

SUMMIT OF THE FUTURE INFORMATION BULLETIN

SUMMARY:

Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 5

A Global Digital Compact – an Open, Free and Secure Digital Future for All (May 2023)

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PROJECT PARTNERS:



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This bulletin is intended to provide an overview of the latest developments and is not a comprehensive summary or record of the SOTF preparatory process. When reporting on statements made by Member States, the bulletin presents key highlights and remarks and the full statements have been hyperlinked if available on the [UN Journal](#) website. This information service is a collaborative endeavor supported by Action for Sustainable Development, Coalition for the UN We Need, Global Governance Innovation Network, International Development Law Organization, and the Present and Future Institute. This report was prepared independently with support from project partners. However, the content of the report does not reflect the specific views of any of the partner organizations. Contact Fergus Watt (ferguswatt6@gmail.com) for more information on this information service. Material is not copyrighted and can be distributed freely.

ABOUT: Building on the proposals presented in Our Common Agenda report, the Secretary-General (SG) is publishing a [series](#) of Policy Briefs over 2023 to serve as inputs into the preparations for the Summit of the Future. The Policy Brief on the [Global Digital Compact](#) (GDC) is the fifth one in that series.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The brief proposes the development of a Global Digital Compact that would set out the principles, objectives and actions for advancing an open, free, secure and human-centered digital future, one that is anchored in universal human rights and that enables the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It outlines areas in which the need for multi-stakeholder digital cooperation is urgent and sets out how a Global Digital Compact can help to realize the commitment in the declaration on the commemoration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the United Nations ([General Assembly resolution 75/1](#)) to “shaping a shared vision on digital cooperation” by providing an inclusive global framework. Such a framework is essential for the multi-stakeholder action required to overcome digital, data and innovation divides and to achieve the governance required for a sustainable digital future. The digital world is one of divides. In 2002, when governments first recognized the challenge of the digital divide, 1 billion people had access to the Internet. Today, 5.3 billion people are digitally connected, yet the divide persists across regions, gender, income, language, and age groups. Some 89% of people in Europe are online, but only 21 per cent of women in low-income countries use the Internet. While digitally deliverable services now account for almost two thirds of global services trade, access is unaffordable in some parts of the world. The cost of a smartphone in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa is more than 40% of the average monthly income, and African users pay more than three times the global average for mobile data. Fewer than half of the world’s countries track digital skills, and the data that exist highlight the depth of digital learning gaps. Two decades after the World Summit on the Information Society, the digital divide is still a gulf.

What does a shared vision on digital cooperation involve?

- ✦ Closing the digital divide and advancing the SDGs.
- ✦ Digital public services for forcibly displaced people.
- ✦ Making the online space open and safe for everyone.
- ✦ Governing artificial intelligence (AI) for humanity.

PROPOSALS:

DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY AND CAPACITY-BUILDING	DIGITAL COOPERATION TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON THE SDGs	UPHOLDING HUMAN RIGHTS	AN INCLUSIVE, OPEN, SECURE AND SHARED INTERNET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Close the digital divide to connect all people, especially vulnerable groups, to the Internet in ways that are meaningful and affordable. ❖ Empower people, through digital skills and capabilities, to participate fully in the digital economy, protect themselves from harm and pursue their physical and mental well-being and development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Make targeted investments in digital public infrastructure and services, and advance global knowledge and the sharing of best practices on digital public goods to serve as a catalyst for progress on the SDGs. ❖ Ensure that data is a force multiplier for progress on the SDGs by making data representative, interoperable and accessible. ❖ Pool data, AI expertise and infrastructure across borders to generate innovations for meeting the SDGs targets. ❖ Develop environmental sustainability by design and globally harmonized digital sustainability standards and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Make human rights the foundation of an open, safe and secure digital future, with human dignity at its core. ❖ End the gender digital divide by ensuring that online spaces are non-discriminatory and safe for women and by expanding women’s participation in the technology sector and digital policymaking. ❖ Apply international labour rights regardless of the mode of work and protect workers against digital surveillance, arbitrary algorithmic decisions and loss of agency over their 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Safeguard the free and shared nature of the Internet as a unique and irreplaceable global public asset. ❖ Reinforce accountable multi-stakeholder governance of the Internet to help harness its potential to advance the implementation of the SDGs and leave no one behind.

	safeguards to protect the planet.	labour.	
DIGITAL TRUST AND SECURITY	DATA PROTECTION AND EMPOWERMENT	AGILE GOVERNANCE OF AI AND OTHER EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES	GLOBAL DIGITAL COMMONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Strengthen cooperation across Governments, industry, experts and civil society to elaborate and implement norms, guidelines and principles relating to the responsible use of digital technologies. ❖ Develop robust accountability criteria and standards for digital platforms and users to address disinformation, hate speech and other harmful online content. ❖ Build capacity and expand the global cybersecurity workforce and develop trust labels and certification schemes as well as effective regional and national oversight bodies. ❖ Mainstream gender in digital policies and in technology design and ensure zero tolerance for gender-based violence, in order to create a more equal and connected world for women and girls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Ensure that data are governed for the benefit of all and in ways that avoid harming people and communities. ❖ Provide people with the capacity and tools to manage and control their personal data, including options and skills to opt in or out of digital platforms, and the use of their data for training algorithms. ❖ Develop multilevel and interoperable standards and frameworks for data quality, measurement and use, in full respect of intellectual property rights, to enable safe and secure data flow and an inclusive global economy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Ensure that the design and use of AI and other emerging technologies are transparent, reliable, safe and under accountable human control. ❖ Make transparency, fairness and accountability the core of AI governance, taking into account the responsibility of Governments to identify and address the risks that AI systems could entail and the responsibility of researchers and companies developing AI systems to monitor and transparently communicate and address such risks. ❖ Combine international guidance and norms, national regulatory frameworks and technical standards into a framework for agile governance of AI, with an active exchange of lessons learned and emerging best practices across borders, industries and sectors. ❖ In the case of regulators, coordinate across digital, competition, taxation, consumer protection, online safety and data protection policies as well as labour rights, to ensure the alignment of emerging digital technologies with human values. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Develop and govern digital technologies in ways that enable sustainable development, empower people, and anticipate risks and harms and address them effectively. ❖ Ensure that digital cooperation is inclusive and enable all relevant stakeholders to contribute meaningfully according to their respective mandates, functions and competencies. ❖ Agree that the foundations of our cooperation are the Charter of the United Nations, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the framework of universally recognized human rights and international humanitarian law. ❖ Enable regular and sustained exchange across states, regions, industry sectors and issues to support the learning of lessons and best practices, governance innovation and capacities to ensure that digital governance is continuously aligned with our shared values.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ✦ Discuss and review the implementation of the agreed Global Digital Compact principles and commitments.
- ✦ Facilitate transparent dialogue and collaboration across digital multi-stakeholder frameworks and reduce duplication of effort where relevant and appropriate.
- ✦ Support evidence-based knowledge and information-sharing on main digital trends.
- ✦ Pool lessons learned and promote cross-border learning on digital governance.
- ✦ Identify and promote policy solutions to emerging digital challenges and governance gaps.
- ✦ Highlight policy priorities for individual and collective stakeholder decision-making and action.

RESOURCE:

1. [Policy Brief on the Global Digital Compact](#)