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Submission of Inputs for the Global Digital Compact[1]

Shaping the GDC process
Consensus Document from the Perspective of the Arab IGF Community of Experts[2]

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I. Inputs to the Global Digital Compact

> a) *Core principles that all governments, companies civil society organisations and other stakeholders should adhere to.*
> b) *Key commitments, pledges. or actions that in your view should be taken by different stakeholders - governments, private sector. civil society, etc - in order to realize the above-mentioned principles.*

Please select the areas on which you would like to submit inputs

☑ 1. Connect all people to the internet, including all schools
☑ 2. Avoid internet fragmentation
☑ 3. Protect data
☑ 4. Apply human rights online
☑ 5. Accountability for discrimination and misleading content
☑ 6. Regulation of artificial intelligence
☑ 7. Digital commons as a global public good
☑ 8. Other areas

1. **Connect all people to the internet, including all Schools:**
   <u>Core principles:</u>
   - Benefit from the convergence of knowledge and technology with focus on the role of technology to disseminate knowledge in order to achieve meaningful access to the internet to all people.
   - Connecting the unconnected is a global responsibility that requires commitment from and collaboration among all stakeholders in order make sure that access to the Internet is considered a universal right.

   <u>Commitments:</u>
   The need for all stakeholders, each in their respective role, to commit to:
   - Promoting digital literacy among all members of society to take advantage of opportunities made available by the Internet.
   - Modernization of traditional educational curricula and benefiting from the advantages of the knowledge and technology.
   - Not relying on access to the Internet as a primary source of profit, instead considering it a public service and a universal right available at the lowest cost for all citizens, while promoting public-private partnership for ensuring affordable access to all society groups.

- Urging policy makers to increase their commitment towards better integration and removing of all digital infrastructure barriers (broadband availability and affordability), online safety and structural and cultural inequalities, to promote the access for all groups (in specific, women, children, youth and elderly) to benefit from the opportunities of the Internet.
- Public funding for the development of digital infrastructure in developing countries is essential and needs to be supported by revenue streams from digital services. Commitments from Tech giants and global platforms towards social corporate responsibility for underserved regions as well as taxation obligations is essential to achieve global connectivity and meaningful access to the Internet.
- Urge all stakeholders to consider all new technologies and alternative solutions, to ensure meaningful access to the internet is secured especially in rural and underserved areas/regions
- Ensure the fair, equal and reliable use of the Internet in education and to all students , especially in the global south.
- Supporting investment in digital infrastructure, and developing digital services to meet local demand, in order to secure meaningful access.
- Strengthening partnerships among national, regional and international organizations for raising awareness and capacity development, in order to ensure the development, trust and resilience of the Internet.

2. Avoid Internet fragmentation:

<u>Core principles:</u>
- A common one Internet is crucial to the global economic growth and social development, therefore its open and inclusive nature should continue to be preserved as a global interoperable public utility.
- A common one Internet is an important pillar to the digital economy eco-system.
- Policy frameworks and regulatory measures should promote a common one Internet and should work to avoid any possibilities of fragmentation. The development and adoption of such measures and frameworks should be conducted in a multi stakeholder approach.
- While maintaining a common one unfragmented Internet, the sovereignty of countries online should be respected. Sovereign states have the right to devise rules for the use of cyberspace by citizens as per their national legislations and values, especially in regards to content moderation, data protection, privacy, fair competition, national security and taxation. Such laws and legislations should not lead to fragmentation of the common one Internet and in that respect the effect of cross border jurisdiction on Internet fragmentation should be addressed in a global setup.
- Internet governance should continue to be addressed in a global multi-stakeholder setup backed up by the UN system.

<u>Commitments:</u>
- Challenges to Internet fragmentation should be addressed at all levels: global, regional and national.
- Devising policies or algorithms by platforms or operators that might lead to fragmentation in user experience, especially to address a specific economic

setup, should be avoided and in that respect user autonomy needs to be ensured by open and global transparent standards, avoiding fragmentation that may occur by gate keepers.
- Public authorities should collaborate with the private sector to address challenges of Internet connectivity power outages which result in Internet fragmentation in the global South. Renewable Energy resources should be adopted as a solution to support Internet availability and connectivity.
- Internet shut downs are another form of internet fragmentation. Adopting policies and measures to avoid internet shut downs is a must at global, regional and national levels.
- Decision makers and the ICT sector should work together to produce a future vision and a plan to ensure the non-fragmentation of the Internet.
- National and regional Internet Exchange points (IXPs) should be established, promoted and kept open.

