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**ORAL STATEMENT**

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Informal Meeting of the UN General Assembly Third Committee  
UN Headquarters, New York

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Thank you, Chair, for this opportunity to reflect and review the Third Committee amidst fellow civil society, government, and other UN stakeholders. I speak for Access Now, an ECOSOC-accredited organization focused on the intersection of human rights and new and emerging technologies.

We convene today in the context of major work at the UN itself, and changes in the broader civil society ecosystem. The Committee convened in the aftermath of major negotiation events, where digital technologies and AI in particular drove debate. These broad, consensus documents in the Pact for the Future, which included the Global Digital Compact and Youth Declaration, can be analysed using the Goldilocks allegory — you know the story about the girl, the bears, and the bowls of porridge. The Pact and GDC were quite broad, covering many issues without much depth. Too cold, perhaps. At the same time, we see the cybercrime treaty — very technical, and focused, but too narrow in its lack of consideration of human rights and basic transparency and accountability measures. This soup was too hot.

What we hope to see is more in the middle — measured documents with ambition but also a fuller perspective on how different stakeholders play essential roles, how their ESC and CCPR rights and interests in sustainable development are affected, and where a rough consensus of states can be responsive to these concerns. For civil society, meanwhile, we are experiencing a winter, or period of deprivation. The swift withdrawal of funding and support from both public and private actors, including the U.S., has shaken the foundations of our ecosystem. The main roots of our tree are cut, the limbs are frozen, and the effects of this malice are creeping through the forest.

To the details of the 3rd Committee: the Cybercrime treaty. First, many civil society and industry groups found unprecedented alignment in finding the final text to inadequately protect human rights as well as cybersecurity. Together we decry the adoption by consensus of the Draft United Nations Convention Against Cybercrime, which will be open for signature in Ha Noi this year. In our view, this convention is a binding instrument that would increase surveillance powers without adequate human rights safeguards, transparency, or accountability measures. The agreed text enables transnational repression through the mutual and multilateral cooperation with states with a weak to quasi-nonexistent rule of law. It requires States to establish broad electronic surveillance powers and cooperate on a wide range of crimes, including those not involving information and communication systems. It will also allow governments to collect electronic evidence and share it with foreign authorities for ‘serious’ domestic crimes. This could include activities protected by international human rights law that some States criminalise, such as same-sex relations, criticism of the government, investigative journalism, protests, and whistleblowing. This must be scrutinized in capitals and massively reformed in protocol negotiations.

To Resolutions: thematic first. On gender, we welcome consensus resolutions on [Trafficking in women and girls](#), [Child, early and forced marriage](#) (CEFM), and eliminating obstetric fistula. And also the resolution on VAWG in the digital environment, a resolution facilitated by France and the Netherlands that was adopted with only one vote against. It retained language on multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, femicide, sexual and gender based violence, and sexual and reproductive health. However, we regret that there is no reference to technology-facilitated gender-based violence, only one reference to women in all their diversity, and that little progress was made to push the agenda forward. We also welcome the [joint statement on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan](#) on behalf of 83 countries. The statement expresses concern for the ongoing institutionalised and systematic discrimination perpetrated against women and girls in Afghanistan, and reminds the Taliban of their obligations under international law. On Privacy, the consensus resolution on privacy in the digital age led by Brazil and Germany speaks to the technology of the day, AI. The text harnesses the momentum seen in other resolutions, calling on governments to refrain from or cease using **artificial intelligence applications** that are impossible to operate in compliance with international human rights law or that pose undue risks to the enjoyment of human rights. We encourage States to ensure that future resolutions call on all States to refrain from using biometric technologies for mass surveillance, to implement comprehensive human rights safeguards for social media monitoring and digital public infrastructure, and to refrain from the targeted use of spyware in order for the resolution to maintain its relevance and applicability in a vastly changing digital landscape.

On Country resolutions, we welcome the adoption of a resolution on the [situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran](#) by a vote. The resolution condemns the alarming increase in the application of the death penalty, including to ethnic and religious minorities, widespread restrictions on rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, of opinion and expression and of thought, conscience, religion or belief, including persecution of persons belonging to recognised and unrecognised religious minorities, the repression of women and girls, including discriminatory compulsory veiling laws and policies. The resolution on the [situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar](#), again adopted by consensus, reiterates the Committee's strong condemnation of all human rights abuses against Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in the country. The resolution includes new language calling on the authorities to **end internet shutdowns** and expressing grave concern about the Myanmar military's abusive conscription of Rohingya Muslims. We welcome the resolutions' request for the UN Special Envoy to brief Member States every six months, but regret it fails to include stronger language calling on Member States to stop transfers of arms and jet fuel to the military junta. We welcome the adoption of the resolution on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic, noting that the situation has swiftly changed since adoption. The resolution highlights ongoing human rights violations and abuses by the Syrian government and non-state actors, as well as the deterioration of the humanitarian situation. It extensively references the ongoing work of the Commission of Inquiry (COI) on Syria, in particular their recent report which found reasonable ground to believe that the Syrian government continued arbitrary detentions, torture and enforced disappearances in 2024. The resolution urges all States to respect the principle of non-refoulement, highlighting the COI's findings that Syria is not safe for refugee returns.

We also hope that this workstream continues and that future resolutions will emphasize the need to support the Syrian people after the collapse of the Assad regime by strengthening the work of the Commission of Inquiry, the IIMM and its documentation role, and any transitional justice mechanisms that will be put in place, and maximizing humanitarian access.

Finally, on civil society access, while we welcome the openness of the cybercrime treaty process to stakeholders, and the action by some States to invite civil society organisations to join informals as observers this session, it was disappointing that only a handful of States extended this invitation. This critical barrier to civil society access to Third Committee negotiations deprive the Committee of civil society's technical expertise and mean that its outcomes fail to leverage the contributions of a crucial stakeholder in promoting the implementation of human rights. We also regret the absence of references to civil society in the resolution on Working Methods of the Third Committee, while supporting that workstream overall. For our part, Access Now convenes the RightsCon 2025 conference on human rights in the digital age, later this month, and kindly invites all present to participate. With robust participation, we'll all keep the bears at bay and the porridge just right.

Thank you, Chair.



**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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