

# **Submission of Inputs for the Global Digital Compact**

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

## **Global Digital Compact - General Comments:**

- UNESCO welcomes the President of the UN General Assembly's appointment of the Permanent Representatives of Rwanda and of Sweden as Co-facilitators to lead the intergovernmental process on the Global Digital Compact (GDC) and conduct the consultations with Member States and Stakeholders on the proposal and the development of the GDC.
- UNESCO embraces the initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General to propose a Global Digital Compact and recognizes the need for coherent and coordinated UN effort and process leading to the 'Summit of the Future' outcomes in 2024.
- Along the ROAM principles (a human-Rights based, Open, Accessible, and Multistakeholder shaped digital environment) adopted by UNESCO's Member States, and the Ethics of Al principles included in the UNESCO Recommendation of Ethics of Artificial Intelligence adopted by acclamation by the Member States in 2021, UNESCO appreciates the multistakeholder character of the consultations so far and calls for continued opportunities for multistakeholder engagement throughout the process of development of the Global Digital Compact.
- UNESCO emphasizes the need to foster a human-rights based, open, accessible, and multistakeholder shaped technological environment in the service of humankind through development and dissemination of knowledge, skills and ethical standards
- UNESCO encourages GDC to adopt a gender perspective to ensure equal access
  to information and technologies, and to promote inclusive and diverse participation in
  all mechanisms of the digital ecosystem, as well as integrate the Leave No One
  Behind Agenda with specific measures for marginalized and vulnerable
  populations.
- UNESCO considers that the digital transformation also includes the interaction between artificial intelligence, internet of things, the cloud, neurotechnology and other emerging technologies, and will continue shaping the way we work, learn, and engage with each other, and should also be reflected in the Global Digital Compact.

- In times where digital is mainstreamed in all areas of life and across all fields of UN competence, the respective mandates of and themes covered by UN Organizations must become the key anchor of digital initiatives.
- UNESCO expresses the need to ensure consistency between existing multilateral fora and mechanisms, avoiding duplication and ensuring that efforts complement, build on and reinforce existing frameworks and successful activities, which have proven to be impactful.
- Any new efforts proposed in the GDC should complement the broader UN digital cooperation landscape already established and should include all relevant players from the digital ecosystem.
- UNESCO has established a solid foundation and strong case to continue its role as a thought-leader, standard setter and capacity developer on digital and can play an important advisory role for the GDC, especially in the consultation period before its adoption by UN Member States at The Summit of the Future.

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

# a) Core Principles

- Center the most marginalized. Connectivity and technology must be deployed to help close growing educational divides. Too often, they benefit privileged learners and educators first. We must recalibrate our policies, actions, and investments to centre learners most in need of opportunities. This will help bridge inequalities, spark needed innovation, and make solutions easier to 'scale out' to more privileged groups. Asking how approaches can work for refugees, for students with disabilities, for girls and women, for teachers in remote areas, and for other underprivileged learners and educators needs to be a point of departure.
- ROAM Principle of 'Accessibility to All'. The principle of Accessibility to All has technical, economic and social aspects. It reaches far beyond mere connectivity, for example, to include issues of affordability, content and capability. It is closely related within societies to the distribution of income and resources between women and men, poor and rich, rural and urban communities, language groups and ethnic minorities, and those affected by disability or marginalisation.

# b) Key Commitment/ Pledges/ Actions

Ensure connectivity reaches all individual learners. For connectivity to truly
equalize educational opportunity, it needs to enable anytime, anywhere internet
access for individual students and teachers. Connectivity initiatives should be guided
by an ethic of inclusion and begin with those facing disadvantage. Efforts to assure
connectivity reaches and follows learners and educators should be grounded in a
rationale of educational equality. They must also be accompanied by expanded and

improved digital skills training, so students and teachers can make productive use of connections for education

