern Europe

Latin America and the Caribbean

Western Europe and Other States

Global

Do you consider that key priorities for a Global Digital Compact are captured in the structural elements circulated?*

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

If you selected 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' please specify which different or additional priorities should be addressed in the Global Digital Compact.

Your answer

This submission is a joint submission from:

- au Domain Administration Ltd (from Australia)
- Canadian Internet Registration Authority (from Canada)
- InternetNZ (from Aotearoa New Zealand)
- Nominet UK (from the UK)

Each organisation is lodging an aligned submission separately.

While we agree with the key priorities outlined in the document – we would like to provide some comments on the preamble.

1) Digital cooperation is a collective effort and commitment. The structural elements document (the document) only recognises the UN's role in this context. Harnessing the full social and economic benefits of technology and addressing the complex transnational issues arising from the use of technology, requires the expertise and commitment of the full range of relevant stakeholders – including the technical community.

2) The reference to the relevant documents underpinning the foundation of digital cooperation and digital governance (i.e. the UN charter, the UNDHR and the Agenda 2030) does not include the WSIS outcomes documents. To best build on existing structures and minimise the potential for duplication, we propose these documents also be recognised as foundational to strengthening digital cooperation.

The WSIS provided the first framework for digital cooperation and mobilized a multi-stakeholder community, working together, to realise the positive transformative impact of digital technologies. It also set up a comprehensive follow up and implementation process and established the Internet Governance Forum (the IGF), a platform for dialogue and analysis of digital policy issues. These are useful, established processes that should be evolved to progress a positive shared vision for our digital future.

Section 2: Principles. Please provide comments and recommendations, if any

Your answer

We support the proposed principles and agree that the GDC should provide a reference point for digital cooperation, establishing principles that guide and sustain positive development of the digital world.

To minimize harms & maximise the benefits the digital world offers, all stakeholders should commit to a shared human-centric vision for our digital future, guided by values that promote human rights, international law, inclusiveness, transparency, & sustainability.

With respect to section II: Point 10, in our view the technical community is a distinct & critical stakeholder group & should explicitly be recognised. Its expertise underpins our increasingly networked world. Its contribution is vital to digital policy processes – to enhance understanding & analysis & to advise on the technical implications & viability of policy decisions. The GDC should acknowledge this by refining the stakeholder categories first identified in the Geneva Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action to explicitly name all the stakeholder groups that make up the multistakeholder model: governments, private sector, technical community, academia & civil society.

The GDC should build on the WSIS process, recognising multi-stakeholder expertise as a critical component in harnessing the benefits of evolving technology. The GDC should prioritise collaborative effort & multistakeholder participation, working together with governments to realise a shared vision for our digital future.

Section 3: Commitments. Please provide comments and recommendations, if any

Your answer

We support the proposed commitments and agree that the GDC should provide a focal point for digital cooperation and that it be anchored in the protection and promotion of human rights. We agree that it should commit to key goals such as:

- closing the digital divide
- harnessing the benefits of digital technologies to achieve the SDGs
- safeguarding human rights
- and ensuring an inclusive, open, safe, and secure digital future for all.

For our continued collective wellbeing, it is critical that AI and other new technologies operate on human-centred values and are used for purposes that are beneficial to society. The regulation and use of AI systems should ensure reliability and safe use, and be transparent, accountable and contestable regarding its purpose, use and design. It should also provide for privacy and security of data.

Recent developments in technology have contributed to increasing communications infrastructure within and between countries (e.g: use of Low Earth Orbit satellite infrastructure has opened new connectivity options). As more people are connected and become reliant on the online world, the impact of existing and new technologies on society as a whole increases. While this creates unprecedented opportunities for sustainable economic growth and social wellbeing, it also gives rise to complex risks and profound challenges.

Such challenges cannot best be addressed in silos, nor by one stakeholder group acting alone. It requires collaborative effort that draws on the expertise of all stakeholder groups – governments, the private sector, the technical community, academia and civil society. In preference to establishing any new structures, existing processes should be refined and evolved so as to harness the breadth of perspectives and insights and shape outcomes that deliver a positive digital future for people all around the world.

Section 4: Follow-up. Please provide comments and recommendations, if any

Your answer

We support the measures as outlined in this section. Given the similarity with the WSIS implementation framework, we recommend the GDC recognise and build on the WSIS processes and not create new structures.

The WSIS implementation framework encourages information exchanges, knowledge creation and sharing of best practices. It fosters partnerships, identifies themes and priorities, tracks progress and supports informed decision making by improving the quality and availability of data.

One key WSIS outcome, the IGF, has proven to be a useful focal point for bringing together the diverse digital/internet community to share information and best practices.

Since its inception in 2005, the IGF has demonstrated its capacity to evolve. It now includes intersessional activities operating under various structures e.g. Dynamic Coalitions, Best Practices Forums, Policy Networks and a network of independently organised National, Regional and Youth IGFs. Today it is a useful resource able to harness diverse specialised expertise to address digital policy challenges. Going forward, it has considerable potential to meaningfully contribute innovative solutions to digital issues.

The WSIS process has successfully mobilised the collective expertise of a multi-stakeholder community working together to maximise digital opportunities and address digital risks and challenges. Rather than developing new strands for coordination and cooperation, the first approach should be to ground these in existing mechanisms such as the IGF.

We support the need to “promote coherence and coordination among stakeholders”, however we disagree with this being limited to a “follow up and review” action.

Meaningful multistakeholder contribution is critical at every stage in the development of our increasingly networked world and appropriate mechanisms must be established to enable this. It is an ongoing process at the heart of digital cooperation.

This approach is the only way to ensure effective decision making and implementation of any activity involved in progressing a shared commitment for our digital world.

We support and welcome the commitment to build on existing mechanisms and avoid duplication. This would also maximise the use of scarce resources and maintain efficiency.

Any additional comments

Your answer

The technical community is a critical and distinct stakeholder group whose contribution is vital to digital policy processes. The GDC should acknowledge this by explicitly naming all the stakeholder groups that make up the multistakeholder model: governments, the private sector, the technical community, academia and civil society.

In preference to establishing any new structures, the GDC should encourage the evolution of existing processes to harness the breadth of perspectives and insights and shape outcomes that deliver a positive digital future for people all around the world.