

The Internet We Want

In today's digital societies, Internet governance is critical for economic, social, and environmental development. Internet governance is a crucial enabler of sustainable development, ensuring that the Internet is used in a responsible and inclusive manner, and can contribute to promoting access to information, communication, and innovation. The importance of this agenda cannot be understated in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing economic recovery, supply chain shocks, and unfolding geopolitical tensions, especially as economies worldwide are working towards a sustainable economic rebuild.

Internet and other digital technologies are vital components of a sustainable future. Leaders across all stakeholder groups globally must come together and collaborate in a cohesive and inclusive manner to ensure that their actions align with existing commitments to:

- promote a human-centric Internet that **ensures respect for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law and protects against harmful behaviours;**
- expand **connectivity** and guarantee **meaningful and affordable access for everyone, everywhere;**
- preserve an **open, free, globally connected, interoperable, unfragmented, and stable** Internet.
- unlock the value of data for development and enable **data free flow with trust**, while ensuring data protection and privacy, to support a truly global digital economy;
- Foster a safe and secure online environment, in particular by increasing efforts to strengthen **cybersecurity;**
- facilitate collaboration for the development of **new and emerging technologies** in a trusted way while continuing to enable innovation;
- adopt **environment friendly practises** consistent with reducing greenhouse gas emission **when utilising the Internet and digital resources;**
- acknowledge, support and encourage the contribution of youth playing a key role in the **achievement of sustainability;** and
- uphold the **multistakeholder approach** in the governance of the Internet.

In line with these commitments, the IGF Leadership Panel encourages all governments, private sector, civil society and technical and academic communities to come together to share this vision, define goals and targets to achieve the Internet we - as a global society - would want, and promote the necessary coordinated and effective actions at local, regional and international levels to realise this common vision.

We firmly believe in the multistakeholder model and the unique convening power of the Internet Governance Forum to achieve this vision and offer the following characteristics as a starting point for discussions.

The IGF Leadership Panel believes that the Internet We Want is:

1. **Whole and open;**
2. **Universal and inclusive;**
3. **Free-flowing and trustworthy;**
4. **Safe and secure;** and
5. **Rights-respecting.**

1. Whole and open

A whole, open, free, globally connected, interoperable and stable Internet is vital for sustainable development, the functioning of digital societies and economies, for supporting business operations worldwide, and a prerequisite to the effective functioning of public services such as education, health care or various governmental services. When properly harnessed, information and communication technologies (ICT) and

digital technologies are formidable engines of innovation, competitiveness development, sustainable economic growth, and instruments of social, cultural, and economic empowerment for all.

This unique potential can only be fully exploited if the fundamental nature of the Internet as an open, whole, interconnected, and interoperable network of networks is preserved. However, at present, there is a heightened risk that some potential policy or business decisions might fragment the Internet into siloed parts.

The potential fragmentation at either the technical, content or governance layers, threatens the open, whole, interconnected, and interoperable nature of the Internet, and its associated benefits to social and economic development, while also harming human rights.

We call on the stakeholders of the Internet to set goals to ensure that the internet stays whole, open, free, globally connected, interoperable, stable and unfragmented.

2. Universal and inclusive

Since its inception, the Internet has evolved from an information exchange network to the platform for sustainable social and economic development we recognise it to be today. An open, stable, and trusted Internet is vital for the effective functioning of a diverse array of services, as varied as agriculture, energy, healthcare, manufacturing, or education, continuously reimagining the way people interact with their peers, businesses, and governments. However, despite the enormous progress in expanding connectivity in recent years, 2.7 billion people remain unconnected.

Connecting the unconnected and reconnecting the disconnected is not just about infrastructure and access to the Internet. Meaningful connectivity also requires focus on bridging the barriers to adoption, including creating and maintaining an enabling environment in which locally relevant, local language content is created, as well as adopting policies and tools designed to identify and address skills gaps. The enduring digital divides in access, application, and skills among and within countries emphasise the need for universal, affordable, and meaningful connectivity in order to reach the development potential of the Internet, ICTs, and digital technologies. Meaningful connectivity should also be secure, resilient and cost-effective.

In pursuit of these goals and of a human-centric, sustainable digitalization, all stakeholders must improve their understanding of how ICTs work in practice, including knowledge of the ICT ecosystem, the roles of the various stakeholders and relevant policy issues.

Frameworks that enable Internet connectivity should be based on light-touch ICT policy and regulations, encourage universal access through competition and the entry of new players into the ICT ecosystem to foster the emergence of innovative products, services, and business models. Policy and regulatory mechanisms should consider the value of the entire communications and digital services ecosystem. They should be non-discriminatory, technology-neutral, and supportive of innovative business models and the development of a wide range of technologies, standards, and system architectures. Successful efforts to deliver universal meaningful connectivity need to balance the needs of all stakeholders, should be grounded in evidence and data, should seek global harmonisation in terms of interoperability and standards, should enable the effective management of spectrum between all stakeholders, and must facilitate investment across the entire digital value chain.

