

National Submission of El Salvador on the Global Digital Compact proposed thematic areas

The Global Digital Compact (GDC) should aim for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to be universal, accessible, free, and affordable. Hence interoperability, openness, and the global reach of the Internet are key to this goal.

In the current context of multiple and interlinked crises, harnessing the potential of science, technology, and innovation, including digital technologies, is critical to address the multidimensional challenges faced, in particular, by developing countries in their efforts to achieve the SDGs, recognizing that ICTs have the potential to provide solutions to the new and evolving development challenges. In that sense, concrete actions and specific initiatives need to be implemented and harnessed through the GDC.

For this goal, the importance of creating synergies, preventing duplications, and building on existing initiatives cannot be overstated. We maintain that the GDC should build upon on forums already advancing in digital cooperation as the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Office of the Envoy on Technology, the Internet Governance Forum (IGF), the AI ethics work of UNESCO, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and the Secretary-General's Roadmap for digital cooperation, as well other related processes in the General Assembly of the United Nations.

We therefore call to create synergies and to take advantage of what the organization and other Member States have been doing for the last decade on connectivity, internet governance, data protection, artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies and ways to accelerate the progress of the SGDs. In this regard, knowledge sharing and strengthening multi stakeholder partnerships would be relevant.

As core priorities for the achievement of the SDGs, technology transfer and capacity building for all developing countries should be ensured and improved in order to reduce existing gaps and to promote equal access and the use of ICTs.

The GDC process should be, in this sense, an opportunity to revive and promote meaningful debate about the role ICTs play in our current world and how we can use these technologies to achieve sustainable development for all, in particular to tackle current global challenges.

Another element that is highlighted across the thematic discussions is the need to continue the multistakeholder approach while preserving the intergovernmental nature of a United Nations process and ensuring a human right centered approach.

We, therefore, present key elements for some of the thematic deep-dives:

1. Thematic areas proposals

Digital inclusion and connectivity

Bridge the digital divide including the gender divide

Bridging the digital divide means ensuring that everyone can use information and communication technologies (ICTs) to their advantage, and to have a pool of adequate tools available to become online



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citizens. There is a direct link between digital and socioeconomic inequalities. Prior challenges arise when not everyone has access to digital technologies, including the internet.

As highlighted in the Report of the Secretary-General related to the progress towards the SDGs, persistent digital dives among and within countries are a main challenge for the achievement of the SDGs. Leveraging the potential of technologies and ensuring connectivity for all requires investing in inclusive and accessible digital infrastructure.

Digital inclusion also requires addressing the gender digital divide to reach - in access to and use of technologies and connectivity. Is also closely related to the opportunities enabled for all women and girls to access digital skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Digital infrastructure

The internet is about data but is also about infrastructure. Therefore, we suggest enhancing investment in digital infrastructure. This encompasses a dual approach from elements related to access to devices, like a computer or other relevant devices, and as infrastructure we refer to a reliable and secure internet environment.

As we stated before, for digital inclusion to become a reality there must be a combination of factors working together to ensure not only affordable, high quality and stable connectivity but the basic tools (physical and social) to navigate in a highly connected environment.

Digital literacy and training skills

Digital skills training and digital literacy at all levels, and to all people throughout their life cycle. The goal should be for everyone to have access to the internet, but also to have the appropriate digital skills, relevant to their individual needs, so that they are able to utilize the media environments that provide the benefits they are looking for.

For people already immersed in ICT environments, more educational resources are needed in STEM, cybersecurity, quantum computing, artificial intelligence, and new and emerging technologies.

It is through the development of digital capacities at all levels, we will be able to improve social and economic disparities and improve connectivity.

Technology transfer and capacity building

Taking advantage of the positive contribution to tackle current challenges will require the adequate financial resources from all sources, including through capacity building and technology transfer to developing countries in order to reduce existing gaps and promote equal access in regard to connectivity. The establishment of more efficient and effective mechanisms for this purpose should be promoted and by strengthening and innovating existing initiatives to benefit in particular developing countries.

Internet governance

Multi-stakeholder and collaborative approach to Internet Governance



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The understanding of the Internet as a decentralized platform is key. We refer specifically to the fact that no institution or entity holds sole power and control and where a multi-stakeholder scheme (governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, academia, and industry) collaborate together to develop an inclusive governance model for the internet's growth and development.

Therefore, we reaffirmed the importance of continuing the multi-stakeholder approach outlined in the Geneva Summit of 2003 and the Tunis Agenda of 2005. The purpose of this is to ensure that a wide range of interested and competent stakeholders can contribute to the development of principles that mark the evolution of the Internet.

On that line there is an urgent need to enhance and foster a more effective participation in particular of developing countries on the existing platforms related to internet governance, through which their interests and priorities could be considered.