- Assure clear and affordable connectivity for education. Governments should
  consider mandating that internet and mobile service providers offer basic and easyto-understand 'connectivity for education' plans or credits at fixed or subsidized-rates.
  People who want a basic connectivity option to support education should be able to
  find it. As education becomes increasingly reliant on connectivity, it must progressively
  be folded into state commitments to provide free and inclusive quality public education.
- Create conditions for gender-responsive digital learning environments for girls and women who have missed out on education, including by investing in school infrastructure, the development of free, safe and accessible digital public learning resources, with good-quality, multilingual and context-relevant educational content, and the training of teachers to use gender-responsive blended and hybrid learning methods and deliver digital skills training. Those modules should also take into account reskilling and upskilling content, in order to equip women and girls with skills relevant to the emersion in society that is highly shaped by emerging technologies, based on the guidelines set out in the Policy Paper I'd blush if I could, published by UNESCO and partners in 2019.
- Support digital open schooling models that integrate connectivity for schools, digital content covering all subject areas and appropriate grade levels, and digital competencies needed for online coaching and online social caring based on Guidelines for ICT in Education Policies and Masterplans, published by UNESCO in 2022.
- **Support cultural institutions** in the digitization of cultural content, including through the Al Ethics Recommendation. inventorying of museum collections, documentation and transmission in the digital environment.

# 2. Avoid internet fragmentation

# a) Core Principles

- ROAM Principle of Openness. The Internet should be open for all to develop or take advantage of its resources and opportunities in whatever ways seem most appropriate or valuable to them. Openness is concerned alike, therefore, with technical issues, markets, content, transparency and trust in the Internet and Internet-enabled services, including issues such as open-source software and development, open government, open data and open educational resources. Through openness, Internet Universality acknowledges the integrity of the Internet as enabling a common global exchange, rather than being confined to 'walled gardens' based on incompatible technologies.
- ROAM Principle of Human Rights. Internet Universality emphasises the importance
  of harmony between the growth and use of the Internet and human rights. A free
  Internet is one that respects the human rights set out in key international agreements

and enables people to enjoy and exercise them fully. It includes the full range of interrelationships between human rights and the Internet, such as freedoms of expression and association, privacy, cultural participation, gender equality, security and rights concerned with education, employment and welfare.

# b) Key Commitment/ Pledges/ Actions

- Technology developers should base their approach on open standards, interoperability, and an open and distributed architecture consistent with Human Rights, and its governance should promote open standards, informed by individual and collective expertise and decisions that allow for a resilient, stable, decentralized, secure, and interconnected network that is available to all.
- **Governments** should refrain from disproportionate measures, particularly prior censorship and internet shutdowns, under the guise of combatting disinformation or any other reason inconsistent with the ICCPR.
- Judicial Systems should apply international human rights standards in their decisions regarding the internet ecosystem, avoiding a fragmented approach that can have implications to the protection of fundamental freedoms and to the architecture of internet.

#### 3. Protect data

#### a) Core Principles

High-Level Principles for the Transparency of Internet Companies. Principles 19

 26 of this UNESCO developed framework deal specifically with the question of Personal Data Gathering and Use, as well as Data Access.

- In line with the Policy Area on Data Governance in the Recommendation on AI Ethics, governments should leverage the power of open government data in strengthening transparency and innovation through the development of data-driven public services. Governments, private sector, and civil society should support digitization and preservation of documentary archives, transforming them into data that can power digital transformation for public good.
- All stakeholders should respect the privacy of users, including right to anonymity
  online and provide them with tools for managing and controlling their data, including
  the possibility to remove data from online platforms, with a special attention given to
  the protection of data privacy of children.

- Governments should set up frameworks for data interoperability and encourage the creation of data stewards and data commons, to enhance control of users over their data.
- Due to the impact large datasets have on AI systems, companies should adhere to internationally recognized standards related to data governance and in particular training algorithms.
- **Companies** should apply UNESCO's 26 high-level principles for transparency of internet platform companies.