3. **Protect data:**
Core principles:
- Privacy regulation should include a precise clear definition of "consent" for personal data collection and processing. This consent should be free, transparent, well disclosed and limited to the time data is collected.
- Accountability of online service providers (including data collectors/handlers) to safeguard and protect the privacy and personal data of individuals.
- The right of individuals to be aware of what type of personal data is collected about them and to be able to dispute the use of their personal data.
- Sovereign countries have the right to devise laws to defend their citizens' data privacy.

Commitments:
- Outline clearly the cases in which personal data may be disclosed including the purpose and period of disclosure.
- Strengthening regional cybersecurity strategies, that should take into consideration economic and social aspects.
- Measures to protect personal data and individuals' privacy should be adhered to on all levels of online connectivity starting from the infrastructure to the devices and apps.
- Governments, private sector, civil society and international organizations should introduce adequate measures to safeguard and protect personal data for all their activities that involve such action and be accountable for it.
- Establish national commitments and measures to protect citizens' data.

4. **Apply human rights online:**
Core principles:
- What applies offline applies online.
- Protection of all individuals from cyberbullying (especially women and children).
- Access to the internet is a fundamental human right.

Commitments:
- Digital platforms should be inclusive and equal to all its users in accessing their content and services.
- Equality in connectivity and access to the internet where individuals can have similar bandwidths and cost, enabling them to access services and conduct online activities in a fair manner.
- Ensure that people with disabilities enjoy a fair access experience to the internet
- Establish a mechanism available to individuals to report possible violation of their human rights online. Such mechanism should be clear in process, transparent and accountable.
- Ensure that measures are implemented to balance between personal data protection and economic data-dependent growth.
- Ensure that measures are implemented to balance between the privacy of individuals and cybersecurity priorities.
- Ensure connectivity and access covers all geographical areas (including rural areas).

5. **Accountability for discrimination and misleading content:**
   Core principles:
   - Establish the necessary consensus in combating disinformation, misinformation and hate speech that may impact negatively political speech, create economic harm, lead to social disorder, trigger violence or risk public health.

   Commitments:
   - Adopt a fair mechanism by all stakeholders to combat disinformation and misinformation, making those responsible and accountable for their actions.
   - Promoting awareness to combat disinformation and misinformation.
   - Coordinate and cooperate with relevant digital platforms to combat disinformation and misinformation.
   - Initiate necessary measures and establish well defined processes to counter and remove any content that proves to be in any form a case of disinformation and misinformation.

6. **Regulation of Artificial Intelligence:**
   Core principles:
   - Developing an AI code of Ethics and conduct, and international standards.

   Commitments:
   - Commit for Algorithms non-bias and transparency (including data non-bias).
   - Promote policy dialogue on national, regional and international levels to develop a better understating of AI related technologies and best practices.
   - National Regulation on how the public would interact with AI related technologies especially Machine and Deep Learning activities including measures and boundaries of control.
   - Build national AI capabilities for the benefit of all stakeholders and society.
   - Build national AI expertise to address AI related regulation and issues.

7. **Digital Common as a global public good:**

Core principles:
- Recognise that access to knowledge in local languages as a public good is a fundamental right for people and society.

Commitments:
- Promote common digital platforms aimed at providing knowledge as a public good.
- Continue efforts to promote digital literacy and knowledge through Digital Inclusion Platforms.
- Support the role of policymakers and all stakeholders to develop & improve national policies and guidelines in order to promote digital literacy/knowledge toward: (a) inclusively empower all members of society and; (b) supporting access for people with disabilities to ICT and public services.
- Emphasize the importance of digital content, skills and education as key factors to enhance access and inclusion in the digital economy.
- Initiate projects, locate resources, and establish teams to develop public good digital content and build digital platforms to host it.
- Promote research, development, innovation, entrepreneurship and capital investments in ICTs and their applications, supporting education, training and capacity-building for all segments of society.
- All stakeholders should cooperate to develop and implement laws and policies that encourage everyone to access and produce content in line with ever-evolving technology, with particular focus on protecting intellectual property, freedom of expression, and securing transactions, communication, and equal access for all people and organizations.
- Ensure digital trust in support of e-economy and e-business growth.

8. **Other areas:**

   a. **AI & Data Analytics**

   Core Principles
   - Leverage AI for Socio-economic development.

   Commitments:
   - Support regional efforts in adopting/implementing regional strategies to build capacity, expertise, and knowledge in artificial intelligence.
   - Explore innovative sources of data for ICT statistics, leveraging science and technology, and using artificial intelligence and big data in evidence-based decision-making related to economic and social development.

b. Digital Economy

<u>Core Principles</u>
- Digital Economy: All segments of society benefit from digital services.

<u>Commitments:</u>
- Develop and implement national policies and strategies to promote digital development and digital cooperation, e-government and open government policies, digital accessibility, e-learning, new technologies and the adoption of technology and innovation in various social and economic sectors.
- Leverage on digital transformation as an enabler to achieve strategic development goals.

c. Digital-Related and Open Science based research and education

<u>Core Principles</u>
- Digital-Related and Open Science based research and education: Open Transparent and participatory Science Technology and Innovation ecosystem.

