

# Submission to the Development of the Global Digital Compact from Stakeholders of the Caribbean Internet Governance Forum

## I. Introduction

The Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) Secretariat reached out to stakeholders of the Caribbean Internet Governance Forum (CIGF) and the Small Island Developing States Internet Governance Forum (SIDS IGF) to coordinate a joint input to development of the Digital Global Compact of the United Nations (UN). Collaboration was undertaken through a shared document in the cloud and via Zoom video conferencing. Caribbean stakeholders from the Governmental, private sector, academia and civil society stakeholder groups actively participated in the joint process so this document represents a collective Caribbean input. While Caribbean nations do provide a SIDS perspective, this submission is not however representative of the views of SIDS from other world regions.

## II. Thematic Areas

Stakeholders were asked to comment on the thematic areas provided by the UN and to add others they deemed pertinent to the Caribbean. As requested by the UN, these thematic areas were then assessed based on the existing work completed or in progress and finally the needs to be addressed.

In considering this, stakeholders were asked to reference the [Caribbean Internet Governance Policy Framework](#) (CIGPF) which was developed by the CIGF over several years. The CIGPF seeks to support, guide and harmonise Internet governance activities across the Caribbean. In addition, the [Digital Agenda for Latin America and the Caribbean](#) (eLAC 2024) adopted in November 2022 by the Eighth Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean was also referenced.

Caribbean priority areas in Internet governance identified by the CIGPF are:

- Infrastructure for broadband connectivity
- Internet technical infrastructure
- Legal & regulatory frameworks and enforcement
- Internet content
- Public awareness and capacity building

- Research.

Whereas eLAC 2024 identified 4 main pillars as follows:

- Infrastructure, connectivity and the development of skills and competencies
- Digital economy, entrepreneurship, innovation and sustainability
- Inclusion and the digital transformation of the State
- Forging new partnerships re trade integration, the regional digital market and cooperation.

eLAC 2024 also includes 10 specific targets for broadband penetration, service accessibility, digital skills and planning.

Finally, other references relevant to SIDS were also noted as worthy of consideration in formulating our inputs to the GDC viz. the Pacific Regional e-Commerce Strategy and Roadmap (<https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Regional-Ecommerce-Strategy-Roadmap.pdf>) and the ongoing Enhancement of Governance and Enabling Environment in the ICT sector (EGEE-ICT) in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, and the Indian Ocean region (<https://www.comesa.int/egee-ict-programme/>).

Using data from these references, initiatives relevant to the UN's GDC call were identified and feedback provided in alignment with the UN's thematic areas, while also including proposals not necessarily so exactly classified. It is important to note however, that these thematic areas are not mutually exclusive and overlap will occur. Following are the thematic areas ultimately proposed and commented upon by Caribbean stakeholders:

1. Connect all people to the internet, including all schools
2. Avoid internet fragmentation
3. Protect data
4. Apply human rights online
5. Introduce accountability criteria for discrimination and misleading content
6. Promote regulation of artificial intelligence (ethical behavior of solutions?)
7. Digital commons as a global public good
8. Sustainable internet consumption/production
9. Collaboration and Multistakeholder Participation
10. Openness and Interoperability
11. Develop a Culture of Cybersecurity
12. Embrace Universal Acceptance

### **III. GDC Input from Caribbean Stakeholders**

The following table summarises and collates the feedback provided by Caribbean stakeholders from the Government, private sector, academia and civil society stakeholder groups for input to the GDC development process.

Thematic Area	Existing Efforts	Needs
<p><b>Connect all people to the Internet, including schools</b></p>	<p>Internet Exchange Points (IXP) are being implemented within the Caribbean to expand access to and improve the quality of service provided.</p> <p><a href="#">IXPs exist in 18 countries within the Caribbean.</a></p>	<p>Adequate infrastructure, designed to be resilient, to withstand the environmental hazards and natural disasters experienced in the region.</p> <p>Foster the growth and development of all IXPs, IXP services and facilities in the region.</p> <p>The necessary devices to provide meaningful connectivity via both wired and wireless modes.</p> <p>Capacity building to enhance digital skills needed to use these devices while also raising awareness of and protecting the vulnerable and disadvantaged in society, who are a large but silent percentage of the population.</p> <p>Note: The considerations account for connecting buildings and people given the specific inclusion of schools, a subset of all people.</p>
	<p>National and regional education platforms which require internet access be made available at schools.</p>	<p>Enhancing the skilled labour force to provide the quality of service needed to ensure meaningful connectivity by providing capacity building in planning, designing and implementing network infrastructure</p>
		<p>Educating all potential users on safety measures needed to protect themselves and children online.</p>

