ICT4Peace comments and recommendations regarding the Global Digital Compact (GDC) Zero Draft

1. ICT4Peace General Comments

ICT4Peace supports in general terms the objectives and principles of the proposed GDC.

The GDC should build on the objectives and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 2030 Agenda and the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). In particular, the GDC should commit to the vision of the WSIS and reaffirm the WSIS outcome documents.

When undertaking to achieve its objectives, commitments and actions, the GDC should avoid duplication and use, to the degree possible, existing UN and other relevant regional institutions and their mechanisms, platforms, and fora, such as WSIS or the Internet Governance Forum (IGF).

In particular, the GDC should leverage the existing WSIS processes, like the WSIS+20 process, and employ existing SDG and WSIS measuring systems and tools.

2. Specific comments and recommendations by ICT4Peace
on the GDC Zero Draft

As with the UN First Committee cyber processes - the theme of accountability is underrepresented. 7g) for instance, refers to seeking responsible and accountable conduct via cooperation, but doesn't elaborate on how this is to be realized.

We would welcome the indication of a mechanism to help ensure accountability on the part of states for their digital conduct. Noticeably in this draft is the absence of recommendations for inter-governmental forums or actions.

Instead, we find exhortations for state actions (and in some cases companies) paired with the establishment of non-governmental bodies as the International Scientific Panel (49a) and a Digital Human Rights Advisory Service (22).

The Compact flags that "international cooperation on AI governance is urgently required" (41) but is rather vague in how this cooperation is to be achieved. We are left with general statements such as "We assess that international governance of emerging technologies, including AI, requires an agile, multi-disciplinary and networked multi stakeholder approach" (47)

We would like to see an affirmation of the goal of fostering "digital peace" as references to "safe and secure digital space" (6) or "free and secure Internet" (26a) are inadequate and are too easily equated with a securitised and militarised digital environment.

While reference is made to establishing "Robust cyber-security standards and capacities" (18), the question of who is to be responsible for developing and implementing such standards is not

addressed.

It is good that an injunction is expressed to "refrain from Internet shutdowns and ensure that any restrictions are in full compliance with international law" (26d) , but again this is left to the goodwill of states and no monitoring of conduct is advocated.

Similarly, the admonishment to "Ensure law and regulations on use of technology in areas such as surveillance and encryption are consistent with international standards and norms" (28d) is desirable, however ICT4Peace would welcome specific suggestions regarding international collaboration to ensure that these abuses are effectively countered.

The draft at times references an important issue, but seems to fob off relevant action to ill defined non-state actor processes. For example, "Develop through multi stakeholder consultations, effective methodologies to measure, track and counter online violence against women and girls". (28c). A similar approach is used with respect to AI-enabled abuses: "Call on digital technology companies and communities to continue to develop and publicly communicate actions to mitigate risks from AI-generated deception..." (32c)

The principal "deliverables" of the GDC are i) a resolution this UNGA session to establish terms of references for the envisaged International Scientific Panel on AI; ii) establishment of Global Fund for AI and Emerging Technologies for Sustainable Development; iii) creation of a CDC portal within 12 months; and iv) initiate a biennial "High-level Review of the GDC" to get underway in 2025.

ICT4Peace is not convinced that these proposed type of outcomes meet the expectations of the international community. Each should be thoroughly discussed and its rationale explained. As expressed

earlier, when implementing and reviewing its commitments, the GDC should avoid duplication and leverage the existing WSIS or IGF processes and use existing SDG and WSIS measuring systems and tools.

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