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| **Agenda item: PL 2** | **Document C25/52-E** |
| **16 May 2025** |
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| Report by the Secretary-General | |
| UPDATES ON THE ITU ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING THE GLOBAL DIGITAL COMPACT | |
| **Purpose**  The objective of this document is to provide updates on the ITU’s action plan, outlining its ongoing activities that support the implementation of the Global Digital Compact.  **Action required by the Council**  Council is invited to **note** this document.  **Relevant link(s) with the Strategic Plan**  Partnerships and international cooperation.  **Financial implications**  Within the allocated budget 2024-2025.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  *UNGA Resolutions* [*A/RES/76/307*](https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/76/307)*,* [*A/77/L.109*](https://undocs.org/en/A/77/L.109) *(Decision 77/568),* [*A/77/L.63*](https://undocs.org/en/A/77/L.63)*,* [*A/78/L.77*](https://undocs.org/en/A/78/L.77) *(Decision 78/555),* [*A/79/L.2*](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2F79%2FL.2&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False) *and* [*A/79/L.3*](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2F79%2FL.3&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False)*, Documents* [*C19/INF/8*](https://www.itu.int/md/S19-CL-INF-0008/en)*,* [*C20/INF/3*](https://www.itu.int/md/S20-CL-INF-0003/en)*;* [*C21/INF/2*](https://www.itu.int/md/S21-CL-INF-0002/en)*;* [*C22/INF/2*](https://www.itu.int/md/S22-CL-INF-0002/en)*;* [*C23/INF/8*](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-INF-0008/en)*,* [*C23/INF/9*](https://www.itu.int/md/S23-CL-INF-0009/en)*;* [*C24/55*](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-C-0055/en)*,* [*C24/INF/9*](https://www.itu.int/md/S24-CL-INF-0009/en); *and* [*CWG-WSIS&SDG-42/10*](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CWGWSIS42-C-0010/en) | |

The ITU is committed to leading the global digital transformation, aligned with the objectives of the Global Digital Compact (GDC), adopted by Member States at the Summit of the Future in September 2024, as an Annex to the Pact for the Future. As the UN’s specialized agency for telecommunication/ICTs, ITU plays a pivotal role in fostering international collaboration, driving innovation, and ensuring that digital technologies contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This document aims to provide updates on [the ITU Action Plan](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CWGWSIS42-C-0010/en) since the last Council Working Group on WSIS&SDGs, held in early February this year, outlining ITU’s strategic actions in support of the GDC, including efforts to enhance universal connectivity, advance responsible AI standards, and promote digital inclusion.

# 1 Updates on the Integration of GDC Objectives into ITU mandates

The objectives, principles, and commitments of the GDC are directly aligned with ITU’s existing mandates. ITU is actively supporting Member States in implementing the GDC through its governing body meetings and initiatives, focusing on universal connectivity, responsible AI standards, digital inclusion, and tailored support to help countries align national strategies with global digital goals and achieve sustainable digital transformation.

