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| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| GLOBAL DIGITAL COMPACT (GDC) | |
| **Purpose**  This report presents information about the ongoing discussion on the Global Digital Compact (GDC) within and beyond the UN system.  **Action required by the Council**  This document is transmitted to the Council **for information**.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  *Council document* [*C24/55*](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0055/en) | |

1. **Introduction**
   1. The Global Digital Compact (GDC) is a proposal in the United Nations Secretary-General’s [‘Our Common Agenda’](https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/) report, which was presented to the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2021. Stemming from a call for digital cooperation by Member States in their Declaration on Commemoration of the UN 75th Anniversary of the United Nations in 2020 ([A/RES/75/1](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FRES%2F75%2F1&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False)), the UN Secretary-General suggested developing the GDC in his Our Common Agenda report, aiming to establish “shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all”.
   2. The Global Digital Compact is to be agreed upon at the Summit of the Future, which is another major proposal in the UN Secretary-General’s Common Agenda report. According to the UNGA Resolution on Modalities for the Summit of the Future ([A/RES/76/307](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FRES%2F76%2F307&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False)), the Summit is now scheduled for 22-23 September 2024 in New York, and it will adopt an outcome document called ‘[A Pact for the Future’](https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future/pact-for-the-future-zero-draft). This document is being negotiated in advance by consensus through an intergovernmental process, facilitated by co-facilitators, the Permanent Representatives of Germany and Namibia to the United Nations in New York. According to the UNGA Resolution on Scope of the Summit of the Future ([A/RES/77/568](https://undocs.org/en/A/77/L.109)), the GDC would be annexed to the Pact for the Future.
2. **Development of the Global Digital Compact**

2.1 The UN Secretary-General’s Our Common Agenda report suggests addressing several digital issues in the Global Digital Compact, including: i) digital connectivity; ii) avoiding Internet fragmentation; iii) protecting data; iv) upholding human rights online; v) promoting a trustworthy Internet; vi) regulating Artificial Intelligence; and vii) promoting digital commons.

2.2 In October 2022, in the lead-up to the development of the GDC, co-facilitators, the Permanent Representatives of Sweden and Rwanda to the United Nations in New York, were appointed by the 77th President of the UN General Assembly, to facilitate the intergovernmental process. From January to June 2023, following [their roadmap for the GDC process](https://www.un.org/techenvoy/sites/www.un.org.techenvoy/files/230222_PGA_transmit_Co-facilitators-letter_GDC_deep_dives.pdf), the co-facilitators conducted informal consultations and thematic deep dive sessions in New York. During these sessions, ITU’s Secretary-General delivered [keynote remarks on digital inclusion and connectivity](https://www.itu.int/en/osg/Pages/Speeches.aspx?ItemID=7), while other ITU representatives made statements on topics, such as Artificial Intelligence and Accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals. ITU also hosted for the co-facilitators two sessions at the WSIS Forum 2023 and two information sessions in December 2023 with Ambassadors and the members of the UN Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) respectively on the GDC, in Geneva.

2.3 In parallel, the Office of the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Technology (OSET) held [an online consultation](https://www.un.org/techenvoy/global-digital-compact/submissions), open until 30 April 2023, to gather written submissions from stakeholders interested in the GDC. On 24 May 2023, the UN Secretary-General issued a [Policy Brief on the GDC](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/our-common-agenda-policy-brief-gobal-digi-compact-en.pdf), as part of his [Policy Brief series on Our Common Agenda](https://www.un.org/en/common-agenda/policy-briefs#:~:text=Today%27s%20complex%2C%20interconnected%2C%20and%20rapidly,the%20lives%20of%20people%20everywhere.). The brief outlined urgent areas for multistakeholder digital cooperation, from closing the digital divide to ensuring an open and safe online space for everyone, and governing AI for humanity. It cited ITU data and proposed a role for ITU and its initiatives, such as Giga and Partner2Connect. Furthermore, the brief also proposed establishment of a Digital Cooperation Forum in New York and a [High-Level Advisory Board on AI](https://www.un.org/techenvoy/ai-advisory-body) (the latter has already been implemented and an interim report released). On 21 September 2023, as per the UNGA Resolution ([A/RES/76/307](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FRES%2F76%2F307&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False)), [the preparatory ministerial meeting for the Summit of the Future](https://www.un.org/pga/77/wp-content/uploads/sites/105/2023/07/SOTF-Ministerial-Preliminary-Programme.pdf) was held at the UNHQ in New York. ITU’s Secretary-General delivered [a statement](https://www.itu.int/en/osg/Pages/Speeches.aspx?ItemID=32) at the event.

