



Global Digital Compact
Informal Consultations with stakeholders

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Excellencies, many thanks for the opportunity to contribute to these stakeholder consultations.

My name is Anna Oosterlinck and I speak on behalf of ARTICLE 19, a local to global human rights organisation, focusing on free speech and related rights.

We followed the consultations with Member States yesterday and thank you for that opportunity. We echo many comments made.

I fully agree with the points made by Canada. Fostering an inclusive, safe, and open digital future for all rests on three core principles: (1) human rights; (2) multi-stakeholder governance; and (3) inclusion.

As the Canadian delegate rightfully pointed out, we don't need to choose between state sovereignty and human rights, or between sustainable development and human rights – these are indeed false choices.

Human rights are central to the rule of law and state sovereignty *and* are the precondition to achieving the SDGs, closing digital divides of any kind, and harnessing digital benefits for all humankind.

I have 7 concrete recommendations:

- 1) **All existing human rights** as set out by the broader international human rights framework must be integrated and mainstreamed throughout the whole Compact. Gender equality should be at its core, and we need to go beyond, adopting an intersectional approach including LGBTQ+ and many others.
- 2) The Compact needs to unequivocally reaffirm that the same rights apply offline and **online**.
- 3) The Compact must emphasize **key enabling rights** for the digital sphere, such as right to freedom of expression and information, freedom of association and assembly, rights to privacy and data protection, rights to equality and non- discrimination.
- 4) In terms of **principles** set out in section 2, the vital principles of transparency, inclusion, accountability, effective remedy, and participation need to apply across all commitments. The Compact must foster multilingualism and inclusion of local cultures and content. We need to do more to include local civil society voices from all corners of the globe in developing this Compact.
- 5) Although governments have the primary responsibility to protect human rights, the Compact must guide **private sector actors** on how to effectively implement their responsibilities as per the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Companies must exercise human rights due diligence throughout the lifecycle of all digital technologies from conceptualisation, to deployment, and sale. Technologies must be designed with the most vulnerable and marginalised communities in mind, often facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. We also need to see transparent and accountable content moderation practices, with inclusion of local civil society.
- 6) The Compact must promote universal, free, open, interoperable, safe, reliable, and secure use of and meaningful access to the Internet. States must support small, community, and non-profit operators in providing complementary connectivity for rural, and remote communities currently overlooked by traditional telecommunication infrastructure.

States must refrain from non-HR compliant restrictions, such as Internet shutdowns, filtering or blocking websites, or online censorship.

They must refrain from mass surveillance. All targeted surveillance measures should be in line with human rights standards, including the principles of legality, legitimacy, proportionality and necessity, and the principles of accountability and transparency. States must not undermine measures for encryption, pseudonymity, and anonymity online; and should not undertake general monitoring of online content.

Dis/misinformation, and hate speech need to be addressed through holistic and positive measures, including through investing in digital, media and information literacy; enabling a free and independent media environment; and investing in digital infrastructure, while ensuring these actions are in line with established human rights standards.

- 7) The **Internet Governance Forum** should remain the primary platform for internet governance and the multi-stakeholder model should apply to all relevant digital governance areas, including AI governance.

Finally, we recommend avoiding duplication with existing processes at the UN and beyond touching on digital governance.

Thank you for your kind attention.