

Global Digital Compact Thematic Deep-Dive – Digital Inclusion and Connectivity (27 March 2023)

ABOUT: The first thematic deep dive or informal consultations on the Global Digital Compact (GDC) was held on 27 March 2023 at the Trusteeship Council Chamber. “[The deep dives](#) aim to share knowledge and views, as well as allow for contributions on a wide range of digital issues”. The Permanent Representative (PR) of Rwanda – H.E. Mr. Claver Gatete and PR of Sweden – H.E. Ms. Anna Karin Eneström are [Co-Facilitators](#) of the intergovernmental process negotiating the GDC.

The meeting started with a presentation from the Secretary-General (SG) of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin followed by briefings from Mr. Gbenga Sesan, Executive Director of [Paradigm Initiative](#), representing civil society and Mr. Karim Lesina, Executive Vice-President of [Millicom](#), representing industry. Member State (MS) interventions followed the presentations after which civil society representatives made their interventions (refer “Stakeholder Remarks” in pages 7).

HEADLINES

Making the necessary efforts and investments to provide universal access to the internet for everyone by 2030, as mentioned by both Singapore and G77.

Common Themes

Upgrading of digital infrastructure was stressed as a critical area in need of attention by various MS to ensure improved connections for all citizens. Another significant issue was online safety, with several MS emphasizing how crucial it is to give their citizens a safer digital environment. An additional crucial aspect was affordability, with several MS emphasizing the significance of ensuring that all citizens, whatever their financial situation, had access to digital services. Digital literacy and skills were also given a lot of attention, with several MS highlighting how crucial it is for citizens to develop their digital literacy. The safety of women and children online was also emphasized with several MS stressing the significance of making the Internet a safer place for these vulnerable populations. Other important areas of focus included funding and investment, with some MS pointing to its significance for achieving digital advancements at the global level. Another significant issue was digital inclusion, with several MS emphasizing how crucial it is to guarantee that all citizens have access to digital services. As various MS discussed the significance of building a safer digital environment for their citizens, privacy and security was a major area of concern. Finally, meaningful connection was emphasized by numerous MS, who stressed the need to ensure that all individuals have access to high-quality digital services.

Highlights

SG of the ITU Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ We cannot let existing digital divides widen when 2.7 billion people remain offline, including about two-thirds of the LDC population
Mr. Gbenga Sesan, Executive Director of Paradigm Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Multi-lingual digital inclusion focused on youth has a multiplier effect and helps to erase long-held literacy-means-understanding-English assumptions. ✦ Programs must be designed WITH those who are living through exclusion, not in comfortable strategy rooms.
Cuba on behalf of G77 and China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ We underline the importance of ensuring synergies and avoiding duplication across various entities and processes related to global digital cooperation. To this end, we would like to highlight other important existing platforms in this regard, including ITU, the Internet Governance Forum, and the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

European Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ The digital transition cannot come at the expense of the green transition. We will promote green data centers and the deployment of submarine telecom cables equipped with ocean monitoring sensors. ✦ The spread of mis- and disinformation are among the challenges. Connecting people to internet should go hand-in-hand with the necessary digital skills
Romania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ We must rally behind a human-centric approach to digital transition based on human rights and democratic principles
Singapore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ We should aim for interoperability at the global level. The GDC can include ideas on how different system can become interoperable, for example the integration of payment systems between India and Singapore.
Lithuania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ When natural disasters and conflicts strike, satellite connectivity will be the only option, thus, we must also look at it
Iran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ We hope the global network will not be used to achieve political goals of countries that dominate the sector and that the GDC will address impediments to universal access. ✦ There is a need to protect women and children from online harm and emphasize the need to respect cultural differences
Colombia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ We welcome participation of all relevant stakeholders from the private sector and academia to people living in vulnerable situations
China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Unilateral Coercive Measures have exacerbated the digital divide between developing and developed countries. The UN must play a leading role in the digital space
Switzerland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ GDC must take into account the UN Internet Governance Forum
Republic of Korea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Must consider digital accessibility to all members of the society, including the elderly and vulnerable by developing accessibility design guidelines
Uruguay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ In Uruguay, the digital divide is not due to income, thanks to government policies, but due to education

RESOURCES

1. [Letter from the Co-Facilitators – 20 March 2023](#)

STATEMENTS

2. [SG of the ITU Ms. Doreen Bogdan-Martin](#)
3. [Cuba on behalf of G77 and China](#)
4. [European Union](#)