

INTRODUCTORY BRIEF: THE GLOBAL DIGITAL COMPACT

This brief produced by APC seeks to provide civil society organisations with an initial understanding of the strategic relevance of engaging in the UN-led Global Digital Compact process by developing inputs based on a long-term vision for what we want the internet to be.

WHAT IS THE GLOBAL DIGITAL COMPACT?

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WHAT IS THE GLOBAL DIGITAL COMPACT?



The Global Digital Compact (GDC) is a framework of principles proposed by the United Nations Secretary-General in his *Our Common Agenda* report. The report provides over 90 recommendations for revitalising the UN and stepping up implementation of Agenda 2030. While some recommendations are within the scope of the Secretary-General's authority to implement, many will require a process of discussion and negotiation among member states and other stakeholders.

Among the *Our Common Agenda* recommendations, a "Summit of the Future", which would advance global governance institutional innovations, is planned for 2024. *Our Common Agenda* proposes that the GDC is to be agreed on during the Summit of the Future. The GDC should "outline shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all."

The Summit of the Future is to be held on 22 and 23 September 2024, in New York, and preceded by a preparatory ministerial meeting on 18 September 2023.

WHAT WILL THE GDC COVER AND WHAT TYPE OF DOCUMENT WILL IT BE?



The GDC builds on a long-term process established by the Secretary-General to promote a shared understanding of key digital principles globally and reinforce multilateral cooperation in a time of convergent crises. Some expect it will provide common rules that will guide the development of our digital future. It will be a high-level political document, to be formatted in terms of "principles" or a "common vision". The GDC is not, however, foreseen as a treaty and will not have a compulsory nature.

The *Our Common Agenda* report suggests issues that the GDC might cover, including digital inclusion, universal connectivity, avoiding internet fragmentation, providing people with options as to how their data is used, application of human rights online, accountability of the corporate sector, alignment of artificial intelligence with human values, keeping a safe and inclusive digital commons, and promoting a trustworthy internet by introducing accountability criteria for discrimination and misleading content.

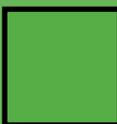
The UN General Assembly has decided that the "Summit of the Future" will adopt a concise, action-oriented outcome document entitled "A Pact for the Future", agreed in advance by consensus through intergovernmental negotiations.

The General Assembly also requested its President to appoint co-facilitators to facilitate "open, transparent and inclusive intergovernmental consultations on the preparatory process of the Summit."

Key benchmarks in the process:

- Secretary-General's Policy Brief to be issued, June 2023
- Development of the Issues Paper based on the consultations, June-August 2023
- Presentation of the Issues Paper at the Ministerial Meeting, September 2023
- Negotiations, end of 2023/first and second quarter of 2024
- Summit of the Future, September 2024

WHY ENGAGE IN THE DRAFTING PROCESS?



The GDC is an opportunity for civil society to contribute to establishing agreed principles for digital governance that support human rights, social justice and sustainable development and that can form the basis of a longer-term framework for accountable and inclusive internet governance – and broader digital governance.

The GDC is also an opportunity to reinterpret the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) vision to respond to the constantly changing digital society that we live in today. It could also play a key role in ensuring that the lessons learned from years of multistakeholder cooperation feed into future processes of internet policy, internet governance and global digital cooperation and in setting parameters for safeguarding multistakeholderism, transparency, inclusivity, dialogue and accountability.

Stakeholders, including civil society groups and individuals, can develop inputs based on a long-term vision for what we want the internet to be, and what we do not want it to be – and more broadly, for digitalisation and its relationship to sustainable development and environmental sustainability.

We can work hard to see priorities reflected in the final product by consulting widely, and deeply, and collaborating extensively, including reaching out to other stakeholder groups.

The GDC has the potential to frame digital debate at the global level in upcoming years, so it is urgent that the public has a seat at the table and proposes carefully tailored and targeted recommendations in relation to key policy themes.

WHAT WILL BE THE PROCESS FOR DRAFTING THE GDC?

Source: UN Office of the Envoy on Technology



Informal consultations with member states and observers

30 January 2023 – see [recording](#)

Informal consultations with stakeholders and member states (civil society, youth, academia)

3 February 2023

Informal consultations with stakeholders and member states (private sector, technical community)

10 February 2023 – 10.00-13.00 and 15.00-18.00 ET

Thematic Deep-Dives - Each deep-dive has two sessions: 10:00 - 13:00 and 15:00 - 18:00 ET

Digital inclusion and connectivity: 27 March 2023

Internet governance: 13 April 2023

Data protection: 24 April 2023

Human rights online: 8 May 2023

Digital trust and security: 25 May 2023

Artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies: 2 June 2023

Global digital commons: 9 June 2023

Accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): 14 June 2023

A public consultation has also been launched by the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology. It is open until 30 April 2023 and is intended to collect input from interested stakeholders for consideration for the GDC.

You can send your contribution! Access [this link](#) for more information on how to share your ideas.

HOW HAS APC BEEN WORKING ON THIS?



Taking advantage of international processes and conferences, APC has been calling attention to this process, disseminating information about it and inviting people to discuss and share their priorities for the GDC. Events and workshops have been organised in spaces such as the IGFs, UN General Assembly side events and RightsCon. We have also engaged in direct advocacy, calling for transparency and participation in the process.

See some of APC's positions:

- [APC statement to the informal consultations with stakeholders and member states on the Global Digital Compact \(February 2023\)](#)
- [APC statement at the opening of the 2022 Internet Governance Forum \(November 2022\)](#)
- [APC priorities for the 2022 Internet Governance Forum \(November 2022\)](#)
- [Promoting governance of the internet as a global public good in 2021 \(November 2022\)](#)
- [Appointment of the UN Tech Envoy: A renewed opportunity for the strengthening of global digital cooperation and the internet governance ecosystem \(June 2022\)](#)
- [Civil society stakeholders' position on the modalities for the appointment of the UN Tech Envoy \(January 2022\)](#)
- [APC: UN Tech envoy should support an open, global and interoperable internet \(January 2022\)](#)
- [IFG 2021: Imagining the Futures of International Internet Governance \(December 2021\)](#)
- [Open letter on the interpretation of paragraph 93\(a\) of the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap on Digital Cooperation \(March 2021\)](#)

WHAT ARE APC'S THEMATIC PRIORITIES IN THIS PROCESS?



APC's thematic priorities have been:

- Meaningful connectivity and digital inclusion, with a focus on community-centred models.
- An intersectional gender approach to access and the application of human rights online, with specific attention to online gender-based violence and gendered disinformation.
- A conceptualisation and operationalisation of cybersecurity that is centred on people and their rights and experiences.
- A commitment to environmental protection inserted throughout the UN's digital agenda, and tech sector commitment to environmental protection, covering all aspects and phases of tech product manufacturing and life cycles.

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