



Comments to the Global Digital Compact Third Revision

South Centre

Geneva, August 2024

The South Centre welcomes the Global Digital Compact Third Revision¹ as part of the broader commitment to advance sustainable development. The pathway to implement the principles it contains will need to be decided through continued intergovernmental dialogue in an appropriate multilateral mechanism allowing for input from diverse stakeholders, with adequate representation of developing countries and sustained financing.

The Global Digital Compact can provide a framework to ensure that the benefits of digital transformation are shared equitably across the globe. Closing the digital divide is essential for building an inclusive and sustainable digital future, that gives priority to digital inclusion, accessibility, while the digital space is non-discriminatory, empowers participation, and builds upon international cooperation.

Digital inclusivity, a vital objective of the GDC, requires investment in robust and affordable infrastructure. Advancing on Digital Public Infrastructure, with the consent of data use and transparency, is a pathway to advance digital inclusion and adequate provision of public services. Digital literacy and skills are essential for individuals and communities to succeed. Therefore, the GDC's implementation requires empowering people with the digital skills they need to participate and thrive in the digital economy and strengthening coordination among agencies of the UN system, leveraging existing work, including the UNESCO ITC Competency Framework of Teachers and the ITU Development Programme.

An inclusive artificial intelligence global governance and enhancing international cooperation, including capacity building on AI to ensure developing countries are not left behind, should remain part of the GDC. Cross-border data flows (para. 45) should focus on sharing practices and understanding legal frameworks. Countries must retain their ability to regulate cross-border data flows, recognising that all countries have a stake in the digital economy. The GDC

¹ See: United Nations, *Global Digital Compact Third Revision*, in https://www.un.org/techenvoy/sites/www.un.org.techenvoy/files/general/GDC_Rev_3_silence_procedure.pdf (accessed 23.08.2024).

implementation process should actively foster an open dialogue on these matters as part of international cooperation.

We recommend deletion of the reference to intellectual property rights (IPRs) in the GDC (para. 38(c)). Equitable access to knowledge and information for everyone is essential in the knowledge society. In this regard, the GDC should encourage the adoption, consistent with international law, of limitations and exceptions to copyrights in the digital environment, including for research, cross-border educational uses and preservation.

Finally, the GDC governance framework should strengthen multilateralism for effective governance mechanisms to address cross-border digital issues, promote digital cooperation, and ensure that the benefits of digital transformation are shared equitably. This mechanism should empower the participation of developing countries in the digital space through capacity building and the required funding to close the widening digital divides among and within countries.

See also:

Carlos Correa and others, [*The Global Digital Compact: Opportunities and Challenges for Developing Countries in a Fragmented Digital Space*](#), Research Paper No. 187 (2023)

South Centre, [*Submission to the Global Digital Compact: Apply Human Rights Online*](#) (2023)

Anita Gurumurthy and others, [*The Global Digital Compact We Need for the People and the Planet*](#), SouthViews No. 262 (2024)