<u>Commitments:</u>
Governments, universities and National Research and Education Networks (NRENs) commit to the following at the regional level and support it at the national level:
- Develop National and Regional Roadmaps on data regulations and adopting Open Science to facilitate and enable access to scientific, educational and research data to the entire community including researchers, academics, students and citizens, in addition to private sector.
- Establish national and regional cloud based infrastructure and knowledge hubs with access mechanisms, tools and delivery platforms to provide Science based data to the community.
- Create and further support and engage with Science Communities towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), climate actions, biodiversity, healthcare…

Annex

Responses submitted through the survey/website prepared by the UN Secretary General Tech-Envoy Office

I. Facilitating Organisation

The consensus document was developed through the facilitation of the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States (LAS) and the Executive Secretariat of the United Nations-Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA), on behalf of the Arab Internet Governance Forum (Arab IGF) Community of Experts.

Type of entity/organization

International, regional or multilateral organization

Geographic Scope of Activity
   o Global
   • Regional
   o Country

II. Process of consultation/preparation

Following is the **process** followed at **the regional level** to collect, consult, and prepare the submission:

The Arab Internet Governance Forum (Arab IGF) is one of the regional IGF initiatives. It was established in 2012 under the umbrella of the League of Arab States and the UN ESCWA, as a result of multi-stakeholder endorsement during the "Conference and Public Consultations to Establish the Arab Internet Governance Forum" from 31 January to 1 February 2012, in Beirut Lebanon. The Arab IGF provides a platform for discussing issues and policies related to Internet governance in the Arab region.

Arab IGF aimed to gather input from a wide range of stakeholders (governments, private, technical community, academic and civil society) on the future of Internet Governance and digital cooperation.

Part of NRIs, the Arab IGF was an ideal venue for conducting a consultation process for the Global Digital Compact (GDC). By engaging with stakeholders in their local context, regional IGFs including the Arab IGF provide a more inclusive and culturally sensitive approach to consultation and ensure that diverse perspectives are considered. This, in turn, enables the development of tailored and context-specific recommendations that are more likely to be relevant and impactful.

The consultation process included the following online meetings and workshops, and the feedback was analysed and consolidated into a collective submission:

ESCWA kicked-off the consultations on the Global Digital Compact (GDC) process during the "UNGIS Chair & Vice Chairs High-Level Meeting", held online within the framework of the Arab International Digital Cooperation and Development Forum (DCDF 2021) on 13 December 2021, with the aim to strengthen the regional emphasis of "Digital Cooperation", and to concretize the local and regional implementation of "Digital Development" as inscribed by the UN Secretary-General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation and the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) Action Lines, as means to achieve the SDGs.

*ESCWA held a "Special Session with the Office of the United Nations Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology in New York" on Wednesday 26 October 2022, as part of the "[Consultative Conference and Expert Meetings on the Arab Digital Agenda and the Arab International Digital Cooperation and Development Forum](#)", **Hybrid in Dubai, UAE**, 25-27 October 2022. The session aimed at getting updates from the UNHQ on the Global Digital Compact and the Summit of the Future in 2024, as well as on the World Summit on the Information Society (2025 and beyond), and the Global Internet Governance Forum, paving the way for the Arab region preparations and contribution to these processes.*

***The first round of Arab consultations between ESCWA and the League of Arab States on the Global Digital Compact** took place during the 50ᵗʰ meeting of the League of Arab States' permanent Committee on ICTs, hybrid, Cairo, 23-24 November 2022, during which ESCWA briefed the participants on the timeline and the way forward for the Joint LAS-ESCWA Arab preparations on GDC.*

***An informal meeting** held online on 7 February 2023 with the Arab Internet governance Forum (Arab-IGF) Community, preceded **two subsequent formal meetings** held on 4 and 5 April 2023 on the subject, to collect, consult, develop and finalize the Arab region input on the GDC in a multi-stakeholder fashion, co-facilitated by the co-chairs of the Arab-IGF Small taskforce, composed of government, private, technical community, academic and civil society representatives, under the leadership/umbrella of the League of Arab States and ESCWA, in preparation of the Arab region input on the Global Digital Compact (GDC) and the Summit of the Future (SoF) (in accordance with the online survey intended to reach the Secretary-General's Envoy Office).*

It was agreed during the 14ᵗʰ meeting of the League of Arab States' Arab Working Group on Internet, held online on 11 April 2023 to circulate the draft paper to the attention of the ICT ministries/TRAs in the Arab States for studying and for helping the countries to develop a common understanding and unified positions among Arab states with regards to GDC.