



WSIS+20 Virtual Stakeholder Consultations

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ARTICLE 19

Excellencies, colleagues, thank you for this opportunity.

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

As part of our World Summit on Information Society (WSIS)+20 Review advocacy, ARTICLE 19 has collaborated across stakeholder communities as part of several coalitions, including the Global Digital Rights Coalition for WSIS.

We thank the Co-Facilitators and their colleagues for engaging so openly with all stakeholders in the past few months and we look forward to continuing this collaboration.

This is a strong zero draft. ARTICLE 19 applauds that the zero draft explicitly anchors the WSIS framework in international human rights law: the world needs human rights-based digital governance.

We warmly welcome establishing the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) as a permanent body, seeking to integrate the Global Digital Compact (GDC) into the WSIS framework, and guaranteeing alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We call on Member States to vigorously defend the proposed human rights language. This language is all taken from agreed UN language and therefore reflects States' existing obligations. To strengthen human rights safeguards even further, ARTICLE 19 has submitted proposals for the zero draft. I will highlight 10 of these proposals - all based on existing UN language:

1. Refrain from or cease using digital technologies that are fundamentally incompatible with human rights.
2. Strengthen human rights safeguards across the whole zero draft, particularly on digital public infrastructure (DPI), data governance, and Artificial Intelligence (AI).
3. All human rights need to be incorporated across the *full* lifecycle, from pre-conceptualisation over standardization all the way to trade, of *all* digital technologies. Gender equality and digital inclusion are key requirements.
4. Reaffirm that any limitation to freedom of expression and the right to privacy must be subject to the narrowly defined principles of legitimacy, legality, necessity, and proportionality as established by international human rights law.
5. Clarify private sector obligations under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights including applying human rights due diligence and impact assessments throughout the full technology life cycle of all digital technologies; taking accountability for mitigating and preventing harm and abuses; and providing access to timely, appropriate and effective remedy. The zero draft should also address the unprecedented market concentration, which is undermining fair competition and restricting innovation, with a handful of companies disproportionately shaping the digital economy, significantly impacting everyone's human rights.
6. Allocate the required resources to the OHCHR as the primary UN actor advancing and mainstreaming human rights in the digital space.
7. In addition to Internet shutdowns, address blocking, filtering and throttling of online content when used as censorship.
8. Promote strong encryption and anonymity, ever so vital tools for civil society and journalists to work safely.
9. Underline the importance of free, independent, plural and diverse media so our democracies can survive and thrive.
10. Affirm universal and meaningful connectivity as an essential enabler to enjoy all human rights.

Finally, we recommend implementing the Sao Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines to meaningfully engage all stakeholders in multistakeholder and multilateral digital policymaking processes.

Thank you.