# Joint Submission to the Consultation on the Global Digital Compact

We welcome the UN Secretary General's call through the report "Our Common Agenda" proposing to adopt a Global Digital Compact during the Summit of the Future in September 2024.

The Global Digital Compact is expected to "outline shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all" covering issues related to digital connectivity, avoiding Internet fragmentation, providing people with options as to how their data is used, application of human rights online, and promoting a trustworthy Internet by introducing accountability criteria for discrimination and misleading content. If adopted, the GDC will have an impact in the lives of all and therefore it is important that the GDC adopts a multistakeholder process not only during the consultative phase but also during the decision making, implementation and monitoring phase.

Further, the GDC should not only recommend guiding principles for the Internet of the future, but also identify and lay down clear actions to achieve these objectives and goals.

### 1. Connect all people to the internet, including all schools

Connecting the nearly 2.7 billion people should be the topmost priority. To ensure that, there is a need to encourage innovative approaches to connectivity including community networks, appropriate spectrum allocation, reducing spectrum auction prices, IPv6 deployment, etc. and promote research and development to create affordable devices and technologies. Universal Obligation of funds needs to be used creatively in order to facilitate more people to be connected.

Resilient and secure digital infrastructure is crucial for digital inclusion. Governments should encourage investment to protect and promote digital infrastructure and ensure reliable connectivity and speed. They should also avoid Internet shutdowns.

Universal access should respect human rights and ensure the Internet is both accessible and safe for all. Multilingual internet, addressing issues of accessibility online for the differently abled should be a priority. Concepts of gender equality, inclusion, and women's rights and protection should be encouraged.

Exchange of best practices and success stories should be encouraged so that they can be replicated elsewhere or customised to suit the local requirements and the IGF should be promoted as the platform for such discussions by the GDC.

In this information age access to the Internet for information and education in schools is crucial. Governments should partner with private sector and technical institutions to ensure that the schools especially in remote and rural locations are provided with adequate internet bandwidth, proper devices in keeping with the increasing bandwidth

requirements, so that students can access online classes and information conveniently. Adequate Bandwidth for schools should be quantified to enable latest technology access for students. Ensuring regular electricity service at least during the school time is critical. For that, the use of solar power may be encouraged for sustainability. Providing capacity building to teachers and students on how to maximise the benefit of the Internet while safe surfing is important.

Finally, the GDC should acknowledge that it was the cooperative, interoperable, open, and bottom-up approach that created this dynamic, resilient Internet, and that this same cooperative approach provides us with the tools to extend Internet access to all people.

#### 2. Internet governance / Avoid internet fragmentation

Over the last 3 decades, multistakeholder efforts have been effective in preventing Internet fragmentation around the world by promoting the development and use of globally accepted Internet standards and protocols.

An example of such efforts is the coordination and governance of the Internet naming and numbering systems, that allow users around the world to access the same content and services without any barriers or restrictions. Numerous individuals and organisations, comprising both governmental agencies and intergovernmental organisations, have contributed significantly to this coordination. Their concerted efforts have been instrumental in maintaining the Internet's open, global, and interoperable nature, while ensuring its stability and security.

The organisations and communities that have evolved around these coordination systems, have built an inclusive, transparent and accountable governance framework that has helped to build trust in the global Internet ecosystem. Active coordination should continue to be promoted and supported to ensure healthy Internet governance.

The Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and its ecosystem play a pivotal role in fostering dialogue and multistakeholder participation on Internet public policy issues and has strengthened the Internet coordination ecosystem over the years. Hence, the IGF is a suitable platform to support the implementation of the GDC principles and commitments. Efforts should continue to be made to strengthen the IGF.

Local multistakeholder processes such as the National and Regional Initiatives of the IGF work well and additional efforts could be made to aggregate these initiatives into regional and global fora. Additionally, various multistakeholder national, regional, and global youth initiatives, such as national Youth IGFs, are working towards meaningful youth empowerment and engagement in decision-making processes. More active efforts to integrate such initiatives will ensure young voices in the digital public policy and technology development space.

Stakeholders should work together towards avoiding fragmentation. In this regard, we support the work that is currently being done in the IGF Policy Network on Internet Fragmentation (PNIF). The PNIF was a community initiative launched by a multistakeholder coalition of civil society, business and technical community organisations to raise awareness of the technical, policy, legal and regulatory measures and actions that pose a risk to the open, interconnected and interoperable Internet.

