

## ICH Special Bulletin on the Global Digital Compact, September 2024

### BACKGROUND:

The intergovernmental negotiation process for the Global Digital Compact (GDC) was co-facilitated by the Permanent Representatives of Sweden and Rwanda to the United Nations. Initially, Sweden and Zambia were the co-facilitators, but Rwanda replaced Zambia in October 2023. The co-facilitators released the [Zero Draft](#) of the GDC on April 1, 2024, followed by the first revision ([Rev.1](#)) on May 15, 2024, and the second revision ([Rev.2](#)) on June 26, 2024. The third revision ([Rev.3](#)) was issued on July 11, 2024, followed by the fourth revision (Rev.4) on September 6, 2024. The latest revision (Rev.5) was released on September 19, 2024. The latest draft was circulated by the PGA on September 20, 2024. Throughout the consultation process, the language has been significantly modified, with both removals and additions. This special bulletin will highlight the key topics addressed in Rev.5 and provide a summary of the evolution of the previously mentioned revisions of the Global Digital Compact.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS - REV.5:

- The Rev. 5 document emphasizes **stronger international cooperation** and addressing the **pace and risks of emerging technologies** with a focus on human oversight.
- Rev.5 introduces the qualifier "in the **non-military domain**" when discussing the application of digital technologies, which narrows the scope by explicitly excluding military considerations from this framework.
- The document specifies multiple measurable actions by 2030, such as Point 11 of Objective 1: universal meaningful connectivity and affordable access with targets and metrics (SDG-9).
- Gender equality is more prominently included, targeting **systemic barriers for women and girls** in accessing digital technology.
- Rev. 5 strengthens commitments on AI by introducing a **multidisciplinary Independent International Scientific Panel on AI** to assess risks, promote best practices, and ensure transparent governance. It further integrates **UNESCO's AI ethics recommendation** as a key guiding principle.
- Emphasizes on **cross-border data flows** with responsible mechanisms for **data privacy and security**. Strengthening of **interoperable data governance frameworks** is introduced to address data gaps and ensure fair access.
- The Rev. 5 expanded on actions for mitigating gender-based violence online, along with hate speech, disinformation, and child exploitation.
- Urge digital technology companies to work with governments and stakeholders to **create transparent accountability frameworks** and standards with auditable public reports., especially in **AI-enabled content** such as identification of AI-generated material.
- New focus in Rev. 5 on **building resilience against misinformation** and promoting **independent and public media** and supporting journalists and media workers (SDGs 9 & 16).
- The GDC promotes **crisis-specific information systems** for better access to relevant, reliable data in vulnerable situations.
- Emphasis on **increasing investment** and capacity-building in **developing countries** for digital infrastructure, governance, and skills

- Increased role for **multistakeholder collaboration**, ensuring contributions from governments, private sectors, civil society, and academia
- **Rev. 5** adds emphasis on **satellites, school connectivity, and telemedicine**, along with improved financing mechanisms for developing countries
- The Zero Draft had specific targets for **Internet speeds**, such as ensuring a minimum speed of 10Mb/s for universal access. This target is dropped in Rev. 5.

### CONTENT TRANSFORMATION FROM THE ZERO DRAFT TO REV.5:

The Global Digital Compact (GDC) has evolved considerably from the Zero Draft to Rev.5, reflecting shifts in priorities and **governance approaches**. Rev.2 emphasizes international cooperation for a safe and secure digital future, with a stronger focus on data security and financing. However, it broadened development in governance by removing the **\$100 million target** and fostering collaboration with tech companies and academia. It underscores the importance of digital technologies in **non-military domains** and the use of data systems for policymaking but reduces the emphasis on the principle of "**leave no one behind.**" Further, Rev. 3 focuses on **non-military digital cooperation**, increasing government responsibility and has **removed regional organizations** from the stakeholder list. It shifts away from just closing digital divides to emphasizing equitable sustainable development. It strengthens principles of **gender equality** and **mental health** in digital spaces. Commitments expand to **prioritize satellite orbits, telemedicine, and digital safety for women and girls**. It narrows the focus of data and AI governance while clarifying the role of the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and aligning follow-up processes with national policies and priorities. Rev. 5 enhances international cooperation, particularly between developed and developing nations, and focuses on human oversight of emerging technologies. It introduces **measurable targets for universal digital connectivity** by 2030, emphasizing marginalized groups. AI governance is strengthened through the creation of an **Independent International Scientific Panel**, and the language on data governance is clearer, especially on **cross-border data flows and privacy**. The Rev. 5 also addresses digital trust and safety, countering gender-based violence, misinformation, and child exploitation, while better integrating environmental sustainability. Notably, the proposal for a UN Digital Human Rights Advisory Service and **specific internet speed targets** were dropped in favor of broader principles.

### RESOURCES:

1. [Summit of the Future](#)
2. [ICH Bulletins - Global Digital Compact](#)