# 4. Apply human rights online

#### a) Core Principles

- ROAM Principle of Human Rights. Internet Universality emphasizes the importance
  of harmony between the growth and use of the Internet and human rights. A free
  Internet is one that respects the human rights set out in key international agreements
  and enables people to enjoy and exercise them fully. It includes the full range of interrelationships between human rights and the Internet, such as freedoms of expression
  and association, privacy, cultural participation, gender equality, security and rights
  concerned with education, employment and welfare.
- In line with the **UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI**, governments should ensure that emerging technologies including AI, respect the rule of law, and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms.

- Governments should create a positive enabling environment for freedom of expression and access to information online, in line with international guarantees of these rights, promoting universal access to the Internet, and taking measures to reinforce the safety of journalists and artists online, including with a specific focus on women journalists and artists.
- Governments should respect the requirements of Article 19(3) of the ICCPR.
- Digital platforms should respect human rights and adhere to international human rights standards in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, applying them consistently and fairly across all regions, languages, and technologies.
- Digital platforms should conduct periodic risk assessments, including gender specific risk assessments, as well as Ethical Impact Assessments to identify and address any actual or potential harm or human rights impact of their operations, based on the provisions of Article 19 of the ICCPR and drawing on the principles set out in

the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI.

- **Governments** should be transparent and accountable about the requirements they place upon digital platforms.
- Digital platforms should be transparent and accountable to independent regulatory systems in how they handle the rights to freedom of expression, access to information, and freedom of association and the safeguards to address and prevent online genderbased violence that are direct threats to the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and girls.
- Education systems, and professional organizations should equip engineers, data scientists, and other members of the technical community, to understand human rights, ethical standards and gender equality perspectives how to apply them to the products and services they develop or maintain.
- Lawmakers should structure processes of legal reform impacting human rights online
  in a multistakeholder participatory way, including with the full engagement of women's
  rights organizations to support reforms that specifically address gender-based
  violence and disinformation online
- **Digital platforms** should enable inclusive access to culture and participation in cultural life and its benefits as an ethical, social and economic imperative;
- Policymakers and digital platforms should cooperate to protect and foster the diversity of cultural contents and languages online, and reinforce intellectual property to uphold the economic and social rights of artists.

## 5. Accountability for discrimination and misleading content

#### a) Core Principles

- High-Level Principles for the Transparency of Internet Companies. Principles 5-9 of this UNESCO developed framework deal specifically with the question of content and process transparency when it comes to efforts by platforms to address content issues.
- The principles underpinning the UNESCO Guidelines for regulating digital platforms will be particularly useful here and should be integrated throughout to ensure effective human-rights based approaches.
- The Windhoek +30 Declaration, adopted at the 2021 World Press Freedom Conference in Namibia and subsequently endorsed by UNESCO Member States at the 42<sup>nd</sup> session of its General Conference, outlines principles to ensure information as a common good in the digital age. It particularly calls for greater transparency of Internet companies, support for the economic viability of independent journalism, and

increased efforts to teach citizens critical thinking through media and information literacy.

- UNESCO and partners should support uptake of guidelines on the development and
  implementation of independent regulatory processes that guarantee freedom of
  expression and access to information while dealing with content that is illegal
  according to international human rights law, and corresponding jurisprudence and
  content that risks significant harm to democracy and the enjoyment of human rights.
- **Regulatory frameworks** targeting digital platforms, including self- co- and governmental regulatory frameworks, must be based on international standards of freedom of expression, access to information and gender equality.
- **Platform models**, editorial policies and advertising systems, as well as human and algorithmic content moderation policies and practices, should be made transparent and eliminate gender bias.
- All relevant stakeholders should advocate for human rights-respecting regulation on content moderation, and to hold government and digital platforms accountable.
- Regulatory bodies should focus regulation mainly on the systems and processes
  used by platforms, rather than on single pieces of content. Any specific decisions
  about the legality of specific pieces of content should follow due process and be open
  to review by a judicial body.
- **Digital platforms** should commit to being transparent about the systems and processes used to moderate and curate content on their platforms and how those systems and processes fulfil the goal of regulation and address the specific threats to the safety of women and girls. (see also principle 4)
- Digital platforms should adhere to international human rights standards in the way
  they operate and to be able to demonstrate how they are implementing these
  standards and other policies contained in their terms of service, including gender
  disaggregation in their reporting of content moderation statistics, and the guidelines
  set out in the Policy Area on Communication and Information in the Recommendation
  on the Ethics of AI.
- **Digital platforms** should have content moderation and curation policies and practices consistent with international human rights standards.
- Digital platforms should offer Media and Information Literacy resources and training, empowering users to interact critically and safely with digital content and technologies to raise awareness of the impact of online harassment (including towards women and girls), to produce guidance on navigating online spaces safely and to build a culture of solidarity against online disinformation and violence.