We appreciate the efforts of the GDC public consultations. We encourage the ongoing GDC process to be more open, multistakeholder and inclusive, promoting active dialogue and robust discussion, which are key elements for reaching better agreements and understandings.

#### 3. Protect data

To enable the free flow of information while ensuring the protection of sensitive data, it is important to have a proactive and collaborative approach to addressing cross-border data flow barriers. That is why we support the concept of Data Free Flow with Trust.

There are numerous barriers that can impede the transfer of data across borders, such as data privacy regulations, data localization requirements, and security concerns - which might result in further aggravating Internet fragmentation. To overcome these barriers, it is important to implement robust security measures, such as encryption and access controls, to protect the data being transferred. Additionally, adopting internationally recognized data protection standards and certifications can help to ensure compliance with data privacy regulations across different jurisdictions.

## 4. Regulation of artificial intelligence

Some regulation of artificial intelligence (AI) might ensure that it is developed and deployed in a manner that aligns with the values and interests of the human kind. However, such regulation will only be possible with good governance in place, as it provides the necessary framework for transparent, accountable, and inclusive decision-making. Good governance involves ensuring that decision-making processes are guided by the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders. It is also conducive to innovation, while safeguarding against the risks and challenges posed by the rapid advancement of AI. By promoting good governance, we can help ensure that the regulation of AI is effective and promotes the public good, while minimising the risks and challenges associated with its development and deployment.

When it comes to the governance of artificial intelligence (AI), many of the lessons learned from Internet governance can be applied. Like the Internet, AI has the potential

to shape our society in profound ways, and it is important that its development and deployment are guided by principles that reflect the values of our society. Multistakeholder engagement is critical in this regard, as it enables diverse perspectives and expertise to be brought to the table, ensuring that the development of AI is guided by the needs and aspirations of all stakeholders. Additionally, transparency, accountability, and inclusivity are essential to ensuring that the governance of AI is conducted in a manner that is fair, equitable, and consistent with the principles of democratic governance. By learning from the lessons of Internet governance, we can help ensure that the governance of AI is conducted in a manner that promotes the public good, while addressing the complex challenges that are sure to arise.

Regulation should be balanced between targeting the challenges faced by widespread adoption of artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies with protecting people online and ensuring human rights are respected. A regulatory sandbox in artificial intelligence (AI) with a multistakeholder approach has numerous benefits that make it a valuable tool for promoting innovation while protecting the interests of all stakeholders. By allowing innovators to experiment with new AI technologies in a controlled environment, a regulatory sandbox can help to accelerate the development of new solutions and business models. At the same time, it can provide regulators with valuable insights into the potential risks and benefits of these technologies, allowing them to develop more informed policies and regulations. A multistakeholder approach, which involves the participation of stakeholders from government, industry, academia, and civil society, can help to ensure that the sandbox reflects a diversity of perspectives and interests. This approach can also foster collaboration and dialogue among stakeholders, leading to more inclusive and effective policy outcomes. Ultimately, a regulatory sandbox in AI with a multistakeholder approach can help to create a more balanced and sustainable ecosystem for Al innovation and deployment, benefiting society as a whole.

In addition, cross national efforts should be explored in finding solutions. This includes balancing and relating AI principles and guidelines to universal human rights norms and harmonising between the different global regulatory frameworks on AI.

This submission is endorsed by the following 73 organisations and individuals from the Asia Pacific region:

SI. No	Name	Organisation/ Individual	Location	Stakeholder Group
1	Al Council	Organization	Hong Kong	Social
2	Asia Pacific Network Information Centre (APNIC)	Organisation	Regional	Technical