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| The section below provides an update on ITU actions related to Objective 1 and Objective 3, among other objectives of the GDC[[1]](#footnote-2):  **GDC Objective 1: Closing all digital divides accelerating progress across the SDGs**   * ITU is working with various stakeholders to close the digital divides and accelerate progress towards the SDGs. This includes developing key metrics, collaborating with the World Telecommunication/ ICT Indicators Symposium (WTIS) and UNESCO, enhancing resilience through standards and policies, connecting schools via the Giga initiative with UNICEF, promoting sustainability through Green Digital Action, bridging the gender digital divide through the EQUALS Global Partnership, addressing the skills gap through ITU Academy and ILO partnerships, and advancing Digital Public Infrastructure and Investment Initiatives.   In the area of satellite-based connectivity, ITU plays a pivotal role by overseeing the allocation of radio frequencies, managing satellite frequency registration, and ensuring the necessary regulatory conditions to meet the growing demand for satellite services, especially in remote areas. This includes enabling advanced applications like telemedicine and education.  **GDC Objective 2: Expanding inclusion in and benefits from the digital economy for all**  – ITU’s country ICT regulatory reviews and guidelines foster global digital economy access, while the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR) facilitates exchanges among regulators. The ITU Academy and digital skills training enhance knowledge sharing and capacity building for digital transformation, and various initiatives drive innovation, especially among marginalized populations.  **GDC Objective 3: Fostering an inclusive, open, safe and secure digital space that respects, protects and promotes human rights**  – ITU and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) strengthen collaboration to advance a rights-based digital future. Building on growing momentum—including the AI for Good platform and the World Standards Cooperation (WSC)—ITU is embedding human rights principles into technical standards development, particularly in emerging areas such as AI watermarking, multimedia authenticity, and deepfake detection.   * The WSIS Forum continues to serve as a key multistakeholder platform for promoting digital inclusion, safety, and accountability. Member States will also be actively engaged through dedicated mechanisms such as the Council Working Groups on Child Online Protection and on the Internet. Complementary efforts will include the development of rights-based guidelines, training materials, online safety tools, and research outputs—particularly to promote safe and empowering online environments for children and other vulnerable groups. These initiatives align with the Global Digital Compact’s vision of a digital space that is open, inclusive, secure, and grounded in international human rights standards.   **GDC Objective 4: Advancing responsible, equitable and interoperable data governance approaches**  – ITU's work on ICT Development Index (IDI) indicators, Global Cybersecurity Index (GCI), and other statistics, along with the UN Broadband Commission's collaboration with UNESCO—particularly its Working Group on Data Governance -and TSB's data interoperability efforts all contribute to this objective.  **GDC Objective 5: Enhance international governance of artificial intelligence for the benefits of humanity**  – ITU’s GSR and the UN Inter-agency working group on AI (IAWG-AI), led by ITU along with UNESCO, build upon their critical work, while the World Standards Cooperation (WSC)—a collaboration between ITU, ISO, and IEC—enhance standards exchange; TSB currently has over 165 AI standards and 150 more in development, leveraging its unique membership composition to engage with key technical business and community members and strengthen collaboration with UN sister agencies, including WGO, FAO, WMO, IAEA, UNEP, and others.  A detailed mapping of the GDC implementation through the WSIS process and ITU activities is provided in the [Annex](https://www.itu.int/md/S25-CWGWSIS42-C-0010/en) in the Action Plan, along with a comparison chart titled “ITU and WSIS activities delivering the Global Digital Compact (GDC) Objectives” available [here](https://www.itu.int/en/Documents/ITU-WSIS-global-digital-compact-objectives.pdf). |

# 2 Updates on Strengthening UN-wide digital cooperation

ITU plays an active role in strengthening coordination within the UN system to foster cross-sector digital cooperation, including participation in the UN Steering Committee for Pact Implementation, chaired by the UN Secretary-General, co-chairing the Working Group on Digital Technologies with the Office for Digital and Emerging Technology (ODET), and attending other related Working Groups. Through these efforts, ITU aims to ensure digital issues are addressed cohesively within the UN system, fostering collective ownership of the GDC and supporting Pact implementation.

## 2.1 Working Group on Digital Technologies

Established in October 2024, the Working Group on Digital Technologies (WGDT) has developed its Terms of Reference (TORs) and Work Plan to define the structure of the group, which is chaired by ITU and ODET, and the scope of its work to follow up on Chapter 3 of the Pact for the Future - Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) and Digital Cooperation, and the Global Digital Compact (GDC).

Under the umbrella of the UN Secretary General’s Steering Committee, the WGDT is responsible for coordinating and overseeing the implementation of actions assigned to the UN system, including those assigned to the UN Secretary-General, while monitoring, tracking, and supporting actions for Member States and relevant stakeholders within its purview. Additionally, it will undertake analysis and advocacy for the implementation of action points within its purview and provide support to RCs and UNCTs for effective GDC implementation through existing structures.

The Working Group has set up six sub-groups, covering Chapter 3 on STI and digital cooperation of the Pact for the Future, as well as one for each of the objectives in the GDC. In addition to co-chairing the Working Group itself, ITU is also co-leading the sub-groups on GDC Objective 1 on digital divides and Objective 5 on Artificial Intelligence. A key priority for the Working Group overall will be to develop the GDC Implementation Map referred to in paragraph 71 of the GDC. More guidance from Member States on what form they would like the Implementation Map to take would be welcome.

The inaugural meeting of the Working Group on Digital Technologies on 21 October 2024 focused on defining its scope, with plans to finalize strategies and action points. Since then, the group has met multiple times at the working level to share information on GDC implementation, develop its Terms of Reference, and advance its Workplan. Co-Chair representatives briefed various parties on progress regarding GDC implementation plans, including Member States in New York through the Group of Friends of Digital Technologies, companies during an event hosted by USCIB and ICC BASIS, civil society at the 2024 IGF in Riyadh, the Freedom Online Coalition in Geneva, and UN agencies in the UN Inter-Agency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation. A Principal-level meeting on 27 February 2025 finalized the ToR and Workplan and sought guidance for next steps.