2.4 The assessment resulting from deep-dives and broader consultations conducted during the 77th session of the UNGA by the GDC co-facilitators of Sweden and Rwanda was reported in [their Issues Paper to the UN General Assembly](https://www.un.org/pga/77/wp-content/uploads/sites/105/2023/09/Global-Digital-Compact-Issues-paper-September-1-2023.pdf), in September 2023. In this Paper, the co-facilitators highlighted broad support for a GDC based on the principles of the UN Charter, Agenda 2030, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They emphasized the need for collaborative efforts to strengthen digital cooperation, close the digital divide and ensure an inclusive open, safe, and secure digital future for all. Recognizing the roles of various UN agencies and forums, including ITU and WSIS, they stressed the importance of avoiding duplication of existing processes, platforms, institutions, and fora.

2.5 ITU has been engaged in supporting and participating in the process for the development of the GDC. This involvement includes participation in a series of intergovernmental processes organized by the GDC co-facilitators, high-level interventions in deep-dive and multistakeholder consultations, hosting roundtable events during the 2023 WSIS Forum, and leveraging ITU communication channels to promote awareness of opportunities for engagement in GDC consultations. Additionally, ITU contributed to the preparation of the UN Secretary-General’s Policy Brief on the GDC and provided [its written inputs](https://www.un.org/techenvoy/sites/www.un.org.techenvoy/files/GDC-submission_ITU.pdf) to the online consultation hosted by OSET. ITU contributions and inputs drew from discussions held during key events such as the Plenipotentiary Conference (Bucharest, 2022) and Ministerial Roundtable in Bucharest, the World Telecommunication Development Conference (Kigali, 2022), WSIS Forum 2023 in Geneva, as well as the outcomes of the last World telecommunication/information and communication technology policy forum (WTPF) and relevant PP Resolutions.

1. **Recent progress of the Global Digital Compact**

3.1 On 10 October 2023, [the President of the 78th session of the UNGA](https://www.un.org/techenvoy/sites/www.un.org.techenvoy/files/231010-PGA-letter-Co-facilitators-and-co-chairs.pdf) reappointed the Permanent Representative of Sweden as a co-facilitator and appointed the Permanent Representative of Zambia to join her as co-facilitator for the GDC (the Permanent Representative of Rwanda had moved on to the role of Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa). Subsequently, the GDC co-facilitators from Sweden and Zambia released [a new roadmap](https://www.un.org/techenvoy/sites/www.un.org.techenvoy/files/Co-facs_letter_Global_Digital_Compact_December_15.pdf) for additional rounds of consultations from 12 February till 1 March 2024, with deadlines for written input submissions set for 8 March, and intergovernmental negotiations scheduled for April to May 2024. Before the start of the consultation, they participated remotely in the Council Working Group on WSIS&SDGs from 1 to 2 February 2024, presenting the most up-to-date preparation of the GDC to the CWG.

3.2 On 23 February, after the First consultation on 12-13 February, preceding the Second consultation from 29 February to 1 March, the GDC co-facilitators released their [proposed structural elements for the GDC](https://www.un.org/techenvoy/sites/www.un.org.techenvoy/files/240223_Co-Facs_Invitation_Letter_Second_Round_Consultations_FINAL.pdf), encompassing Member States’ commitments and actions in four areas:

1) Closing the digital divide and accelerating progress across the SDGs

2) Fostering an inclusive, open, safe, secure digital space

3) Advancing data governance

4) Governing emerging technologies, including AI, for humanity

3.3 Throughout the consultations, among other things, advocacy for human rights, including children’s safety, gender equality, digital accessibility, and the development dimension, was prominent in many Member States’ and stakeholders’ statements. At the same time, many countries and stakeholders, including the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) ([statements](https://www.itu.int/net4/wsis/ungis/)), underscored the significance of WSIS and advocated for strengthening existing UN institutions and processes for the GDC follow-up. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of multistakeholderism, civil society involvement, inclusion of gender perspectives, and youth engagement, with recommendations focusing on issues such as AI governance, digital rights, trust and safety, data governance, and digital infrastructure access, all underpinned by the prioritization of human rights and digital literacy.

