## Switzerland Contribution to the Global Digital Compact 30. April 2023

## I. Introduction

Switzerland is convinced that the United Nations provides the appropriate framework to develop a Global Digital Compact in an open and inclusive process that brings together governments, the private sector, civil society, academia and all other interested stakeholders in a multi-stakeholder approach.

A Global Digital Compact has the potential to strengthen a principles-based order in the area of digital cooperation. We believe that this potential can only be harnessed if the process is open, inclusive and based on existing work streams and fora. Geneva, with its ecosystem and know-how, is an ideal location for involving all relevant actors in the development of a Global Digital Compact and generating added value. The "Messages" from the UN Internet Governance Forum (IGF) 2022 held in Addis Ababa, which focused on the Global Digital Compact themes, should be especially taken into consideration, as they provide key inputs from the global multistakeholder community. Switzerland stands ready to support the Co-Facilitators of the Global Digital Compact, and to work towards the establishment of a Geneva-based presence of the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology.

The themes foreseen so far are all relevant, and should build on already existing agreements, especially those of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) and its outcomes, as well as the outcomes of the WSIS+10 review. Probably attention should also be given to the intersection between digitalization and climate change, which has been discussed inter alia during the UN IGF 2021 (where a report on the matter was produced by a dedicated UN IGF Policy Network). An appropriate follow-up to the Global Digital Compact is essential. Considering its multistakeholder nature and multilateral basis, the UN IGF is best placed for offering a platform for periodic discussions and actions related to the follow-up and implementation of the GDC, ensuring ownership of the process by all stakeholders. The follow-up actions to the Global Digital Compact should build on existing structures, especially the Tech Envoy Office as a focal point within the UN, as well as the UN IGF as central policy discussion and action platform, for taking multistakeholder networks to develop and implement the Global Digital Compact forward.

Inputs Thematic Areas	Core Principles (policy inputs / concepts)	Key Commitments (ongoing projects, pledges, activities)
<ol> <li>Connect all people to the internet, including all schools</li> </ol>	Connecting the unconnected, especially considering the needs of the "bottom billion" - and particularly including those of women and girls to bridge the "gender digital divide" - are essential in order to overcome the digital divides.	Switzerland commits to further supporting the efforts to address connectivity issues, such as through the GIGA Initiative and other efforts undertaken by ITU, UNESCO and other UN institutions.
	Meaningful connectivity goes beyond the technical means to enable such connectivity by making it widely available, but includes meaningful and affordable access, the acquisition of digital skills, and	Switzerland moreover commits to further international discussions and best practice on enabling environments for the deployment of broadband, such as the recommendations from the

## II. Core Principles and Commitments

	<ul> <li>critical digital literacy and awareness, as well as cultural and solutions. This also implies profound changes in the way curricula should be designed in schools and in teaching and education as a public good. It also implies to ensure the favorable framework conditions including the right regulatory framework conditions.</li> <li>True connectivity requires meaningful participation of all stakeholder groups worldwide to the corresponding governance processes and institutions.</li> <li>Moreover, it is important to foster competition for an inclusive digital transformation and promote investment and easing infrastructure deployment.</li> <li>Policy principles that support bridging the digital divide, as listed in this OECD report</li> <li>Bridging digital divides in G20 countries [ en   OECD, need to be taken into account.</li> </ul>	Broadband Commission Expert Group on how to close the broadband gap. Switzerland will continue to support the work of the Diplo Foundation and its <u>Geneva Internet Platform</u> , which amongst other things offers state of the art quality information and capacity development resources, including on policies to foster access to networks and services. Switzerland will continue to support UNESCO International Bureau of Education in Geneva which, among other things, is working to steer the transformation of education (hybrid education learning assessment). The organization is also supporting the Education in Emergency thematic in Geneva, among other actors such as the Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies. Switzerland will continue to support global efforts to bridge the digital divide by promoting initiatives and projects that enable developing countries to use digital technologies in order to make their economies more competitive, integrate them into the global production and trade system, reduce barriers to market entry, and facilitate access to digital financial services for people and businesses. This includes for example Switzerland's participation in the Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG), which supports the financing of internet infrastructure and mobile networks, and Switzerland's participation in the UNCTAD E-commerce and Digital Economy Programme, which helps policy makers of developing countries to create favorable framework conditions and enhance capacities for e-commerce by supporting them in identifying and removing obstacles to its development. Switzerland commits to continue working towards
2. Avoid internet iragmentation	continue efforts towards a single, open,	the core principles spelled out, and to offer its