3	Bangladesh toNetwork Operators Group(bdNOG)	Organisation	Bangladesh	Network Operators Group
4	Broadband India Forum (BIF)	Organisation	India	Think Tank
5	CCAOI	Organisation	India	Civil Society
6	Council for Social and Digital Development (CSDD)	Organisation	India	Non-Profit
7	DEPRIVE - AKKMA	Organization	Philippines	Civil Society
8	Digital Freedom Coalition	Organisation	Nepal	Coalition
9	Digital Media Foundation	Organisation	Nepal	Civil Society
10	Digital Rights Nepal (DRN)	Organization	Nepal	Civil Society
11	Educating Nepal	Organisation	Nepal	Civil Society
12	Grade Ace Pvt Ltd	Organisation	India	Private
13	ICT Watch	Organisation	Indonesia	Civil Society
14	India Internet Foundation (IIFON)	Organisation	India	Technical
15	India School of Internet Governance (inSIG)	Organisation	India	Civil Society
16	Indian Network Operators Group (INNOG)	Organisation	India	Technical
17	Internet Australia	Organisation	Australia	Technical
18	Internet Governance Institute	Organisation	Nepal	Civil Society
19	Internet Society Bangladesh Chapter	Organisation	Bangladesh	Civil Society
20	Internet Society India Chennai Chapter	Organisation	India	Civil Society
21	Internet Society India Delhi Chapter	Organisation	India	Civil Society
22	Internet Society India Kolkata Chapter	Organisation	India	Civil Society
23	Internet Society India Mumbai Chapter	Organisation	India	Civil Society

24	Internet Society India Trivandrum Chapter	Organisation	India	Civil Society
25	Lanka School on Internet Governance (LKSIG)	Organization	Sri Lanka	Civil Society
26	Limitless Lab	Organization	Philippines	Business
27	Nepal Internet Foundation	Organisation	Nepal	Civil Society
28	Nepal Network Operators' Group	Organisation	Nepal	Network Operators' Group
29	Nikhil Gehlot	Organisation	India	Business
30	Pacific Islands Chapter of the Internet Society (PICISOC)	Organisation	Regional	Civil Society
31	Rayznews	Organization	Nepal	Civil Society
32	Solutify Myanmar	Organisation	Myanmar	Civil Society
33	Specialised -Works	Organisation	Bangladesh	Private
34	Story Cycle	Organisation	Nepal	Non-Profit
35	UUM InterNetWorks Research Lab	Organization	Malaysia	Academia
36	Ved International Society	Organisation	India	Civil Society
37	Women in Digital	Organisation	Bangladesh	Business
38	Youth IGF India	Organisation	India	Civil Society
39	Youth IGF Nepal	Organisation	Nepal	Youth
40	Anand R. Nair	Individual	Coimbatore, India	Academia
41	Annaliese Williams, NetThing Chair (Australian IGF)	Individual	Australia	Civil Society
42	Aris Ignacio	Individual	Philippines	Academia
43	Arun Mahendru	Individual	India	Public Sector
44	Baljinder Singh	Individual	Amritsar, India	Academia
45	Charles Mok	Individual	Hong Kong / United States	Civil Society
46	Cheryl Langdon- Orr	Individual	Australia	Civil Society
47	Dr Gnanajeyaraman Rajaram	Individual	India	Academia
48	Dr Nirosha Wedasinghe	Individual	Sri Lanka	Academia
49	Dr. Anurag Vijay Agrawal	Individual	India	Technical
50	Dr. Ashish Rastogi	Individual	India/Oman	Academia

51	Dr. G. PRAKASH	Individual	India	Private University
52	Dr. Yik Chan Chin	Individual	China	Academia
53	Engr. Javed Niaj Mohsin	Individual, Janimh Technical Solution	Bangladesh	Technical
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56	G.V. Ihita	Individual	India	Youth
57	Iqbal Ahmed	Individual	Bangladesh	Technical
58	Jan Jacob Jansalin	Individual	Philippines	Public Sector
59	Juliana Harsianti	Individual, Indonesia Internet Governance Forum (ID-IGF)	Indonesia	Civil Society
60	Kapil Goyal	Individual	India	Academia
61	Kasun Tharaka Wickramasuriya	Individual	Sri Lanka	Public Sector
62	Kshitiz Saxena	Individual	India	Academia
63	Mohammad Ali Jauhar	Individual	India	Technical
64	Mohammad Kawsar Uddin	Individual	Bangladesh	Media
65	Naveen K Lakshman	Individual	India	Technical
66	Pavel Farhan	Individual	Thailand	Academia
67	Priyatosh Jana	Individual	India	Academia
68	Sagarika Wickramasekara	Individual	Sri Lanka	Technical
69	Shahanaj Begum	Individual	Bangladesh	Technical
70	Shradha Pandey	Individual	India	Youth
71	Shubham Agarwal	Individual	India	Technical
72	Stephen Ng	Individual	Hong Kong	Academia
73	Vinay Aseri	Individual	India	Private