- Digital platforms should have effective user complaints mechanism to allow users and non-users meaningful opportunities to raise their concerns, especially women and girls who are experiencing harassment and threats online, including the right to redress against decisions taken.
- Relevant stakeholders commit to taking concretes actions for the prevention, protection and prosecution of online violence against journalists, artists, scientists, human rights and gender equality activists.

## 6. Regulation of artificial intelligence

## a) Core Principles

 The Ethics of Al principles encompassed in the Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, the first global standard-setting instrument that was adopted in November 2021, by the 193 Member States, namely Proportionality and Do No Harm, Safety and security, Fairness and non-discrimination, Sustainability, Right to Privacy and Data Protection, Human oversight and determination, Transparency and explainability, Responsibility and accountability, Awareness and literacy, Multistakeholder and adaptive governance and collaboration.

- Governments should apply AI regulation in a manner consistent with international human rights standards, including the UNESCO Recommendation on AI Ethics, and Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and under the public scrutiny of civil society organizations, journalists, artists, scientist, researchers, and other relevant institutions in a system of checks and balances.
- Al regulation should take into account the complex nature of Al systems, and the fact that they span many domains and policy areas.
- The principles of transparency and accountability should be core to any AI regulation, taking into account the responsibility of **governments** to the risks that AI systems that they might be adopting could include, and the responsibility of the **companies** developing AI systems, throughout the supply chain and the different stages in the AI life cycle.
- **Accountability measures** should include redressal measures, establishing AI ethics officers, and the possibility to report harm caused by AI systems.
- **Governments** should assess and measure the impact of AI and other emerging technologies on the environment, and set policy guidelines to balance any risks.
- The Al regulatory framework should include a strong component of data governance.

- Regulatory processes should be led through an open, transparent, multistakeholder, and evidence-based manner, including the collection of gender disaggregated statistics.
- Regulatory systems must have sufficient and independent funding to carry out their responsibilities effectively including dedicated funds from their public budgets to finance gender-responsive schemes and ensure that national digital policies include a gender action plan.
- **Regulatory systems** should include monitoring mechanisms such as Ethical Impact Assessment and Readiness Assessment.
- Regulations dealing with informational issues with respect to AI and the use of algorithms and automated mechanisms for content moderation and curation should also be informed by UNESCO's Guidelines for regulating digital platforms: a multistakeholder approach to safeguarding freedom of expression and access to information, especially as it concerns measures to eliminate gendered disinformation and online gender based violence. (These guidelines are currently under development and due to be published later in 2023)
- Governments and relevant stakeholders should take accountability to develop value orientation, understanding, and skills needed for ethical use of AI for all citizens based on AI and Education: Guidance for Policy-makers, published by UNESCO in 2021.

# 7. Digital commons as a global public good

## a) Core Principles

- **Our actions** should be guided by commitments to human rights, inclusion, equity, environmental sustainability, and social justice
- Education should remain a human right and public good in digital as well as in physical spaces, as explained in Reimagining Our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education, published by UNESCO in 2019.
- The Windhoek +30 Declaration, adopted at the 2021 World Press Freedom Conference in Namibia and subsequently endorsed by UNESCO Member States at the 42<sup>nd</sup> session of its General Conference, outlines principles to ensure information as a common good in the digital age. It particularly calls for greater transparency of Internet companies, support for the economic viability of independent journalism, and increased efforts to teach citizens critical thinking through media and information literacy.
- ROAM Principle of Multistakeholder Participation. Multistakeholder participation in the development and governance of the Internet has drawn together governments, intergovernmental and international organisations, the private sector, civil society and

the Internet technical and professional community and academia. The goal of multistakeholder participation is to improve the inclusiveness and quality of decision-making by including all those who have an interest in the Internet and its impact on wider social, economic and cultural development in open and transparent decision-making processes.

