



UN Civil Society Conference 2024

Interactive Dialogue on the Pact for the Future, Declaration on Future Generations, Global Digital Compact, and cross-cutting issues

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Excellencies, thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this Interactive Dialogue.

My name is Anna Oosterlinck and I speak on behalf of ARTICLE 19, a local to global human rights organisation, focusing on freedom of expression and related rights.

ARTICLE 19 has a number of proposals for the Global Digital Compact (GDC).

- **All binding human rights commitments** including international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international refugee law must be genuinely mainstreamed throughout the whole GDC. Given that human rights are indivisible and interdependent, all political, civil, economic, social, and cultural rights must be included as these rights are the precondition to achieving the SDGs, closing digital divides, and harnessing digital benefits for humankind. The same rights that apply offline equally apply online.
- Gender equality needs to be at its core. In addition, the GDC must adopt an **intersectional approach** including LGBTQ+ and all marginalised communities, often facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.
- The GDC needs to apply an **accountable, transparent, and human rights-based approach to the whole lifecycle** of *all* digital technologies, from conceptualisation

to sale and export. States should commit to refrain using digital technologies that cannot be operated in compliance with international human rights.

- The GDC must emphasize **key enabling rights** for the digital sphere, such as right to freedom of expression and information, freedom of association and assembly, rights to privacy and data protection, rights to equality and non-discrimination.
- We need **multi-stakeholder governance or approach** rather than cooperation, as currently mentioned in the zero draft of the GDC.
- It must commit to a **free, open, global, safe, accessible, and interoperable internet**. And any connectivity plan must centre people and communities and comply with international human rights.
- Strong protections of end-to-end **encryption** to support key enabling rights in the digital sphere.
- States must refrain from mass **surveillance** in public spaces which is inherently disproportionate. Targeted surveillance must only be used in compliance with international human rights including the principles of legality, legitimacy, necessity, and proportionality, and with effective remedies in place.
- The GDC needs to approach **information integrity** in line with freedom of expression, including existing standards on addressing hate speech. Dis/misinformation, and hate speech need to be addressed through holistic and positive measures grounded in international human rights norms, including through investing in digital, media and information literacy; enabling a free and independent media environment; and investing in digital infrastructure.
- States must commit to refraining from **internet shutdowns**. They should ensure that any internet restrictions comply with international law and commit to net neutrality.
- Although governments have the primary responsibility to protect human rights, the GDC must guide **private sector actors** on how to effectively implement their responsibilities as per the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Companies must exercise human rights due diligence throughout the lifecycle of *all* digital technologies from conceptualisation to deployment, to sale and export.
- We must strengthen and leverage **existing UN implementation mechanisms**, including bolster the capacity of OHCHR and the IGF and support the WSIS process, avoiding duplication with existing processes at the UN and beyond touching on digital governance.
- Finally, we cannot approach digital governance in isolation, as has been primarily the case in this Summit of the Future process. Digital issues matter to our full life experience from education to health, climate change and addressing poverty and inequalities, and far beyond.

Thank you for your kind attention.