Thematic Area	Existing Efforts	Needs
		Digital infrastructure to provide safe learning environments.
	National and regional universal service funds (USFs)	Encourage use of the funds to provide equitable access to the have nots. Encourage the implementation of USFs where they don't exist.
		Encourage detailed data collection on existing digital divides regionally to better inform policy and allocate resources from USFs

Thematic Area	Existing Efforts	Needs
<p><b>Avoid Internet Fragmentation</b></p>		<p>Collaboration on a regional level on decisions on issues like regulation.</p> <p>Facilitate measures which prevent differences of language from becoming/continuing to be break points.</p> <p>Lobby for our Caribbean values in international fora.</p> <p>Raise awareness of what is now considered "other" and how it could be useful/interesting for us</p>

	<p>Existing efforts regarding openness and interoperability:</p> <p>Caribbean Open Institute (COI)</p> <p>CARICOM Single ICT Space</p> <p>Caribbean Open Data Conference</p>	<p><b>Regulatory framework</b></p> <p>Should support openness and interoperability. This includes policies and regulations that promote open data, open standards, and open APIs, and that encourage the use of open source software.</p> <p><b>Awareness</b></p> <p>Greater awareness of the benefits of openness and interoperability, both among policymakers and the general public. This includes understanding the potential of open data, open source software, and open standards to drive innovation and economic growth.</p> <p><b>Investment in Capacity-building</b></p> <p>There needs to be investment in the skills and knowledge necessary to promote openness and interoperability. This includes training programs for government officials, educators, and entrepreneurs to help them understand how to work with open standards and technologies.</p> <p><b>Infrastructure Investment</b></p> <p>Investment in infrastructure is necessary to support openness and interoperability. This includes the development of robust data exchange platforms, the</p>
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Thematic Area	Existing Efforts	Needs
		<p>deployment of high-speed internet connectivity, and the provision of the necessary hardware and software tools to enable open collaboration and innovation.</p>
<p><b>Protect Data</b></p>	<p>Data Protection Policies and Legislation are being drafted and enacted by various governments within the Caribbean region.</p> <p>At least 10 Caribbean territories with modernised data protection legislation at present</p>	<p>Data protection requires a combination of skilled workers to create risk mitigating environments, awareness of safety practices and the enforcement of laws when there are breaches. Digital security is key to users being confident in their use of technology. Providing cybersecurity requires collaboration, beginning with the creator of the technology, ending not with the user, but the eventual owner of the technology, who possesses the produced data.</p> <p>Capacity building is required to raise awareness on data and its uses both good and bad.</p> <p>Policy requirements not modelled solely around the existing European models or General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance.</p>



Thematic Area	Existing Efforts	Needs
<p><b>Apply human rights online</b></p>		<p>Policy requirements not modelled solely on the existing European models</p> <p>Consistency with current human rights standards and individual responsibilities and obligations is needed.</p>
		<p>Public awareness-raising to inform users of their rights online and the responsibilities of users to maintain equal rights.</p>
<p><b>Introduce accountability criteria for discrimination and misleading content</b></p>	<p>The Caribbean Broadcasting Union has implemented a Social Media Policy Framework for the Caribbean currently used by two of fifteen media bodies within the region.</p>	<p>Internet content provides a challenge for information management with regional content on popular platforms being less visible unless a tailored experience is curated. The misuse of hashtags to bring attention to unrelated content for ‘views’ presents a challenge for any user attempting to source information. While platforms allow reporting of misleading content, the use of misleading hashtags is allowed due to the platform’s position of creators tailoring their viewing audience. This has led to, for example, videos of Carnival in Canada being tagged with #TrinidadandTobago.</p>

Thematic Area	Existing Efforts	Needs
		<p>The creation and popularity of ‘memes’ has led to the mass creation of false images under the guise of being jokes that contain false information believed by many to be true. To mitigate this, all satire content should be clearly labelled as such in all media formats.</p> <p>This will require regional cooperation due to the cross-border nature of the Internet by both public and private sectors in the content they produce for mass consumption.</p>
<p><b>Promote regulation of artificial intelligence</b></p>		<p>Promote understanding of how this regulation will impact having a free and open Internet given concerns these two needs are in opposition.</p> <p>Protection of data generated and collected by artificial intelligence.</p>
<p><b>Digital commons as a global public good</b></p>	<p><a href="#">The Digital Library of the Caribbean</a> is a collection of resources on or about the Caribbean. Partners include regional and international libraries as well as private collectors.</p>	<p>Raise awareness of what digital commons are and are not, along with the value in shared knowledge.</p> <p>To benefit from them they need to be accessible, without breaching data protection laws.</p> <p>Free access and sustainable resource management will be integral in maintaining these digital commons.</p>

