

3 February 2023



ORAL STATEMENT

UN Global Digital Compact
Informal Consultations with Member States and Stakeholders
UN Headquarters, New York

Delivered by: *Laura O'Brien, Senior UN Advocacy Officer*

Excellencies, colleagues, thank you for this opportunity to contribute to the Global Digital Compact process. I am the Senior UN Advocacy Officer at Access Now, a grassroots to global organization dedicated to defending and extending the digital rights of people and communities at risk. We warmly welcome the Governments of Sweden and Rwanda as co-facilitators of this process and look forward to continued engagement.

Guided by the principles of the UN Charter, the Declaration on the Commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the UN rightfully commits to improving digital cooperation worldwide. Through this formal commitment, the UN finally paid heed to the transformative impact digital technologies have on our daily lives, paving a path to steer us through the promises and perils of the digital age. We cannot achieve the vision of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, much less the 2023 Agenda, without universal access to an open, free, interoperable and secure internet.

At the first WSIS convening 20 years ago, States moved with a diverse set of actors to agree that all people should together build and enjoy the Information Society. The Global Digital Compact should embody a sustained commitment to a vision of digital transformation centered on human rights. It must ensure that all voices are heard through robust participation worldwide. As the co-champions of the Digital Human Rights Roundtable, and active participants in the annual Internet Governance Forum, we see the UN's power to forge consensus on the most difficult digital issues.

At the outset, we look forward to an open, inclusive, and gender-responsive process that reaches agreement in a few areas, including:

- "Do no harm" as a first principle of technological development and governance;
- The key role of human rights due diligence in digital development; and
- A stronger sense of corporate transparency and accountability across borders.

Finally, we seek attention to the risks and opportunities for emerging technologies to help us navigate the climate crisis in order to achieve environmental justice. This will be a main theme at our upcoming RightsCon Summit, from June 5-8. An event we consider a waypoint on the path toward the Summit of the Future.

Thank you.

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FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS

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***Delivered by:** Peter Micek, General Counsel*

Excellencies, co-chairs: As you have heard today, civil society greatly appreciates this opportunity to contribute to the Global Digital Compact process. However, we generally enjoy limited capacity and scant resources. We are trying to plan our contributions to various processes on digital, cyber, development, and human rights. We would appreciate clarity, as soon as possible, from the co-chairs on the following:

1. The timing of the development of key texts, including a Zero Draft and other following drafts;
2. What the thematic deep dives are on and guiding questions/other ways to ensure relevant input, including whether there will be reports from these consultations?
3. The coordination with existing events that summon robust civil society input, including the national, regional, and global IGFs, RightsCon, WSIS Forum, and related gatherings;
4. Language and accessibility accommodations for participation;
5. Efforts to ensure equitability and gender-responsiveness;
6. Alignment with existing processes, including the development of the UN Data Strategy, UN human rights due diligence guidance on new technologies, cyber processes, and the ongoing work of the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and other forums;
7. Key meeting points, including the 2023 General Assembly, and modalities for stakeholder participation there, including for the private sector, academia, other UN agencies, and civil society.

Thank you.



Access Now (<https://www.accessnow.org>) defends and extends the digital rights of people and communities at risk. As a grassroots-to-global organization, we partner with local actors to bring a human rights agenda to the use, development, and governance of digital technologies, and to intervene where technologies adversely impact our human rights. By combining direct technical support, strategic advocacy, grassroots grantmaking, and convenings such as RightsCon, we fight for human rights in the digital age.

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