

German IGF-D position on the Global Digital Compact negotiations (Rev. 3)

22 August 2024

The German IGF (IGF-D) welcomes that the global, open, interoperable, resilient, free and secure Internet is reaffirmed in the GDC (Revision 3) as well as the recognition that this Internet relies on multistakeholder governance following the Tunis Agenda.

However, the IGF-D would like to see more precise tasks for the IGF, specifically involvement in the Follow-up and the establishment of new bodies. We would appreciate the consideration of the São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines of the NETmundial+10 Declaration. Therefore, we would like to emphasize two crucial points:

1. Risk of fragmentation and duplication through new institutions

We recognize that, as stated in paragraph 52, international governance of emerging digital technologies requires a multidisciplinary and adaptable multi-stakeholder approach. We consider the IGF a suitable platform for this endeavor.

Instead, numerous new processes and institutions for the follow-up of the GDC are proposed in paragraphs 72, 73, 75, and 76 raising concern about parallel structures as stressed by the IGF Leadership Panel and the IGF Multistakeholder Advisory Group in their letter to the co-facilitators of the GDC.

Concerning these proposals, we emphasize that existing governance structures can and should be enhanced through the GDC. We echo the words of the IGF Leadership Panel Chair and MAG Chair “we are concerned by the possibility of establishing a parallel track of UN digital processes that are not linked to the WSIS processes. The language in Rev. 3 paragraphs 72, 73, 75, and 76 raises concern about such a parallel track, operating independent of WSIS efforts, at a time when the importance of a coordinated and holistic approach to digital issues has been highlighted and reinforced by Member States and other stakeholders.”

We stand ready to participate in the regional implementation of the Compact provided for in para. 65. Regarding any plans for the implementation, the nature of the internet and digital processes must be recognized and the efforts of the multistakeholder community, which of course also includes governments, must be mentioned. We would have hoped that instead of that the implementation of the GDC shall “build upon the processes emanating from the WSIS” (para. 67); rather, these must be harmonized. The GDC should not prejudge the WSIS+20 Review and rather consider the discussions taking place at the WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event in May 2024.

We emphasize the importance of including the opinions of young people, this should also be done when implementing the GDC in line with the principle: Nothing about us, without us.

We are concerned about the proposed International Scientific Panel on AI in para. 55a and an additional Global Dialogue on AI Governance in para 55b, particularly given the precarious financial situation of the United Nations. Instead, the United Nations Group on the Information Society (UNGIS) should be strengthened as it already guarantees UN system-wide coordination on digital topics. The Annual Global Dialogue on AI Governance, as well as a High-Level Review of the GDC, can and should be embedded in the existing IGF to avoid fragmentation of the discussions.

Any Declaration on the progress of implementation can and should also be prepared within the framework of the IGF with the participation of the multistakeholder community. However, asking the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) to include a review of its working processes is a step in the right direction.

2. Future of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) – Opportunity and risk at the same time

We underline the [Open Letter](#) of the Technical Community's perception that “some proposals for the Global Digital Compact can be read to mandate more centralized governance.”

The future of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) is currently at risk. The WSIS+20 Review and the GDC present both opportunities for a substantial further development of the IGF but also risks of fragmentation of the discussions and an increasing influence of states that are not interested in broad, inclusive multistakeholder governance.

Although the role of the IGF is recognized in para. 27 of the GDC and support for it is reaffirmed, this is indirectly undermined in the remaining chapters, especially in the Follow-up & Review section. A coherent and continuous anchoring of the IGF is needed here, particularly in the follow-up and review section of the GDC. The recently concluded NETmundial(+10) conference made clear that the IGF needs better funding and should remain the central forum for the coordination of Internet governance. The GDC should lay a good basis for financing the IGF from all sides, government as well as other donors, instead of creating new duplicative structures. Improved financing can enhance the inclusivity of the IGF and provide for a democratic and bottom-up follow-up and review of the GDC.

The GDC offers the opportunity to provide the impetus for further development of the IGF and to upgrade it not only financially, but also by assigning further competencies to the IGF. This can be done by laying the follow-up and review in the hands of the multistakeholder community and therefore empower the IGF to act to further develop itself and enable it to effectively provide a follow-up and review of the GDC. Furthermore, we consider the IGF's annual meeting ideal for including the Global Dialogue on AI Governance in para. 55b. The IGF has proven itself for many years to be an excellent forum for discussions on governance in and around evolving technologies. It has global structures, mechanisms, and a community in place to welcome input from a proposed International Scientific Panel on AI as well as any stakeholder groups. The IGF's high convening power could be used to craft declarations and thus further increase the IGF's contribution to substantial Internet governance. The GDC needs to provide the necessary framework to do so but should not preempt the WSIS+20 review process in which the IGF's mandate should ultimately be renewed and improved.

We reject any attempts to weaken the IGF as this severely undermines the multistakeholder governance model that has benefitted the world so far. In alliance with the signatories of the Open Letter, we ask that member states, the Secretary-General and the Tech Envoy seek to



ensure that proposals for digital governance remain consistent with the enormously successful multistakeholder Internet governance practice that has brought us the Internet of today.

The Internet Governance Forum Germany (IGF-D)

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Annex

For documentation purposes: Statement as delivered by Paulo Glowacki

Excellencies, colleagues, I present this statement on behalf of the German IGF (IGF-D).

IGF-D welcomes that the global, open, interoperable, resilient, free and secure Internet is reaffirmed in the GDC as well as the recognition that this Internet relies on multistakeholder governance following the Tunis Agenda.

However, the IGF-D would like to see more precise tasks for the IGF, specifically involvement in the GDC Follow-up. We would appreciate the consideration of the São Paulo Multistakeholder Guidelines. Therefore, we would like to emphasize the following:

1. Risk of fragmentation and duplication through new institutions

We recognize that international governance of emerging digital technologies requires a multidisciplinary and adaptable multi-stakeholder approach. We consider the IGF a suitable platform for this endeavor.

We emphasize that existing governance structures can and should be enhanced through the GDC. We echo the words of the IGF Leadership Panel Chair and MAG Chair that “the language in Revision 3 raises concern about a parallel track of UN digital processes being established, operating independent of WSIS efforts”

We stand ready to participate in the regional implementation of the Compact. The nature of the internet and digital processes must be recognized in any plans for the implementation and the efforts of the multistakeholder community, which of course also includes governments, must be mentioned. Furthermore, the implementation of the GDC shall “build upon the processes emanating from the WSIS”. The GDC should not prejudge the WSIS+20 Review and rather consider the discussions at the WSIS+20 Forum High-Level Event earlier this year.

We emphasize the importance of including the opinions of young people, in line with the principle: Nothing about us, without us.

We are concerned about the proposed International Scientific Panel on AI and an additional Global Dialogue on AI Governance, particularly given the precarious financial situation of the United Nations. Instead, UNGIS should be strengthened as it already guarantees UN system-wide coordination on digital topics. The Annual Global Dialogue on AI Governance, as well as a High-Level Review of the GDC, can and should be embedded in the IGF to avoid fragmentation of the discussions.

Any Declaration on the progress of implementation can and should be prepared within the framework of the IGF with the participation of the multistakeholder community. Asking the CSTD to include a review of its working processes is a step in the right direction.