Data protection

Human rights approach

Crimes related to the use of unauthorized data are on the rise. Illegal access to data causes harm to those who are affected by it. As a result, cybercrime relating to data threatens the privacy of hundreds of millions of individuals whose personal information is accessed without authorization, stolen, modified, or illegally used with malicious intent.

Therefore, we highlight the States responsibilities to address cybersecurity concerns, particularly to protect sensitive data to extend individual rights to cyberspace under national legal frameworks, as well into a broader scale safeguard national security interests.

Protection of data in the context of international security

Unauthorized access to sensitive information at the government level can disrupt government systems, undermine public service provision, negatively affect the economy, compromise the very form of government, and compromise the supply chain, resulting in failures in the social function of States resulting in social discord and mistrust.

For national, social, economic, and political stability, States must ensure the safekeeping of data and procurement of their digital infrastructure. This responsibility can also be translated as the responsibility of the government to protect citizens' data collected, managed, and stored in a public environment to a greater degree.

Multi-stakeholder approach on Data protection

Private data protection can be upheld through a multi-stakeholder approach where everyone plays critical roles. By promoting international standards within existing frameworks, a multilateral approach can be achieved. On a national level, governments also have regulations that prevent service providers from obtaining, using, and manipulating data. Those who provide services on data management and Internet Service Providers should adhere to strict regulations that prevent the improper use of sensitive information.



Principles for interoperability of data

We highlight for data interoperability the following principles: openness for data that isn't under protection and open source software, technology neutrality to avoid dependency and adapt needs to a rapidly changing technological environment, data portability for reuse of data, transparency regarding processes and accessibility in order for all people, regardless of their specific needs, to have similar access to and use of ICT products.

Digital trust and security

Protection of digital critical infrastructures and digital information infrastructures

In order for societies to function as they should, digital critical infrastructure, such as access to food, water, energy, and transportation, as well as social services, should be protected and respected at all times. Critical health and education infrastructure should be respected in all circumstances. However, there is a need for Member States to discuss what embodies digital trust and security in order to shape a common understanding of what these terms encompass.

Digital trust in their connection to data protection

Digital trust is intrinsically connected with data protection, privacy and the empowerment and determination of individuals to make conscious decisions about the recollection, storage, use and elimination of private information. Transparency in the collection and manipulation of data is fundamental and provides the user with sufficient power to manage personal data from a human rights perspective. To advance digital trust, more multidisciplinary discussions and collaboration are needed.

We also believe the misuse of ICTs poses a threat to digital trust in terms of potential risk and harm caused by all forms of online violence and abuse, which can aggravate the differential impacts of violence on women and children. In addition, it is necessary to address any type of discrimination caused by algorithm biases and other violations of human rights in the use of ICTs.

In that sense, the GDC should tackle the continuity and interrelation between offline and online violence, harassment and discrimination against women and girls and the increase of such acts that are committed, assisted, aggravated or amplified by the use of technology, and it should urge governments and all stakeholders to take all appropriate measures, including legal or criminal action, to combat the use of digital tools, including social media and online platforms, for the purpose of harassment, hate speech and racism against women and girls.

Artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies

Innovation

Digital transformation and innovation through AI applications development, implementation and use represent huge opportunities. Technologies emerging from the AI realm and other emerging tech can reduce gaps between countries and promote development, however they can also deepen inequalities and the digital divide. Multi-stakeholder cooperation is essential to ensure that current and future uses of AI are secure, peaceful, and sustainable.

Al applications related to international security



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The increasing autonomy of certain AI applications is of major concern, particularly in areas of international security, weaponry development and transition to cyberspace warfare. Ethical and legal implications should be fundamental in the development of AI applications particularly those that reduce or restrict human control in situations of life and death.

Ethic uses of AI

There must be a human-centered approach to AI applications development, so that they are based on human rights, are secure, safe, and sustainable; they should be beneficial to individuals, respect their dignity, and consider society's benefit as well.

Global digital commons

Universality of the Internet

It is fundamental for the internet to be viewed as a public good, with functionality, security, openness, and stability being essential features. In order to prevent the open source and public nature of the Internet from diminishing, newly revitalized courses should be discussed. As this presents accessibility issues for developing countries.

Standardization and interoperability

Standardization of frameworks for digital common goods is essential for improving accessibility, and interoperable data is also essential for allowing information to flow from different platforms with respect for privacy and elevated levels of security.

Accelerating progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

ICTs towards the achievement of the SDGs

Recognizing that information and communications technologies present new opportunities and benefits for the achievement of the SDGs, requires addressing the major impediments that developing countries face in engaging with and accessing new and emerging technologies such as: appropriate enabling environment, sufficient resources, infrastructure, education, capacity, investment, and connectivity.

In that sense, in order to take advantage of the relevant role of ICTs towards the achievement of the SDGs, strong multi stakeholder partnerships are critical to improve the science, technology and innovation ecosystem working in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders to identify solutions to pressing development challenges.