	interoperable, safe, and secure nternet for all worldwide.	support in providing a venue and facilitation efforts between all interested parties.
	Free cross-border data flows need to be anchored in international law, while taking into account data protection needs and avoiding forced data localization policies.	Switzerland is actively working towards anchoring the free flow of data and prohibitions to forced data localization in its Free Trade Agreement practice and multilaterally at the WTO.
	Fragmentation at the user-layer of the Internet, imposition of unnecessary barriers for usage of the internet across borders and imposition of tariffs on electronic transmissions need to be avoided by working towards common policy standards.	
	This requires strengthening open, inclusive and accountable governance structures, especially through further developing an effective, proactive and politically visible UN IGF.	
3. Protect privacy and data	In order to better tap into the social and economic power of data while also preventing users from losing control over their own data, we should develop a data governance approach that overcomes the supposed tension between data privacy and data use, bearing however in mind that the protection of personal data and privacy is a fundamental right and acknowledging the importance of ensuring high standards in this regard. Digital self-determination aims to be a new approach in governing responsible data access, use, re-use, management and empowering data subjects in the digital age. At its foundation is the idea that individuals, companies and society as a whole should be able to determine what actions they take in our digital ecosystem. This includes giving these actors the ability to determine the relevance and value of data that is important to them, to have access to and control over this data, and to determine how said data is used and reused.	Switzerland commits to further international discussions on data governance and to address data-related challenges in a horizontal and cross- sectoral manner in accordance with its privacy and data protection legal framework and international obligations, including furthering discussion on data divides. Switzerland commits to promote the development of interoperable trustworthy data spaces and to explore further processes and policies to make digital self- determination a reality.

	By improving the level of control that individuals and organisations have over their own data, we can increase their trust in our data-driven society and raise their willingness to share and make use of data. Increased data sharing between different actors will increase access and growth opportunities for various players and sectors and open up new ways of using and combining data. This will lay the foundation for developing innovative applications with individual and collective benefits.	
	Society as a whole should benefit from the efficiency gains and innovative potential brought about by data – without losing democratic control over basic societal functions in important sectors. We therefore conceive of digital self-determination as a long-term goal.	
	Trustworthy data spaces show great potential as a way of making digital self-determination a reality. There is a need to promote the development of standards for trustworthy data spaces in cooperation with existing organisations for norms and standardization, and to develop international guidelines for trustworthy data spaces in order enable their interoperability and to create legal certainty on an international level.	
	Users and owners of data should have the freedom to transfer data across borders and have the choice of storage, Forced data localization, which creates data insecurity and infringes on the rights of data subjects and owners should be avoided.	
4. Apply human rights online	The development and use of digital technologies should be guided by the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. States should develop effective regulatory and policy responses to the risks associated with digital technologies.	Switzerland has supported OHCHR's B-tech project from its onset in 2019 and is committed to continue its cooperation. Switzerland is a member of the Freedom Online Coalition since 2019 and Friend of the Chair since 2020.

	The Global Digital Compact should build on recommendations 3a/b of the SG Roadmap on Digital cooperation and be guided by OHCHR's B- Tech Project , that provides authoritative guidance and resources for implementing the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human rights (UNGPs) in the technology space.	Switzerland supports Access Now's campaign to prevent internet Shutdowns and the 2023 conference on digital rights Rightscon.
	Technology companies (and all companies using new technologies) should implement human rights due diligence (for example through identifying, preventing, mitigating and accounting for how they address adverse human rights impacts related to their products). Effective remedies need to be available to individuals and communities exposed to those human rights risks. Internet freedom and fundamental human rights have to be protected online.	
<ol> <li>Accountability for discrimination and misleading content</li> </ol>	Switzerland attaches great importance to the fight against online discrimination and the distribution of misleading content. Online platforms are beneficial in many ways: They facilitate the finding of information, allow active participation in public discourse and increase diversity in opinions. As such, they contribute to freedom of expression and have become an essential feature for democracy. At the same time, digital platforms have negative impacts, notably when it comes to hate speech and disinformation. Their algorithms determine what we read and what we don't even see. This narrows our reality and raises questions with regard to transparency.	Switzerland commits to support the efforts to increase accountability for discrimination and misleading content, while protecting human and fundamental rights. As such, Switzerland will contribute as member of the Catalyst Group to UNESCO efforts for an Internet for Trust.
	Digital platforms should have their responsibilities in ensuring a functioning public communication: They need to become more transparent with regards to their central processes such as development and	

