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**Contribution by the People’s Republic of China**

RECOMMENDATIONS TO INCLUDE LEVERAGING EXISTING HIGH-LEVEL INTERNATIONAL MEETING PLATFORMS TO PROMOTE GLOBAL CONSENSUS ON DIGITAL GOVERNANCE IN THE INTER-SECTORAL OBJECTIVES OF ITU STRATEGIC PLAN FOR 2024-2027

Background

In today's world, digital globalization has become an important symbol of the new round of globalization, however it also brings significant challenges. Digital divide, emerging technologies application, cybersecurity threats and a series of other issues need to be addressed urgently. Countries adopt different policies according to their national conditions, making policy coordination in global digital governance more difficult. The international community calls for a new global digital governance system. As the specialized agency of the United Nations for ICTs, ITU brings together various stakeholders representing governments, industry, academic institutions, and civil societies from all over the world to promote global consensus in digital governance and facilitate rules-making for global digital governance. ITU's key areas of action also cover cybersecurity, digital divide, emergency telecommunications, Internet policy and governance, and other important aspects of digital governance.[[1]](#footnote-1) ITU regularly hosts key events such as the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR) and the World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Symposium (WTIS). It was proposed at the Global Symposium for Regulators 2020 (GSR-20) that “Clear, strong and enforceable rules related to data governance can provide adequate shield for digital consumer protection while creating a predictable, structured framework for doing digital business.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

Currently, multilateral governance mechanisms, bilateral governance mechanisms and specialized governance mechanisms led by the private sector are running in parallel to promote the development of global digital governance landscape. **On the front of global multilateral governance mechanisms**, the Group of Twenty (G20) Summit held in Hangzhou in 2016 first included the digital economy in the governance framework, initiating an important process of policy coordination among major countries around global digital governance; the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, within the framework of the United Nations, have all increased their attention to digital governance issues[[3]](#footnote-3); the OECD, the World Economic Forum and other organizations have published a large number of research papers in the field of digital economy, contributing to the increasing awareness of different stakeholders on digital governance. **In terms of bilateral and regional mechanisms,** giant free trade agreements（FTA）[[4]](#footnote-4) are playing an increasingly significant role in shaping the rules of global digital governance. Reflecting the demands of different stakeholders in the digital field through negotiations is of great significance in shaping the rules of global digital governance in the future. For example, China and EU held the high-level digital dialogue in September 2020, where the two parties exchanged policies around ICT standardization and AI governance.[[5]](#footnote-5) **The private sector is also exerting substantial influences on global digital governance, such as through setting international standards.** The International Organization for Standardization (ISO), the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) have all established special working groups to conduct studies on standards related to the AI ethics. However, due to multiple reasons, such as the trend of de-globalization, the expanding scope of data governance issues, and the lack of global consensus, the multilateral frameworks are constraint. A series of bilateral agreements have promoted the rule-setting in new areas of digital governance, but fragmented governance will become the biggest challenge of global digital governance in the future. How to promote a unified, transparent, and fair global rules framework, prevent the fragmentation of rules from causing greater “digital divide”, and achieve global inclusive growth is still a great challenge facing global digital governance in the future.

Analysis

The ITU Strategic Plan is a strategic document developed in accordance with the Constitution and the Convention of the Union and is an important document that will guide the activities of the Union for a four-year period. The strategic goals[[6]](#footnote-6) identified in Resolution 71 (Rev. Dubai, 2018) on ITU Strategic Plan for 2020-2023 all covers some aspects of digital governance, but don’t have sufficient supporting consultation mechanisms. It is therefore recommended that the "inter-sectoral objectives"[[7]](#footnote-7) of ITU Strategic Plan for 2024-2027 explicitly provide for leveraging existing high-level international meeting platforms to carry out consultations in digital governance and promote greater global consensus on digital governance.

Proposal

In summary, we recommend that ITU include leveraging the regular high-level international meeting platforms for global digital governance in its medium- to long-term strategic plan for consideration. The specific recommendations are as follows:

* Consider including leveraging existing high-level international meeting platforms to promote global consensus on digital governance in the "inter-sectoral objectives" of the ITU Strategic Plan for 2024-2027.
* Promote global consensus on digital governance in such areas as AI governance, digital divide, and digital security through the existing high-level international meeting platforms, and form the research frameworks on digital governance based on global consensus, including development framework, accounting framework, statistical framework, and monitoring framework, etc.
* Promote ITU to publish annual research reports on global digital governance.

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1. See the details on the official ITU website: https://www.itu.int/zh/action/Pages/default.aspx. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. See the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR) 2020, Best Practice Guidelines - The gold standard for digital regulation, https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/GSR/2020/Documents/GSR-20\_Best-Practice-Guidelines\_Final\_C.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The World Trade Organization (WTO) included the digital-related trade issues into its rules for trade in services and eventually launched a separate negotiation process for trade-related aspects of e-commerce; the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has released research reports on issues such as digital currencies and cross-border payments; and the World Bank began to focus on financing for digital infrastructure development. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The giant free trade agreements mentioned here include, but are not limited to, the signing and entry into force of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP)/Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership(CPTPP), U.S.-Japan Trade Agreement and U.S.-Japan Digital Trade Agreement, the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement, the Phase One of China-U.S. Economic and Trade Agreement, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP, currently signed and will enter into force in 2022),and the advancement of the negotiation process of China–EU Comprehensive Agreement on Investment(CAI), and China–Japan–South Korea Free Trade Agreement. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Xinhuanet: "Xi Jinping meets jointly with German and EU leaders", September 15, 2020, http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/leaders/2020-09/15/c\_1126493059.htm. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. ITU’s Strategic Goals for 2020-2023: “Goal 1 – Growth: Enable and foster access to and increased use of telecommunications/ICT in support of the digital economy and society; Goal 2 – Inclusiveness: Bridge the digital divide and provide broadband access for all; Goal 3 – Sustainability: Manage emerging risks, challenges and opportunities resulting from the rapid growth of telecommunications/ICT; Goal 4 – Innovation: Enable innovation in telecommunications/ICT in support of the digital transformation of society; Goal 5 – Partnership: Strengthen cooperation among the ITU membership and all other stakeholders in support of all ITU strategic goals”. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. See “Inter-sectoral objectives” part, under Section 2 “ITU results framework” of the ANNEX 1 TO RESOLUTION 71 (REV. DUBAI, 2018) on ITU strategic plan for 2020-2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)