<b>Thematic Area</b>	<b>Existing Efforts</b>	<b>Needs</b>
		<p>The grouping of the Caribbean as Latin America and the Caribbean needs to be revised when there are as many as two Caribbean nations included in the dataset. The assumption of findings in these situations is often inaccurate for the Caribbean.</p> <p>Support needs to be given to the Caribbean nations to gather and update datasets to provide its own regional statistics that will have merit when placed with that of Latin America.</p>

Thematic Area	Existing Efforts	Needs
<p><b>Digital Transformation and Digital Economy</b></p>	<p>E-commerce platforms are available to multiple islands to allow commerce between islands.</p>	<p>Digital technologies are impacting all economic activities, transforming processes, business models, products and value chains. To maximize the impact of these technologies on the economy, it is necessary to boost their adoption in the productive fabric, focusing on small and medium-sized companies and promoting technology-based entrepreneurship</p> <p>The transformation of processes will include the necessary changes to how information is distributed to the public as Internet content. This will need to be guided by policies which determine accountability for and classify harmful or misleading content.</p> <p>Legislation and regulation will need to be reviewed and may require amendments.</p>

Thematic Area	Existing Efforts	Needs
	<p>E-governments are becoming more sustainable with government services being entirely or partially online.</p>	<p>Fostering a regional digital market strategy, which reduces barriers to digital trade, must be part of the strategies of subregional integration mechanisms, through a greater integration of digital infrastructure, normative harmonization, free flow of data, and facilitation of commerce and best logistics services, among others.</p> <p>Ensure that e-government services are accessible to all</p>

<p><b>Collaboration and Multistakeholder participation</b></p>	<p>Caribbean Telecommunications Union</p> <p>Caribbean Internet Governance Forum</p> <p>Caribbean Network Operators Group (CaribNOG)</p> <p>The Caribbean Open Institute</p> <p>CANTO</p>	<p><b>Limited resources</b></p> <p>Caribbean countries face resource constraints, including limited funding, technical expertise, and infrastructure. Collaborative efforts that bring together governments, private sector, civil society, academia, and international partners can pool resources, expertise, and best practices to address common challenges and optimize the utilization of available resources.</p> <p><b>Capacity Building</b></p> <p>This is needed to enhance the skills and knowledge of stakeholders in areas such as digital technologies, cybersecurity, data management, and policy development. Multistakeholder participation in capacity building initiatives can help build a skilled workforce, promote knowledge sharing, and foster innovation in the region.</p> <p><b>Coordination and Harmonization</b></p> <p>The Caribbean region consists of many small island states, each with its own unique challenges and opportunities. Collaborative efforts and multistakeholder participation can help in coordinating and harmonizing efforts across countries to avoid duplication of efforts, streamline processes, and promote regional cooperation and integration.</p> <p><b>Policy and Regulatory Frameworks</b></p> <p>Developing and implementing effective policy and regulatory frameworks for digital infrastructure and services require</p>
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<b>Thematic Area</b>	<b>Existing Efforts</b>	<b>Needs</b>
		<p>collaboration and multistakeholder participation. Involving relevant stakeholders in policy discussions, consultations, and decision-making processes can help ensure that policies and regulations are inclusive, transparent, and aligned with the needs of different sectors and communities.</p>

Thematic Area	Existing Efforts	Needs
<p><b>Develop a Culture of Cybersecurity</b></p>	<p>CARICOM Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Action Plan - CARICOM IMPACS (March 2016)</p>	<p><b>Adoption of Regional Cybersecurity Strategy</b></p> <p>Given the marked increase in cyber incidents, a culture of cybersecurity is sine qua non for a free and secure digital future.</p> <p>SIDS, given their inherent constraints such as small populations, limited resources (financial and human) are particularly vulnerable. Noting that the shortage of cybersecurity personnel globally would be exacerbated in the SIDS context.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to how the particular vulnerabilities associated with small size/island states could be translated into strengths in the context of cybersecurity</p> <p>Build capacity among end users to mitigate the risks to themselves and others.</p>



Thematic Area	Existing Efforts	Needs
Sustainable internet consumption/production		<p>Due to the large amount of energy the Internet increasingly consumes in data centres, cloud deployments etc., consideration needs to be given to the environmental impact. Key areas of consideration are the conservation of natural resources, reduction in toxic materials and the emission of waste and pollutants and other environmental protection areas.</p> <p>There is need for public awareness of the potential environmental risks posed by current, emerging and future technology - especially for SIDS. This includes the issue of Radio Frequency (RF) radiation exposure standards and limits – Safety/Awareness/ Publications/Regulations.</p>

Collated by the Caribbean Telecommunications Union (CTU) Secretariat.



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<https://input.un.org/EFM/se/3995D1A472EC463708DB480DD61A87357E>