

Global Digital Compact

Written Submission to the Zero Draft

6 March 2024



On 23 February 2024, the co-facilitators of the Global Digital Compact (GDC), the Permanent Representatives of Sweden and Zambia, circulated a [letter including the possible elements for the Global Digital Compact](#) and sought feedback from stakeholders. The following document capture the Internet Society's written contribution to the zero draft addressing the possible elements for the GDC.

Section 2: Principles

Under Principles, we appreciate the language recognizing the “role and responsibility of governments, private sector, civil society, and the United Nations and other international organizations within their respective mandates”, as stated in the Geneva Declaration. However, we would like to see more language around how a multistakeholder approach will be taken as it relates to the GDC and its follow-up mechanism.

In addition, we believe it is important that the GDC recognize the important role that the technical community plays as a key stakeholder group within the Internet governance ecosystem. Since the Tunis Summit, the Internet technical community has been actively involved in supporting the implementation of the targets, recommendations and commitments of the WSIS as they pertain to the Internet. The policy debates of Internet governance would benefit from being informed by the experience and insight of those who have been directly responsible for developing and operating it. In consequence, the Internet technical community is an indispensable stakeholder and contributor to the global Internet governance dialogue. The organizations and individuals in this community have had over four decades of cumulative experience in creating, improving, deploying, and managing the Internet in almost all countries of the world, under a wide variety of legal, administrative, and regulatory regimes. Recognizing this important role would improve the GDC outcome.

Section 3. Commitments

Over the years, the Internet Society has been involved in the GDC informal consultations, including the informal deep dive discussions and the call for written contributions last year. In all instances, we underscored our commitment to upholding the open, globally-connected, secure, and trustworthy Internet, underscoring the threats of fragmentation. We believe that “Avoiding Fragmentation” should be retained as a key commitment and be reflected as such. We recommend this commitment preserve



the following actions and resource: (1) accessible infrastructure with a common protocol; (2) open architecture of interoperable and reusable building blocks; (3) decentralized management and a single distributing routing system; (4) common global identifiers, including IP addresses and DNS; and (5) the Internet as a technology-neutral and general-purpose network. The Internet Society has developed an Internet Impact Assessment Toolkit, which enables stakeholders to conduct impact assessments for Internet-related policies and decisions by analyzing proposals and showing positive and negative impacts the proposal might have on the open, globally-connected, secure, and trustworthy Internet. Impact assessments allow other stakeholders to channel the insights of the technical community to identify and understand potential effects on systems that make the Internet function, their interactions, and possible side effects on technology. We believe this approach can foster a commitment to avoid fragmentation.

Section 4. Follow-up

The Internet Society continues to believe that the Internet Governance Forum is a relevant and important multistakeholder mechanism within the United Nations to enable stakeholders to come together share information and develop solutions to some of the greatest challenges facing the Internet. Like others, we urge the co-facilitators to avoid duplicating existing fora like the IGF. Rather, we should seek to leverage and strengthen existing mechanisms that enable true multistakeholder dialogue and actions to create a stronger Internet for everyone. The IGF can and should continue to evolve to include focus areas on emerging digital transformation topics while also remaining an essential coordinating point for Internet Governance dialogue. The IGF is an inclusive and transparent forum proven to advance knowledge sharing and best practices, as well as promote coordination and partnerships among stakeholders, aligning with the elements included for the follow-up mechanism in the letter circulated by the co-facilitators on 23 February 2024.

Any additional comments

We are of the view that the Preamble should also reaffirm the Geneva Declaration and Tunis Agenda and this should be the basis for the follow-up mechanism as previously stated. Additionally, we look forward to the presentation of the zero draft at the end of the month and await further details regarding the negotiation process. We find this opportunity to avail our appreciation for the multistakeholder approach to the GDC consultations to date. However, we would like to see a continued opportunity for meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders, including academia and technical community, in the next phase of the GDC negotiations.

We firmly believe that the expertise of the technical community is indispensable. The Internet technical community consists of individuals and organizations from around the world that understand the global Internet as a complex interaction of technology, standards, implementation, operation, and applications. They bring this expertise when working with governments, national and international organizations, academia, civil society organizations, and the private sector to maintain a technically viable Internet that

responds to societal needs. We urge the GDC leadership to continue utilizing the expertise of all stakeholders, especially the technical community, in shaping the Global Digital Compact, its elements, principles, and commitments.