We call on the stakeholders of the Internet to set goals to move towards universal meaningful connectivity for everyone, everywhere, to encourage the uptake of new technologies at need, and to address skills gaps.

3. Free-flowing and trustworthy

Cross-border data flows underpin many aspects of business today — cloud services, remote work, workplace collaboration, management of human resources, customer relationships and supply chains. They also underpin distance learning, telemedicine, the fight against cybercrime and child abuse online, fraud monitoring and prevention, investigation of counterfeit products, and a broad range of other activities. The processing and

transfer of both personal and non-personal data are integral to many of these exchanges, making trust a vital element for resilient and sustainable economic growth and recovery.

However, there is an increasing lack of trust, or confidence, due to concerns that policy objectives—such as privacy, national security, consumer and human rights protection, access to data or even industrial competitiveness—would be compromised when data moves abroad. This lack of trust serves as the rationale for the adoption of an increasing number of data localisation and sovereignty measures, leading to fragmented national approaches to data governance and a growing number of restrictions that prohibit or considerably encumber cross-border data flows. Failure to address this lack of trust and to find an appropriate trust model risks impeding cross-border data flows, thereby limiting economies of scale and scope, driving inefficient, unsustainable investment, and restricting innovation.

Promoting policies that facilitate the adoption of applicable technologies and the global movement of data, including through governance models that allow for data-sharing for public good, is fundamental to harnessing their significant economic and social benefits. In particular, policymakers should support open cross-border data flows, while also assuring the protection of privacy, security, as well as intellectual property, and that those protections are implemented through a risk-based approach and in a manner that is transparent, non-discriminatory and in line with the principles of necessity and proportionality.

Trust is strengthened when governments adopt robust and comprehensive commitments to protect the rights and freedoms of individuals, including the fundamental right to privacy. In addition, cooperation between governments and stakeholders including business and multilateral organisations is needed to advocate for interoperable policy frameworks that would facilitate cross-border data flows, enabling data to be exchanged, shared, and used in a trusted manner, thereby aiming for high privacy standards.

We call on the stakeholders of the Internet to set goals to unlock the value of data flows for sustainable development of all and enshrine trust as the prerequisite for data sharing regimes, founded on the protection of data.

4. Safe and secure

Cyberspace is now an intrinsic part of every country's development, creating enormous opportunities and enabling economic and societal growth. At the same time, the indispensable nature of cyberspace in day-to-day human activities also generates growing vulnerabilities. Rapid digitalisation is testing the resilience of cyber infrastructures. The escalating vulnerabilities resulting from disparate states of cyber hygiene hinder the effectiveness of countermeasures against cyber attacks, threatening to thwart the potential economic impact of ICT and digital technologies.

The borderless nature of the Internet and the associated digital economy, the increased cyber-physical interdependency of IoT, and cybercrime paint a complex legal and operational picture for cybersecurity. A collective, collaborative multistakeholder approach is required to find meaningful ways and effective solutions to mitigate local, cross-border and global cybersecurity concerns.

To empower and protect societies from increased cybersecurity risks, the international multistakeholder community should explore practical ways to mainstream cybersecurity capacity building (CCB) into broader digital development efforts. This is also essential for building resilient societies and promoting a whole-of-society approach to dealing with threats emanating from cyberspace.

We call on the stakeholders of the Internet to set goals to establish and implement robust frameworks for high levels of cybersecurity, and strong recommendations for legal structures, practices, and cross-border cooperation to combat cybercrime.

5. Rights-respecting

Human rights must be respected online and offline. Governments are responsible to ensure that human rights are respected, protected, and promoted, while businesses and digital service providers are obliged to comply with all applicable laws and to respect human rights. Governments must refrain from internet shutdowns. Any restriction of access to the Internet must be lawful, legitimate, necessary, proportional, and non-discriminatory.

All stakeholder groups have the responsibility to promote transparency, accountability, and human rights due diligence throughout the lifecycle of existing, new and emerging technologies. We have learned that certain behaviours on the Internet can be very harmful to our societies. The Internet we want will protect us from them.

A human rights-based approach to Internet governance is required in order to realize the full benefits of the Internet for all, including the rights to education, to participation in public and cultural life or to access to information, as well as empowering businesses of all sizes. To that end, standards development organisations should introduce processes to ensure due consideration of human rights in their work, including by inviting participation of experts from all stakeholder communities.

We call on the stakeholders of the Internet to set goals to ensure a human rights-based approach to Internet governance, and to promote human rights in the digital space.

If we are to achieve the Internet we want, we have significant multistakeholder work ahead of us, including collaboration with existing and ongoing initiatives.