



## **Contribution from the Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE) April 2023**

On behalf of the Board of the [Global Forum on Cyber Expertise](#) (GFCE) Foundation, we submit the following contribution to the Global Digital Compact. The GFCE appreciates that the consultative process on the Global Digital Compact is inclusive and transparent, ensuring that the voices of civil society and multi-stakeholder actors are represented appropriately. The GFCE would also like to recognize the efforts of the UN Tech Envoy office, and co-facilitators Rwanda and Sweden, in paving the way towards consensus on shared principles for an open, free and secure digital future for all.

The GFCE is a neutral, apolitical platform for international cooperation and exchange on strengthening cyber capacity and expertise globally. Established in 2015, its multi-stakeholder network comprises of over 190 organizations including governments, civil society, academia, private sector, and international organizations. On this occasion, we respectfully provide input on digital connectivity for your consideration.

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

The GFCE believes that every citizen of the world should be able to fully reap the benefits of information communication technologies (ICTs) through a free, open, peaceful and secure digital world. The GFCE is committed to advancing digital connectivity as a vital driver of sustainable development and human rights for all people. Digital connectivity also contributes to the realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. At the same time, we recognize that digital connectivity comes with challenges and risks, as cyberspace is increasingly exploited by malicious actors. Therefore, the GFCE advocates for cybersecurity and [cyber capacity building](#) as crucial elements to digital connectivity, as they enable countries and communities to protect themselves from cyber threats and vulnerabilities, develop skills, and harness the opportunities of cyberspace.

#### **Core Principles for Governments, International Organizations, Businesses Universities and Other Relevant Stakeholders**

- Digital connectivity is a key enabler of sustainable development that should be available, affordable, accessible, and meaningful for all people.
- Ensuring universal access to the internet should be a priority for all nations, especially prioritizing marginalized communities (e.g. women and girls, remote and rural communities, ethnic minorities and indigenous people, persons with disabilities, older people).
- Bridging the digital divide requires collaboration between governments, the private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders.
- Cybersecurity and cyber capacity building are essential components of digital connectivity, as they ensure countries and communities can protect themselves from cyber threats and vulnerabilities, and fully leverage the benefits of cyberspace.
- Cyber capacity building should follow a multi-stakeholder, inclusive and human-centric approach that involves collaboration and coordination among governments, international

organizations, non-governmental organizations, civil society, private companies, the technical community and academia.<sup>1</sup>

#### Key Commitments, Pledges, Actions

- Raise awareness and understanding of the internet and its benefits among all segments of society, especially marginalized communities who face greater barriers to digital inclusion.
- Enhance the digital skills and competencies of individuals and organizations to enable them to use the internet effectively and safely for various purposes.
- Support the adoption and implementation of cyber security standards and best practices by public and private sector entities to enhance trust and interoperability in cyberspace.
- Continue supporting the implementation of SDG Target 9c, which aimed to provide universal and affordable access to the internet in LDCs by 2020; by expanding network coverage, reducing service costs, and increasing device affordability.
- Encourage information sharing and knowledge transfer among different stakeholders to identify best practices in cyber capacity building and digital connectivity initiatives, for example through platforms like the GFCE.
- Promote the development of national and regional digital transformation strategies that reflect the importance of digital connectivity, universal internet access, and cybersecurity.
- Establish clearer links between [cyber capacity building and development](#), and increase resources for actionable commitments.<sup>2</sup>
- Support research and development efforts to identify new solutions to bridging the digital divide and enhancing digital connectivity.
- Encourage private sector investment in digital infrastructure development in developing countries, in collaboration with local stakeholders and international organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> The GFCE has developed capacity building principles as codified in the GFCE's Delhi Communiqué on the [Global Agenda for Cyber Capacity Building](#), endorsed by the GFCE community. These principles were based on general principles for development and capacity building set out in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, directly linking thus cyber capacity building with international development principles.

<sup>2</sup> To this end, the GFCE is co-organizing a Global Conference on Cyber Capacity Building in 2023, in partnership with the World Bank, World Economic Forum and Cyber Peace Institute, and with the support of several UN Member States. Amongst other things, the Conference will raise decision-makers' awareness of how cybersecurity and capacity building support digital, social and economic development, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).