**4. Zero Draft of the Global Digital Compact**

4.1 On 1 April, [the Zero Draft of the GDC](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sotf-global-digital-compact-zero-draft.pdf) was released by the GDC Co-facilitators ([letter](https://www.un.org/pga/78/2024/04/01/letter-from-president-general-assembly-on-global-digital-compact-zero-draft/)), ahead of its presentation to Member States on 5 April. As a basis for intergovernmental negotiation, the Zero Draft outlines five main objectives and ten principles, to be pursued in order to achieve an inclusive, open, safe, and secure digital future for all. These objectives encompass closing the digital divide, expanding opportunities in the digital economy, fostering an inclusive digital space, advancing equitable international data governance, and governing emerging technologies like AI for the humanity. The principles, designed to steer digital cooperation efforts, emphasize inclusivity, development focus, human rights, gender equality, environmental sustainability, accessibility, accountability, innovation, multistakeholder participation, and forward-thinking approaches.

4.2 The Zero Draft includes proposals for Member States’ commitments and actions aimed at achieving key objectives, including bridging digital divides, promoting inclusive digital economies, fostering digital safety, advancing data governance, and governing emerging technologies. It also proposes establishment of new mechanisms and processes within the United Nations, including *a UN Digital Human Rights Advisory Service*, *an International Scientific Panel on AI*, *Annual global dialogue on AI* and *a Global Fund for AI and Emerging Technologies*.

4.3 In terms of the GDC follow-up and review, the Zero Draft references a few existing UN processes and mechanisms, like the WSIS Processes, WSIS+20 review in 2025, Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), Human Rights Council, High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and ECOSOC, as well as the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

While it invites all UN agencies, funds, and programmes to support GDC implementation, the Zero Draft proposes establishing *a dedicated UN Secretariat office for coordinating digital and emerging technology*. The draft proposes that the UN Secretary-General be tasked with submitting a proposal for the new office’s operational functions, structure, and staffing to the 79thsession of the UN General Assembly. Within 12 months, the UN Secretary-General is also requested to provide a GDC implementation roadmap and set up a GDC portal for voluntary reporting by Member States and other stakeholders. Furthermore, the Zero Draft also suggests the UN General Assembly hold a *bi-annual High-Level Review of the Global Digital Compact*, from its 80th session.

4.4 During the Zero Draft presentation by the co-facilitators on 5 April, concerns were voiced by some Member States regarding the creation of new institutions, fora, platforms, and processes, urging instead use of and strengthening of existing mechanisms like the WSIS, to avoid duplication within the UN system. In response to requests from Member States for additional time to review the Zero Draft, the co-facilitators decided to provide further elaboration on certain elements in the draft during the session scheduled for 12 April, instead of conducting the originally scheduled first reading on the same date.

4.5 During the session on 12 April, the co-facilitators provided further information on the new proposals in the Zero Draft. For example, they mentioned that the proposed integration of the Office of UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Technology (OSET) into a new dedicated office on digital (in paragraph 61 of the Zero Draft) mirrors the approach taken with the Office of the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth being upgraded to the Youth Office, aiming to support UN-wide digital cooperation, GDC implementation, monitoring, and follow-up, as well as coordination of international AI governance initiatives, complementing the role of UNGIS in coordinating UN agencies, funds, programmes, and Regional Commissions in WSIS action line implementation.

4.6 Member States were invited to provide language submissions for the Zero Draft via e-deleGATE before 25 April. The first reading of the Zero Draft (section by section) took place on 2 and 3 May at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. A compilation document of the language submissions received by the deadline will be circulated by the GDC co-facilitators before the start of the first reading. Additionally, interested stakeholders were invited to join a virtual meeting of the Zero Draft on 24 April. ITU's Deputy Secretary General delivered a statement. The co-facilitators have indicated that they plan other stakeholder sessions before the conclusion of the process.

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