ITU’s initiatives have been incorporated into the Working Group’s Work Plan, addressing key areas such as the digital divide, digital economy, digital literacy, inclusivity, online safety and security, data, and AI, along with initiatives from other UN entities and bodies. ITU supports the Working Group in advancing GDC implementation by leveraging existing mechanisms, including but not limited to Giga, Girls in ICTs, EQUALS, Green Digital Action, the ITU Academy and Digital Skills, Measuring ICT, the SDG Digital Initiative, the Digital Regulation Platform, the ITU Broadband Commission, AI Standards Exchanges, and the AI Skills Coalition. It also acknowledges ITU’s major conferences and events, such as the Global Symposium for Regulators (GSR), the AI for Good Global Summit, the WSIS Forum, the International AI Standards Summit, the World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC), the World Telecommunication Standards Assembly (WTSA), and the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) as existing mechanisms and/or milestones for 2025 and beyond.

## 2.2 Other Working Groups on Pact Implementation

ITU is actively involved in other Working Groups that have been established under the Steering Committee on Pact implementation, including those focused on the Pact’s contribution to SDGs, Peace and Security, IFA Reform, UN Governance Reform, and Youth.

Notably, together with UN ODA and ODET, ITU has been assigned as a co-Action Lead for Action 27 (c) of the Pact on bridging digital divides and enhancing international cooperation for the benefits of digital technologies in the Working Group on Peace and Security. ITU is also an action contributor, alongside other entities, for Action 24 (b) of the Pact. While the provision is aimed at strengthening international cooperation to prevent and combat transnational organized crime in all its forms, including crimes committed through information and communications technology systems, ITU will contribute, as needed, on activities within its mandate with respect to building confidence and security in the use of ICTs.

Additionally, ITU participates in the Working Group on UN Governance Reform, contributing to actions aimed at strengthening the UN system, enhancing international cooperation in outer space exploration, ensuring human rights, and addressing global challenges. ITU is identifying key initiatives, such as WSIS, P2C, and the Early Warnings for All (EW4A) initiative, to support these efforts.

## 2.3 Inter-Agency Working Group on Artificial Intelligence

Additionally, [the High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP)](https://unsceb.org/high-level-committee-programmes-hlcp#:~:text=HLCP%2C%20established%20on%2027%20October,facing%20the%20United%20Nations%20system.), under the umbrella of the UN Chief Executive Board (CEB), acknowledging the importance of the [Inter-Agency Working Group on AI (IAWG-AI)](https://unsceb.org/inter-agency-working-group-artificial-intelligence), co-chaired by ITU and UNESCO, requested alignment of its work and offering UN system support to GDC implementation. ITU and UNESCO are now working together with other IAWG-AI member agencies, providing inputs to the Working Group on Digital Technologies (WGDT), alongside an updated 12-month IAWG-AI work plan. In addition, IAWG-AI convenes jointly with WGDT Sub-Group 5, co-led by ITU, ODET and UNESCO, to channel UN system inputs to the relevant GDC-mandated processes.

## 2.4 Let’s Talk Digital on the Global Digital Compact

ITU also regularly hosts “Let’s Talk Digital” gatherings with Geneva-based UN and international agencies – our “Geneva Digital Kitchen” network - to discuss emerging digital trends, share initiatives, and strengthen collaboration. Its recent meetings have focused on how these collaborations can create valuable synergies to address the diverse needs of Member States and stakeholders, especially in following up on the GDC. The group has developed a 'Geneva Contribution Plan' to support the GDC and foster this collaborative spirit.

Beginning in January 2025, the Geneva Digital Kitchen launched a series of in-depth thematic discussions on the GDC, starting with a session led by OHCHR on human rights. This was followed by a second discussion in March, organized in collaboration with the ILO, focusing on digital technologies and the future of work. During its March gathering, the group also explored the development of a *Measuring ICT Data Hub*, built on the ITU Data Hub, as a key component of the Geneva Contribution Plan, which will play an important role in supporting GDC implementation and contributing to GDC assessment efforts.

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1. “An overview of the Global Digital Compact – including ITU’s related actions”, presented to the CWGs 2024, is available [here](https://www.itu.int/en/council/cwg-wsis/Documents/2024/InfoSession%20on%20GDC_2Oct2024V2.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)