	enforcement of community standards. Also, they should put in place mechanisms for reporting and access to redress. States have the duty to guarantee freedom of expression as well as other fundamental rights such as protection from discrimination. As such, it is crucial that a clear framework for communication on digital platforms is developed and applied. Any measures they take to combat hate speech and disinformation must be consistent with international law as well as the protection of fundamental and human rights.	
6. Regulation of artificial intelligence	Any international regulatory efforts should build on existing international law, expanding and concretizing it only where necessary. Wherever possible, any efforts should focus on regulating the potentially negative and undesirable effects of AI, and not the "technology" AI per se. Any efforts should take into account the different responsibilities of public and private actors and, where appropriate, set specific requirements for government use of AI. Any efforts should be exemplary in terms of human rights, democracy and the rule of law and strengthen these. At the same time, they should also emphasize the opportunities of AI and be designed in such a way that they promote innovation and do not "stifle" it. Any efforts should not only focus on a prior ("ex- ante") risk assessment of the applications of AI, but also include impact assessment considerations. Implementation mechanisms: To guarantee their effectiveness, any efforts should provide for implementation mechanisms. States should be given	Switzerland took part in the elaboration of the UNESCO Recommandation on Ethics of AI. Switzerland, in the person of Ambassador Thomas Schneider, chairs the Council of Europe's Committee on Artificial Intelligence, which aims to negotiate a framework convention on artificial intelligence, human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The convention is intended to reach a maximal number of States, beyond those that are members of the Council of Europe. Switzerland is supporting the AI for Good Global Summit of the ITU which will take place in July 2023 in Geneva.

	as much leeway as possible in designing national mechanisms.	
	Any efforts should make use of internationally recognised methods following recommendations from competent organisations, good practices, or international standards.	
	Any efforts should promote digital self-determination in order to enable the protection and control of one's own data protecting while at the same time enabling data use and thereby innovation.	
	Human rights, the rule of law and the overall impact and systemic risks of AI on democracy and the wider society should be considered.	
	As long as research is in accordance with human dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms, no unnecessary requirements should be imposed on research and science so that they can reach their full potential for the benefit of society.	
	Any process should be inclusive and transparent and should involve all interested and relevant stakeholders.	
	Gender equality is a priority for Switzerland. Switzerland is therefore committed to ensuring that the gender equality perspective is maintained and upheld throughout any efforts.	
7. Digital commons as a global public good	Regulation for digital content platforms should ensure information as a public good, while preserving freedom of expression and other human rights, as well as other relevant international commitments and obligations.	Switzerland is part of the Catalyst Group of UNESCO's Global Conference Internet for Trust
	Building on the idea to expand, rather than restrict access to data, information, culture and knowledge, the concept of digital commons supports and taps into the long-term goal of digital self-determination.	

Other areas	In general terms, the GDC should build on the agreements of the World Summit on the Information Society and its outcomes, as well as the outcomes of the WSIS+10 review.	
	An appropriate follow-up to the GDC through existing structures is essential. Considering its multistakeholder nature and multilateral basis, the UN IGF is best placed for offering a platform for periodic discussions and actions related to the follow-up and implementation of the GDC, ensuring ownership of the process by all stakeholders.	
	The follow-up actions to the GDC should build on existing structures, especially the UN IGF as central policy discussion and action platform, for taking multistakeholder networks to develop and implement the GDC forward. Follow-up actions can well be channeled through WSIS structures, such as WSIS- Forum and the WSIS Action Lines, updated as appropriate.	