

Global Digital Compact

RIPE NCC response to the outline of the GDC zero draft

Amsterdam, 8 March 2024

Introduction

The co-facilitators of the Global Digital Compact (GDC), the Permanent Representatives of Sweden and Zambia, [circulated a letter](#) including the possible elements for the GDC on February 23, and asked for feedback from stakeholders. The following document is the RIPE NCC written contribution to the zero draft addressing the possible elements for the GDC made on March 8, 2024.

Section 1: Priorities Addressed in the Global Digital Compact

We agree with the elements captured for a Global Digital Compact document - and we would like to provide additional comments on the preamble.

We recognise that for the GDC to successfully address the challenges and opportunities of the digital future for all, it should acknowledge expertise, evidence-based knowledge, and the full involvement of many stakeholders, including the technical community.

With regard to the reaffirmation of the foundations for strengthened digital cooperation and in consideration of relevant documents, such as the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Agenda 2030, we firmly support those and provide further comments in the Any additional comments section.

With regards to the UN's role in fostering strengthened digital cooperation, the GDC should recognise digital cooperation as a collective and ongoing

effort across a larger number of fora, communities and organisations that represent many different types of stakeholders. Significant progress has been made in cooperation across various topics and fora, including the ITU's World Summit on the Information Society and the Internet Governance Forum.

Section 2: Principles

We endorse the GDC's principles and its alignment with SDGs. The GDC must prioritise equitable access to digital technologies and opportunities for everyone, particularly targeting underrepresented and disadvantaged groups, with special attention to the Global South.

The GDC should reinforce existing Internet governance frameworks, endorsing inclusive and open approaches that have proven effective in navigating and coordinating the complex landscape of Internet governance.

The GDC must emphasise the importance of maintaining an interoperable, open, and trusted global Internet that serves the public interest. This fosters collaboration among various stakeholders to address digital challenges and promote inclusive decision-making, aligning with SDG 17's goal of enhancing partnerships for sustainable development.

The GDC should prioritise safeguarding fundamental digital rights, such as access to information and privacy, in line with established international human rights standards. Additionally, it should encourage innovation by engaging the technical community in developing solutions aligned with its objectives, fostering a culture of continuous progress.

Principle 10 should encompass the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) acknowledgement of the technical community's crucial role, expanding its scope beyond the Geneva Principles to recognise the community's contributions in ensuring the stability, neutrality, security, and functionality of the global Internet, as well as addressing emerging challenges.

Section 3: Commitments

The GDC should prioritise significant investment in connectivity and infrastructure to keep pace with the rapid digital growth and transformation. Ensuring resilient, accessible, and high-speed Internet connectivity for all, especially in underserved rural and remote areas, is critical to bridging the digital divide and connecting the 2.7 billion unconnected.

The GDC must also strongly commit to investing in digital literacy programs and educational initiatives. These efforts are crucial for empowering individuals with the knowledge and skills required to navigate the digital world safely and effectively, ensuring that people from various backgrounds become active, informed participants in the digital economy. Furthermore, the GDC should promote environmentally sustainable practices in digital technology development, deployment, and usage to mitigate the carbon footprint and other environmental impacts of digitalisation.

The technical community is committed to enhancing the ongoing dialogue and collaboration with governments and UN agencies within existing fora. We pledge to offer technical and operational expertise, guidance, and capacity-building initiatives to tackle forthcoming challenges in digital transformation.

The technical community maintains close collaboration with governments across regions. Adhering firmly to principles of openness and inclusivity, we channel our efforts towards sustaining a secure, resilient, and fully interoperable Internet ecosystem. Our commitment extends to cultivating stronger partnerships with both governmental and industry stakeholders, with the aim of driving innovation and steering the development of the Internet infrastructure. This initiative is in alignment with the objectives delineated in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 9, which focuses on strengthening industry, innovation, and infrastructure.

Section 4: Follow Up

A structured and systematic follow-up mechanism is essential to ensure the effective implementation of the Global Digital Compact (GDC). Leveraging existing structures and processes will prevent unnecessary duplication and maximise the impact of ongoing capacity-building efforts.

We strongly advocate for the GDC's follow-up and review processes to be integrated within the work of the UN Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and to build on WSIS processes. We agree that this collaborative effort can combine and create new and best-suited modalities for implementation.

This integrated approach would foster synergy and coherence across various international digital governance efforts, ensuring that the GDC's objectives are aligned with global practices.

Over the past 18 years, the IGF, a significant outcome of WSIS, has

demonstrated its capacity to adapt and engage a diverse stakeholder community, effectively identifying emerging digital policy concerns, risks, and challenges. Its evolution has led to the establishment of various entities such as Policy Networks, Best Practice Forums, Dynamic Coalitions, Parliamentary Tracks, National, Regional, and Youth IGFs. Furthermore, it has structurally expanded to include a High-Level Leadership Panel alongside the Multistakeholder Advisory Group and the IGF Secretariat.

By incorporating these follow-up activities within the broader context of the World Summit on the Information Society, the GDC's follow-up process can leverage existing knowledge, frameworks and partnerships and further ensure that the GDC aligns with the long-term vision and strategic goals of global Internet governance.

Section 5: Additional Comments

The GDC's preamble should be built on and embedded within the framework established by the WSIS outcome documents. This grounding ensures that the GDC aligns with the strategic objectives and visions outlined in the WSIS process. By embedding the GDC within this established framework, flexibility and new specific modalities will be allowed to evolve. This approach ensures continuity, clear outcomes, coherence, and a shared commitment to the core values of an inclusive, people-centred, and development-oriented Information Society.

This alignment will also facilitate leveraging past achievements and lessons learned, enabling a more effective and forward-looking implementation of the GDC's objectives. In doing so, the GDC should enhance its relevance and applicability in addressing the current and emerging challenges in the digital landscape, fostering a more inclusive, secure, and sustainable digital future for all.