- The scientific community should make multilingual scientific knowledge openly available, accessible and reusable for everyone; increase scientific collaborations; and sharing of information and knowledge for the benefits of science and society.
- Promote and engage in international and multi-stakeholder cooperation in the context of open science and access for information to all, with a view to reducing digital, technological knowledge gaps and gender digital gaps, in line with UNESCO's Recommendation on Open Science
- Establish and iteratively improve public digital learning platforms with high
  quality, curriculum-aligned education resources, ensuring they are free, open and
  accessible for all, in the framework of the initiative of Gateway to Public Digital
  Learning launched at the Transforming Education Summit and in line with UNESCO's
  Recommendation on Open Educational Resources, while also protecting the privacy,
  safety and data security of users.
- Aim for achieving universal digital literacy for education being mindful of the systemic and long-term transformation of the labour market due to digitalization. The a system-wide approach to integrate values, knowledge, understanding, and skills on digital technologies into the school curricula, qualifications of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and higher education, taking into consideration the ethical aspects and interrelated humanistic disciplines. Be cognizant of the emergence of a set of Al literacy skills required for effective human—machine collaboration. Take institutional actions to enhance digital literacy across all layers of society. Give a special focus on women and girls, cultural and linguistic minority groups, and older people.
- Governments and the cultural community should implement the principles of the MONDIACULT 2022 Declaration on culture as a global public good, with a view to harness and contribute to the design and implementation of suitable digital technologies across the cultural value chain to promote a diverse supply of and plural access to cultural expressions online, bearing in mind the importance of preserving cultural heritage, diversity, artistic freedom and gender equality.
- Governments should implement the principles of the Windhoek+30 Declaration on Information as a Public Good, built on the three pillars of media viability, transparency of internet platform companies, media and information literacy and gender equality.

# 8. Other areas: Build capacities for fair and equitable participation in digital transformation

## a) Core Principles

- Inclusive, equitable and quality education and lifelong learning for all: Steer human-centred digital learning to advance our national and international aspirations for education and lifelong learning.
- ROAM Principle of 'Accessibility to All'. The principle of Accessibility to All has
  technical, economic and social aspects. It reaches far beyond mere connectivity, for
  example, to include issues of affordability, content and capability. It is closely related
  within societies to the distribution of income and resources between women and men,
  poor and rich, rural and urban communities, language groups and ethnic minorities,
  and those affected by disability or marginalisation.

## b) Key Commitment/ Pledges/ Actions

- Use three keys to unlock the power of digital teaching and learning, making it more universally accessible and a more reliable pillar of holistic educational experiences:
- Content. High quality, curriculum-relevant digital teaching and learning content must be made available to all students learners, teachers and caregivers through digital learning platforms
- Capacity. Capacity to use digital technology to improve learning must be strengthened to ensure teachers, learners and other education stakeholders have the skills and knowledge needed to leverage digital tools for learning using evidencebased approaches.
- Connectivity. Digital connectivity helps ensure that all schools and individuals can benefit from the educational advantages that come with good quality internet connections.
- States, civil society, private sector, and international organisations, commit to
  making the necessary investments and taking the required actions to identify and
  cooperate to close gender gaps related to the capacities of all groups to enjoy fair
  equal and safe participation in all aspects of digital knowledge societies from
  technology development and deployment, to the generation and exchange of
  information and knowledge
- Relevant stakeholders build capacities to leverage digital technologies for cultural employment, as to enhance the safeguarding, promotion, digitization, and inventorying of cultural heritage.

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